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Character Education in Christian Schools

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Abstract

Character education programs have been an important part of school systems across the country since the Colonial time period. The way character education has been taught has changed over the years, but the goal to help students make ethical decisions remains the same. Over the last few decades, Christian values have slowly been removed from many character education programs and replaced with values concentrating on citizenship. The goal of one small midwestern Christian elementary school was to develop an effective character education program that was centered on Christian values to help carry out its mission statement. This study shows that a Christian character education program is able to meet the goals of an effective program and have a positive Christian impact on its students.

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Character Education in Christian Schools

by

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Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Ultimate thanks to Jesus Christ, because through Him, all things are possible.

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Abstract

Character education programs have been an important part of school systems across the country since the Colonial time period. The way character education has been taught has changed over the years, but the goal to help students make ethical decisions remains the same. Over the last few decades, Christian values have slowly been removed from many character education programs and replaced with values concentrating on citizenship. The goal of one small midwestern Christian elementary school was to develop an effective character education program that was centered on Christian values to help carry out its mission statement. This study shows that a Christian character education program is able to meet the goals of an effective program and have a positive Christian impact on its students.

Character education has become a fast growing school reform movement in the United States (Prestwich, 2004). Many schools are incorporating character education programs into their schools by combining social, religious, and cultural values into a single program (Murphy, 1998). There has been a huge push for values or ethics education in schools today, but not without controversy. Many parents feel that the rise in violence in school and within their communities is due to the lack of values or ethics taught in the classroom (Bulach, 2002; Jeynes, 2009; Stiff-Williams, 2010). Critics question the school's role in teaching or instructing different beliefs or values to students (Prestwich, 2004). With all its controversy, character education has made its way into public and private schools across America.

The goal of a character education is to help develop in students an understanding of ethical values (Milson & Mehlig, 2002) and to create citizens that portray ethical traits that are desirable to be functional in a society (Prestwich, 2004). Schools have taken the responsibility to teach students different character traits or values that are needed to function in today's society. Many private or religious institutions use character education to help teach students about the different religious values or beliefs needed to function as a Christian in today's society. Schools implement character education programs to the students through a variety of methods: by incorporating it into lesson plans, school wide themes, read alouds, and individual lessons on the different traits (Revell, 2008).

Critics question the impact that character education programs have on the students. Is character education programming meeting its goal to create equipped citizens for today's society? The research is mixed on the impact and validity that character education has on students. Students are receiving information and training on

different values, but critics argue that this is not enough and students are not being equipped (Prestwich, 2004).

Problem

Character education programming takes a large amount of time and effort by the administration and teachers who implement the curriculum in their schools. When implementing a program of this magnitude into a school, all vested parties must be on board and be willing to put the time and effort into the program. Administration, board members, faculty, staff members, parents, and community members must be willing to help out and work together to have a program like this become successful.

Schools are also working with limited budgets and resources today. Character education is an additional expense that can take funding and resources away from other vital programs within a school. When investing time and resources into a program, a school hopes to see results in their students. Since schools want to see results in their students, schools need to develop character education programs that focus on the values that students are struggling with in their schools. Finding common values that need to be taught as a school and matching them to a program also takes time and resources (Bulach, 2002). If goals and outcomes are not being met, a school has to look at the validity of the program and evaluate the significance of that program as it is being used within their school.

In the last six years, Sioux Center Christian has implemented its own character education program by focusing on different values the school feels are necessary to be a Christian steward in Christ's kingdom. The character education program has been created into schoolwide theme that focuses on the different values. The school has

invested a large amount of teaching time and instructional time to introduce different Christian traits and values to the students with the goal of having the students emulate those traits and values in their daily lives.

The mission statement at Sioux Center Christian is to develop a knowledge and understanding of Christ and His creation in all God's children so students can obediently serve God as they work and play. Sioux Center Christian has developed a yearly faith-based character education program, using the characteristics of an effective character education program. The faith-based character education program has three guiding principles that the students will focus on: growth, service, and worship. But, over the last couple of years, parts of this program have been changed some of its focus to help with the promotional aspect of the school. The purpose of the study is to determine if the faith-based character education program at Sioux Center Christian is still meeting its original goal of helping the students fulfill the school's mission statement.

Research Questions

The questions examined include:

1. Does the current character education program at Sioux Center Christian align with the characteristics of an effective character education program?

2. Does the current character education program at Sioux Center Christian fulfill the three school-established guiding principles?

Definitions

A basic understanding of the terms used is essential to any piece of work. Unless otherwise stated, all the definitions are the author's. For the purpose of this work, the following definitions are put forth:

Character education is a program designed that emphasizes learning and modeling certain traits desirable in a functional society (Prestwich, 2004).

Core values are basic values that are valued and shared by the school, parents, students, and community (Lickona, T., Schaps, E., Lewis, C., & Character Education Partnership, W.C., 2007).

Values clarification approach refers to an intervention intended to alleviate values confusion by teaching individuals to apply a process of valuing (Milson and Mehlig, 2002)

Christian stewardship refers to the responsibility that Christians have in maintaining and using the gifts God has given them to help fix the brokenness of our sinful world (Van Dyk, 2000).

Christ's kingdom refers to all of God' creation and where it becomes visible whenever the will of the Lord is done (Van Dyk, 2000).

Reformed view refers to the Reformed tradition's view of a child as an image bearer of God that is precious in God's sight (Van Dyk, 2000).

Literature Review

Character education programs have been around since schools were started in the United States (Murphy, 1998). The Puritans, who came over from Europe, believed that there was a clear interrelationship between character education, the Bible, and literacy (Jeynes, 2009). Many educators and parents saw it as the duty of the educational institutions to instruct students both academically and socially. Students learned how to be patriotic and how to be good citizens of the United States by singing, memorizing

important dates, quoting historical speeches, and learning proper social etiquette (Kenan, 2009). Character education programs taught students how to be loyal to God, to one's country, to their community, and to their self. Most character education programs included religious beliefs and values based on the community (Clouse, 2001; Murphy, 1998).

As time went on, character education programming continued to grow in schools across the country. These character education programs taught values that were linked to Christian importance using Bible passages to help their students become hard-working citizens. From the 1820's-1920's, many schools used *McGuffey Readers* to help instruct their character education programs. Teachers would have students memorize and recite passages from *McGuffey Readers* that used many Bible passages and references to teach moral values to students (Jeynes, 2009).

By the end of the 1930's and the beginning of 1940's, character education lost favor in schools due to some harsh methods of instruction that tended to frighten students more than impact attitudes and behaviors. Programs focused on the consequences of bad behavior and poor moral decisions. Guilt was used as a tool to scare students into proper behavior (Jeynes, 2009; Prestwich, 2004). World War II and the Great Depression also changed people's opinions on how character education was being taught and the program's goals. Patriotism was still a key value in most programs, but a new emphasis was on being loyal to one's country and its allies (Jeynes, 2009). People thought it was important to teach children how to work together to keep the world safe. A new movement in character education also widened the definition to include play, psychological development, and being active in the wider society (Jeynes, 2009).

Character education programs were designed to help students become more active in their communities. Students were encouraged to find different ways to serve their country, their community, and their schools (Jeynes, 2009).

Over time, character education continued to adapt itself to society's values and interests. By the 1960's, the direct approach to instructing character education took a hit by movements that wanted to break free from traditional values and traditional ways of instruction. Character education moved towards a more individual approach that stressed how individuals should interpret situations based on their own individual beliefs and principles. This individual moral reasoning made teaching values developmentally inappropriate in schools (Prestwich, 2004).

The 1960's also brought new ways of thinking that questioned the existence of God. The science world started emphasizing previous theories developed by Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer that questioned the existence of God. John Dewey also challenged moral education by questioning decision-making. Dewey challenged the existence of God. He maintained that moral failure had nothing to do with knowing right from wrong, rather applied scientific methods. Dewey emphasized a movement that applied scientific reasoning to decision making or to use personal strengths or opinions to validate decision-making (Jeynes, 2009).

The 1960's also brought a new era of science and technology with the launching of *Sputnik*. The United States felt like it was behind in the race to the moon. Schools were pushed to give more time and resources to the math and science courses in school. With the increase of higher math and engineering being taught in schools, a new way of thinking and reasoning was being used for assessment. To show understanding students

needed to be able to prove or justify their reasoning. Character education was now more commonly taught from the values clarification approach (Clouse, 2001; Milson & Mehlig, 2002).   Milson and Mehlig (2002) stated:

> Values clarification was intended as an intervention to alleviate values confusion by teaching individuals to apply a process of valuing. The valuing process allowed an individual to clarify his or her values without being influenced by the values of others. (p. 47)

This approach was not very successful and usually left children confused about processing values (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). The values clarification approach made it difficult for students to make moral decisions because moral decision-making became very individualistic as long as one could justify their conclusion. What was right for one person may not be right for someone else (Clouse, 2001; Milson & Mehlig, 2002).

One of the major impacts to character education in the United States came from a series of court decisions made by the United States Supreme Courts in 1962 and 1963 to remove Bible reading and prayer from pubic schools. This ruling impacted how character education was taught in schools in the United States (Burke & Segall, 2011; Jeynes, 2009).   Schools were no longer able to use biblical scriptures as resources to the characteristics they were teaching. With the values clarification approach, the Bible no longer was used as a primary source to justify moral decisions (Jeynes, 2009; Milson & Mehlig, 2002).

Character education made a comeback with in the late 1980's and 1990's with the increase in school dropout rates, school violence, and gang activity (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006; Stiff-Williams, 2010). Student morale was going

down, and students felt threatened by their peers in schools (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Prestwich, 2004). After the Columbine High School shootings in 1999, many critics questioned school's moral principles and the moral education being taught in schools (Bulach, 2002; Revell 2002; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008). There was a huge push to have a universal character education program that could be used in schools across America. Many state governments looked into developing character education programs for their schools or helped fund character education programs that were being used in schools within their state. Today 18 states mandate schools to implement a character education program, 18 states encourage schools to adapt a character education program, and 7 states support character education programs without legislation (What is Character Education, n.d.).

The methods of how character education is taught in school have changed over the years, but its purpose has stayed the same: to help develop in students an understanding of ethical values (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Murphy, 1998). Certain values: honesty, respect, and responsibility, have stayed consistent in character education programs over the years, possibly using different terminology in the different regions of the country (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

For character education programs to become successful, they need to follow distinctive guidelines and have common goals. By sticking to these goals and basing programs around consistent core values, character education programs become successful (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Lickona, et al, 2007). These guidelines include creating a list of core values, having positive teacher involvement, encouraging

role modeling by teachers and staff, and giving students real life opportunities to put what they have learned into action (Benninga et al, 2006).

Creating a list of core values that reflect a school's mission is the first step to creating an effective character education program. The values and characteristics that a school wants to teach to their students also need to carry out the mission of the school. Input from faculty members, administration, staff members, board members, students, and parents is important in making a character education program effective since all parties are teaching students how to make ethical decisions in every aspect of their life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Bulach, 2002; Prestwich, 2004; Revell & Arthur 2007; Schaps, Schaeffer, & McDonnell, 2001). A successful character education program needs the involvement of both the parents and members of the community since the values of character education also need to be reflected outside of the school setting (Benninga & Quinn, 2011; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Teachers are also a key component in the success of a character education program. Teachers play a key role in the instruction of character education. Teachers need to create classroom environments that allow values to be modeled, and classroom environments where the students feel safe to model the values (Lickona et al, 2007). Teachers also need to incorporate character education values into their daily lesson plans and create units that demonstrate these values in a variety of different situations (Bulach, 2002; Revell & Arthur 2007; Stiff-Williams, 2010). It is important that the teachers, who are associated with a character education program, help create a program that is meaningful to the students and avoid the tacked-on approach. Many character education

programs repeat from year to year, so it is important that teachers continually revise their lessons to keep values meaningful and relevant to the students (Bulach, 2002).

Successful character education programs also need to provide opportunities for the students to carry out and practice values in their daily life. Schools need to provide real life situations where the students may encounter using the values they have studied. Successful programs provide group discussions, life scenarios, classroom duties, or service projects that allow students to demonstrate what they have learned in the classrooms (Benninga et al, 2006; Lickona et al, 2007). A school with an effective character education program, according to Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, and Smith (2006), "needs to have their students contribute back in meaningful ways" (p. 451). Schools need to encourage their students to participate in volunteer activities, cross-age tutoring, and community projects (Benninga et al, 2006).

Two of the most widely used character education programs in the United States are *Character Counts* and *Character Plus*. Each character education program has been developed to focus around the core value of "improving the ethical quality of society by changing personal decision-making and behavior" (Josephson Institute, 2014; What is CHARACTERplus®, 2014). *Character Counts* has been a successful program because it follows a variety of guidelines that make character education programs successful. *Character Counts* focuses on six pillars: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship (Josephson Institute, 2014). These six pillars reflect many schools' mission statements and can be implemented into the curriculum being taught. *Character Plus,* a character education program used in many schools in Illinois and Missouri, also designs its program around the values of honesty, respect, and

responsibility (What is CHARACTERplus®, 2014). *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* use these pillars and values as a foundation to help students develop better decision-making skills that they can use in society.

Character Counts and *Character Plus* also spend a significant amount of time and resources on training teachers how to teach and model these core values. Both programs provide many opportunities for teachers to receive training by attending workshops to help them stay current with available materials. *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* also provide teachers with lesson plans that help teach the different values. Both programs stress the importance of teachers being motivated about the character education program and modeling the characteristics in their classrooms (Josephson Institute, 2014; What is CHARACTERplus®, 2014).

The *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* programs also stress the importance of students getting involved with the community and providing real life opportunities for the students to use the values being taught. Both programs are designed to have the students make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and real life situations. Schools are encouraged to give opportunities for students to volunteer in the communities or to create programs within the school that allow students to live out what they are being taught (Josephson Institute, 2014; What is CHARACTERplus®, 2014). Following these guidelines has helped *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* become successful.

Christian schools have also incorporated character education programs into their own school systems. Using many of the same guidelines and principles that have made programs like *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* successful, many Christian schools

have develop their own character education programs. Many Christian schools want to use character education programs to help develop Christian characteristics in their students. Murphy (1998) wrote:

> The Christian school community sees education as involving the "whole person" unfolding in an environment of faith, hope, and love and the school as a place for helping students toward a "responsible and coherent way of life". Schools develop students 'spiritually and doctrinally," but specific efforts also need to be made to develop their character so that student do the good and moral actions that their religious training tells them they should do. (p. 32)

Christian schools develop their own individual character education programs that are based on the foundations of their religious beliefs. Programs like *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* do not tie their values to any religious principles since these programs are used in many public schools across the country.

Christian schools also develop their own character education programs to help them carry out their mission statements. Character education programs like *Character Counts* and *Character Plus* are designed to be implemented in a variety of schools and therefore use universal terms allowing them to fit into any school (Benninga & Quinn, 2011; Murphy, 1998).

Sioux Center Christian School has has developed a character education program using the following guidelines: creating a list of core values, having positive teacher involvement, encouraging role modeling by teachers and staff, and giving students real life opportunities to put what they have learned into action. Each year the school takes a different Christian theme and develops it into a school wide theme that focuses on

different Christian characteristics.   Sioux Center Christian created a character

educational program to meet its Reformed view of the students. Van Dyk (2000) wrote a

Reformed view of how we should view students: "children are image bearers of God.

Children are experienced, gifted, responsible creatures, precious in God's sight" (p. 242).

Sioux Center Christian created a character education program that would help the school

fulfill its mission statement "to develop in each of God's children a knowledge and

understanding of Christ and His creation so that they can obediently serve God and others

as they work and play" (About Sioux Center Christian School, n.d.). The three guiding

principles the character education program focuses on are growth, service, and worship.

All three guiding principles come from Sioux Center Christian's mission statement and

use Christian characteristics and biblical characters to help fulfill the school's mission.

The first guideline Sioux Center Christian School has for its character education

program is for students to grow in and have a better knowledge of Christ. As stated in

the school's mission statement, "to develop in each of God's children a knowledge and

understanding of Christ and His creation" (About Sioux Center Christian School, n.d.),

Sioux Center Christian wants to help their students understand who God is and learn how

to live a life that honors him. To help the students do this, the character education

program focuses on characteristics that help students develop a better understanding of

God. The students learn how different people in the Bible obeyed God by using

characteristics like diligence, honesty, forgiveness, compassion, selflessness,

thankfulness, and boldness. Students also learn how to honor God by using these

characteristics in their own lives.

The students at Sioux Center Christian are also taught about these characteristics and biblical characters through school wide chapels, classroom devotions, and in the classrooms. The teachers include the different characteristics in their lesson plans, devotional time with the students, and in the daily life of the students in the classroom. Teachers also model the characteristics to their students in the classroom, giving the students the opportunity to see how to model these characteristics. Learning about these characteristics helps the students grow in their knowledge of God.

The second guiding principle Sioux Center Christian School has for its character education program is building community through service. God created us as relational beings with the desire to build community through acts of service (Murphy, 1998). Sioux Center Christian wants to help their students serve their Creator by teaching them how to serve others. As stated in the school's mission statement, "so that they can obediently serve God and others" (About Sioux Center Christian School, n.d.), Sioux Center Christian wants their students to apply what they learn about Christ in the classroom into their daily lives.

Like *Character Counts* and *Character Plus*, Sioux Center Christian has built in opportunities for the students to serve others within the community. Students are able to serve God by working together in the classroom, by working together in cross-grade groups, by contributing to projects or programs that help people in need, and by helping people within the community. By serving other students in the school and serving others within their community, students build community and learn how to serve the Lord. It is important that the students are given opportunities to take what they are being taught in the classroom and to apply it to real world situations.

The third guiding principle Sioux Center Christian School has for its character education program is to develop a school wide theme that creates an atmosphere for worship.   Following the biblical view that all of life (work and play) is an act of worship, Sioux Center Christian wants to instill in their students that everything that they do is an act of worship. As stated in the school's mission statement, "serve God and others as they work and play" (About Sioux Center Christian School, n.d.), Sioux Center Christian wants their students to worship God in every area of their lives.

Sioux Center Christian followed these three guiding principles as it developed its own character education program. It also incorporated the guidelines of other successful character education programs to help make it be a successful character education program. Sioux Center Christian continues to create a character education program that is centered around biblical values that students can use in their everyday life. The school hopes to continue to have a positive influence in the students' lives.

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were students in the grades ranging from the fifth grade to the eighth grade, administrators from Sioux Center Christian, and teachers from Sioux Center Christian. Ten students from each grade level were randomly selected to participate in the survey. The students were selected using a computer-generated program. The students' make-up is from a largely homogenous population in terms of age, ethnicity, and background. The students that were selected have all been part of the school' faith-based character education program for at least four years.

The administrator that was asked to participate was part of the initial character education development team and has been part of the school' faith-based character education program for at least four years.

The teachers that were selected were all current teachers at the school and range in years of teaching experience inside and outside the school system. The participating teachers also have been part of the school's faith-based character education program for at least four years.

Research Design

The participants of this study took part in a survey designed to rate how well the school's faith-based character education program was meeting its three goals: growth, service and worship, by using a 5-point Likert scale (Appendix B). Participants had the opportunity to respond to a variety of questions pertaining to the three goals. The survey was generated by the researcher using a variety of other surveys that were developed to help schools using character education programs receive feedback on their own programs (Cobleskill-Richmondville Character Education Survey, n.d.; Respect & Responsibility School Culture Survey, n.d.). The participants were also asked to type their own response to a question dealing with school's Christian character education program. Participants were sent a link to the online survey created by the administrator of the test.

Materials

The materials needed to carry out the study consisted of a survey based from the questions created by the researcher and created through an online survey creator. Six of the survey questions pertained to the goal focusing of spiritual growth. Six more questions pertained to the goal of service, and four questions pertained to the goal of

worship. The last question, an open-ended question, asked participants to write three

things they have learned from the school's faith-based character education program.

Procedure

Parents of the student participants were sent a letter informing them about the

survey and asked for permission for their child to take part in the survey (Appendix A).

Student participants were contacted and given a link to the survey. Students were given a

two-week time span to complete the survey. Students were also given class time and

access to the Internet to complete the survey.   The administrative and teacher

participants were contacted through school email accounts and given a link to the survey.

They were given two-week span to complete the survey.

To measure how well the school's faith-based character education program was

meeting its original goals, the questions and their responses were grouped by the three

goals. Questions pertaining to each goal were categorized together for scoring. Results

were grouped and recorded. Written responses were also recorded and separated into

categories based on the three goals: growth, service, and worship. The purpose for the

written responses was to help reveal which of the three goals was more dominate and

which goals were not as prevalent to the participants in the school.

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Results

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Growth

Fifty participants participated in the survey: ten fifth graders, ten sixth graders, ten

seventh graders, ten eighth graders, and ten teachers or administrators. All of the

participants' responses were combined to help participants' responses stay anonymous.

The survey questions reflected the three goals the school created for the program: growth, service, and worship. Six questions pertaining to growth were asked to the participants. Questions focused on how students treated each other, how students resolved conflict, and students should properly interact with other students.

The first question reflecting growth was "students treat classmates with respect" (Table 1). This question scored high with most participants saying they think students treat each other with respect. Six participants felt that classmates always treat each other with respect. A majority of the participants, thirty-three, felt that classmates are often treated with respect by their classmates. Ten participants felt classmates sometime show respect to their classmates. Only one participant felt that classmates rarely show respect to fellow classmates.

Table 1

Responses to Question One Pertaining to Growth

Students treat classmates with respect.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	1	2%
Sometimes	10	20%
Often	33	66%
Always	6	12%

Participants were also asked "when students see another student being picked on, another student will try to stop it" (Table 2). This question had responses ranging from never to always, with the majority saying they see other students trying to stop other students from being picked on by other students. Two participants said that another student would always step in to stop another student from being picked on. Twenty participants said that it is often that another student will try to stop another student from

being picked on by another student. Twenty-three participants said they sometimes see

another student trying to stop students from being picked on. Four participants felt that

students rarely try to stop students being picked on, and one said they never see other

students trying to stop students from being picked on by other students.

Table 2

Responses to Question Two Pertaining to Growth

When students see another student being picked on, another student will try to stop it.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	1	2%
Rarely	4	8%
Sometimes	23	46%
Often	20	40%
Always	2	4%

The third question pertaining to growth asked if "students resolve conflicts

without fighting, insults, or threats" (Table 3). Responses once again ranged from never

to always. This question scored the lowest out of all the growth questions with

participants feeling students struggle with resolving conflict without using more conflict.

Two participants said students always resolve conflicts without fighting, insulting, or

threating each other. Nineteen participants said students often resolve conflict without

fighting, insulting, or threating each other. Twenty-one participants said students

sometimes resolve conflict without fighting, insulting, or threating each other. Seven

participants said students rarely resolve conflict without fighting, insulting, or threating

each other. One participant said students never resolve conflict without fighting,

insulting, or threating each other.

Table 3

Responses to Question Three Pertaining to Growth

Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	1	2%
Rarely	7	14%
Sometimes	21	42%
Often	19	38%
Always	2	4%

Participants were also asked if "students include those who are different (e.g. belong to a different race, gender, or from a different culture)" (Table 4). This question received very high remarks with ninety percent of participants responding with always or often. Fourteen participants said students always include those who are different. Over sixty percent, thirty-one participants, said students often include those who are different. Five participants said students sometimes include those who are different.

Table 4

Responses to Question Four Pertaining to Growth

Students include those who are different (e.g., belong to a different race, gender, or from a different culture).		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Sometimes	5	10%
Often	31	62%
Always	14	28%

The fifth question pertaining to growth asked if "students listen to each other in class discussions or class conversations" (Table 5). Responses were positive on this question with most of the respondents feeling students listen to each other. Eight participants said students always listen to each other in class discussions or class

conversations. Twenty- two participants felt students often listen to each other in class discussions or class conversations. Seventeen participants said students sometimes listen to each other in class discussions or class conversations. Only three participants responded that students rarely listen to each other in class discussions or class conversations.

Table 5

Responses to Question Five Pertaining to Growth

Students listen to each other in class discussions or class conversations.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	3	6%
Sometimes	17	34%
Often	22	44%
Always	8	16%

The last question pertaining to growth asked "when students do something hurtful to another student, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize, help them up, or do something nice)" (Table 6). Responses were favorable with the majority of the participants responding that they see students trying to make up for doing something wrong. Three participants said students always try to make up when they do something hurtful to another students. Over half of the participants, twenty-eight of them, said that students often try to make up when they do something hurtful to another students. Sixteen of the participants said students sometimes try to make up when they do something hurtful to another students. Three participants said they rarely see students try to make up when they do something hurtful to another students.

Table 6

Responses to Question Six Pertaining to Growth

When students do something hurtful to another student, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize, help them up, or do something nice).		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	3	6%
Sometimes	16	32%
Often	28	56%
Always	3	6%

Service

Participants were also asked six questions that focused on the school's goal of service.   The service questions focused on how students should help other students, how students can help others in the community, and students can help out in the classroom. The first question pertaining to service asked participants if "students work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean" (Table 7). This question asked about keeping four different areas clean, which may have impacted participants' responses. Overall, participants felt students do a good job with keeping the school area clean, the majority of responses falling between often and sometimes. One participant felt students always work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean. Seventeen participants said students often work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean. A little over half, twenty-seven participants, said they felt students sometimes work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean. Five participants said students rarely work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean.

Table 7

Responses to Question One Pertaining to Service

Students work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	5	10%
Sometimes	27	54%
Often	17	34%
Always	1	2%

The second question pertaining to service asked participants if "students share what they have with others" (Table 8). This question had positive results with most participants responding they feel students share with others at least sometimes or often. Three participants said they think students always share what they have with other students. A little over half of the participants, twenty-six participants, said they often see students share what they have with other students. Seventeen participants responded saying they see students sometimes share what they have with other students. Four participants said that they rarely see students share what they have with other students.

Table 8

Responses to Question Two Pertaining to Service

Students share what they have with others.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	4	8%
Sometimes	17	34%
Often	26	52%
Always	3	6%

Participants were asked if "teachers give students opportunities to work with students from other classes" (Table 9). This question had a larger range of answers with

every option having at least two or more responses. Three participants responded saying

teachers always give students opportunities to work with student from other classes.

About one-third, fifteen participants, said teachers often give students the opportunity to

work with students from other classes. Thirteen participants said teachers sometimes

give students the opportunity to work with students from other classes. One-third of the

participants, seventeen participants, also said teachers rarely give them opportunities to

work with students from other classes. Two participants said teachers never give students

the opportunity to work with students from other classes.

Table 9

Responses to Question Three Pertaining to Service

Teachers give student opportunities to work with students from other classes.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	2	4%
Rarely	17	34%
Sometimes	13	26%
Often	15	30%
Always	3	6%

The fourth question pertaining to service asked participants "when a student needs

help with a problem, another student will try to help them" (Table 10). This question

scored high with over 75 percent of participants responding with an always or an often.

Twelve participants, about one fourth of those surveyed, said students always help

students when they have a problem. Over half, twenty-seven participants, said that

students will often help students when they have a problem. Eleven students, about one-

forth of the participants said students sometimes help students when they have a problem.

Table 10

Responses to Question Four Pertaining to Service

When a student needs help with a problem, another student will try to help them.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Sometimes	11	22%
Often	27	54%
Always	12	24%

Participants were also asked if "students try to comfort other students who have experienced sadness" (Table 11). This question scored very high with the majority of participants feeling students try to comfort other students. Twelve participants said that students always try to comfort other students who have experienced sadness. Over half of the participants, twenty-seven participants, said students often try to comfort other students who have experienced sadness. Eleven participants said students sometimes try to comfort other students who have experienced sadness.

Table 11

Responses to Question Five Pertaining to Service

Students try to comfort other students who have experienced sadness.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Sometimes	11	22%
Often	27	54%
Always	12	24%

The last question pertaining to service asked participants if "teachers encouraged student to help others (e.g., peers, siblings, parents, grandparents, neighbors)" (Table 12). This question also scored very high with over ninety percent of the participants saying

teachers always or often encourage students to help others. Over sixty percent, thirty-two

participants, said teachers always encourage them to help others. Fourteen participants

said teachers often encourage them to help others. Four participants said that teachers

sometimes encourage them to help others.

Table 12

Responses to Question Six Pertaining to Service

Teachers encourage student to help others (e.g., peers, siblings, parents, grandparents, neighbors)		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Sometimes	4	8%
Often	14	28%
Always	32	64%

Worship

Participants were also asked four questions that focused on the school's goal of

worship.   The worship questions focused on students being given different opportunities

to worship God at school, being challenged to worship God in different ways, and being

given time to worship God. The first question asked participants if "theme chapels allow

students to worship God in a meaningful way" (Table 13). This question scored high

with the majority of the participants indicating chapels allow them to worship God in a

meaningful way.   Over half, twenty-eight participants, said that theme chapels always

allowed student to worship God in a meaningful way. Sixteen participants said that

theme chapels often let students worship God in a meaningful way. Six participants

responded saying theme chapels sometimes allow students to worship God in a

meaningful way.

Table 13

Responses to Question One Pertaining to Worship

Theme chapels allow students to worship God in a meaningful way.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Sometimes	6	12%
Often	16	32%
Always	28	56%

The second question pertaining to worship asked participants if "students are given opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, P.E., and at recess" (Table 14). This question had multiple areas to review, which may have affected some of the responses that were given. Overall, the majority of participants felt students were given opportunities to praise God. Over half, twenty-seven participants, said students always receive opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, P.E. and at recess. Fifteen participants said students often receive opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, P.E., and at recess. Seven participants said students sometimes receive opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, P.E., and at recess. Only one participant said students rarely receive opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, P.E., and at recess.

Table 14

Responses to Question Two Pertaining to Worship

Students are given opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, P.E., and at recess.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	1	2%
Sometimes	7	14%
Often	15	30%
Always	27	54%

Participants were also asked if "classroom devotions encouraged students to ask questions about their faith" (Table 15). This question had positive responses. Eleven participants said classroom devotions always encouraged students to ask questions about their faith. A little under half, twenty-two participants, said classroom devotions often encouraged students to ask questions about their faith. Seventeen participants, said classroom devotions sometimes encouraged students to ask questions about their faith.

Table 15

Responses to Question Three Pertaining to Worship

Classroom devotions encourage students to ask questions about their faith.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Sometimes	17	34%
Often	22	44%
Always	11	22%

The last question pertaining to worship asked participants if "students are given class time to study God's word and His creation" (Table 16). This question had a wider range of responses. Over half, twenty-seven participants, said that students always receive class time to study God's word and His creation. Fifteen of the participants said

students often receive class time to study God's word and His creation. Seven of the

participants said students sometimes receive class time to study God's word and His

creation. Only one participant said students rarely receive class time to study God's word

and His creation.

Table 16

Responses to Question Four Pertaining to Worship

Students are given class time to study God's word and His creation.		
Responses	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Never	0	0%
Rarely	1	2%
Sometimes	7	14%
Often	15	30%
Always	27	54%

Written Responses

The participants were also asked to write their responses to the question "What

are three things that you have learned or taken away from the different themes that we

have had at Sioux Center Christian?" The purpose of this question was to allow the

participants to personally write things about the character education program and allow

the researcher to see which of the three goals were more dominant in the responses. It

also allowed the researcher to see if there were repetitive comments or common themes

that came up more than once. The researcher coded the written responses into the three

themes that reflected the goals of Sioux Center Christian School's program: growth,

service, and worship.

The first and largest category was growth (Appendix C). Over half of the written

responses, seventy-eight responses, fell into the category of growth. One of the main

themes in the growth responses was linked to specific themes or character education

programs that have been part of the school. Many participants referred to specific yearly themes stating specific things they have learned. Some participants were able to give the overall goals of the different themes and say how they should apply them to their daily lives. An example of this was that with the theme "Got Fruit", participants were able to list the fruit of the spirit or were able to explain why they needed to apply them to their daily lives. One participant said "Fruit of the Spirit-- I have learned to always love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, to others" (Appendix C). Another theme that was prevalent in the responses was the theme "Among the Nations"; some participants talked about what it meant to be a disciple and the different attributes you needed to be a disciple of Christ. One participant said "Among the Nations: So far I've learned that being a disciple of God and being his child is also very important. Being accepting, compassionate, hospitable, and forgiving are all ways to show God's love to the world" (Appendix C).

Another reoccurring theme in the growth responses was responses dealing with knowing or understanding that God loves you. Twenty-five responses expressed God's love for them and how they should show God their love. Some examples that show the participants understanding of this concept included participants who stated "we can always be loved and accepted by God and our Christian community," "that God protects us from everything," and "I have learned that God is with you no matter what" (Appendix C). Many participants were also able to express that they understand that God loves them and made them unique and in his image. Some examples that show this included statements like "we are made in God's own image" and "God made everyone unique, even if they seem different" (Appendix C). Participants also commented on how to

honor God and be a servant. Some examples included statements like "I have learned to try and be a faithful servant through obedience and love" and "I have learned how to use what I have for God's glory" (Appendix C).

Another common theme with the responses in the growth category was how we treat others and show others God's love. Fifteen responses were reflections of these two ideas. Many participants talked about how they need to forgive others and be kind to others. Some examples included "treat people with respect' and "forgive people" (Appendix C). Many participants also commented on how they needed to accept other people like God accepts them. Some examples of responses that demonstrated this were "be accepting of others" and "I should be accepting and try to follow in God's footsteps" (Appendix C).

The growth written responses also included several responses that showed what it means to be a Christian and how to live a life of a Christian. Many of the participants' responses revealed that they understand that the life of a Christian is not easy. Some responses that revealed this idea were "we all have a purpose in the world and we are not perfect all because of sin" and "my values decide who I am and how I affect others around me" (Appendix C). Another example that shows the life is not always easy for a Christian, but God is always there was the comment "everything happens for a reason. God won't send you through a hardship just because he feels like it. He does it so that someday, it will make you a better person. Don't think there isn't a reason for anything in God's creation" (Appendix C).

The second category for the written responses to the question "What are three things that you have learn or taken away from the different themes that we have had at

Sioux Center Christian?" focused on the identified goal of service (Appendix D). This category received about thirty percent, or forty-four, of the written responses. The main themes with the written responses in this category focused on how to serve God and how to serve others. Some of the responses on how to serve God included statements like "go and make disciples of all nations" and "I have learned how to serve God better in my daily life" (Appendix D).

The majority of the responses focused on how to serve or help others. This category could be broken down into helping others spiritually and helping others physically. Participants gave positive responses on how to share Christ with others. Some examples the participants gave included "I should help others know about God" and "following God and sharing my beliefs with others is the way I need to live my life" (Appendix D).

Over half of the service written responses, twenty-six of the forty-four responses, talked about how to serve others. Participants gave different ways how to help others and how to be kind to other people. Some of the examples included "I also learned about how much of a difference it makes when you help others with their small problems" and "be compassionate to others" (Appendix D). Being kind to others and including others was another main theme in the service responses. Some examples of showing kindness included "showing kindness to others even when it's hard will always be the best option" and "we need to learn to involve and be kind to everybody whatever nationality they are or even if they're in our class we need to respect them" (Appendix D).

Another common theme in the written responses in the service category included themes of community. Many participants talked about how the character education

program brought unity and a common language to the school. Some of the responses that

talked about community included "how to unite the whole school" and "a common

language and direction that connects our student body, staff and parents" (Appendix D).

The last category for the written responses to the question "What are three things

that you have learn or taken away from the different themes that we have had at Sioux

Center Christian?" focused on the identified goal of worship (Appendix E). This

category was the smallest of the three categories and received about twenty percent, or

twenty-eight, of the written responses.   The main themes with the written responses in

this category focused on worshiping God during chapel and worshiping God everywhere

in our daily lives.

The majority of the responses, twenty of the twenty-eight responses, focused on

worshiping God through chapel time and other theme related activities. Participants were

very favorable about having the opportunity to worship God in a variety of ways during

school chapels. One participant talked about loving chapel and making worshiping God

fun, "I LOVE the change in our chapel time. It shows that serving God is exciting and

fun!" Another participant talked about their students understanding chapels and enjoying

them, "my students look forward to the new themes and to chapel. We talk about what

they saw/heard in chapel afterwards, and there is usually a good understanding"

(Appendix E).

The written worship responses also focused on participants worshiping God in

their daily lives. Participants talked about taking time to worship God and finding

different ways to worship him. One participant talked about prayer and finding their

talents through prayer in their comment "next I have learned how to pray throughout the

years, how to praise and NOTICE the many blessings, talents, and gifts" (Appendix E).

Another participant talked about always worshiping God and never stopping in their

comment "nothing is ever finished. You are never done reading God's word or helping

others. There is no checklist that you have to complete and be done" (Appendix E).

Discussion

Based on the research results, the Christian character education program that

Sioux Center Christian has established has met the goals of being an effective character

education program. For character education programs to become successful, schools

need to follow distinctive guidelines and stick to common goals and core values

(Benninga et al, 2006; Lickona et al, 2007). The results of the survey show a strong

support by the teachers, staff, and students also making the character education program

effective. Many of the responses talked about how Sioux Center Christian School's

Christian character education program created a community within the school and had

strong support from the participants (Appendix D; Appendix E).

Results from the research also indicated that the Sioux Center Christian School's

Christian character education program is also meeting the goal of an effective program by

impacting the lives of the students (Benninga et al, 2006; Lickona et al, 2007). The

results showed that the participants felt that students were taking the character concepts

that were being taught and applying them to their daily lives. Most multiple-choice

questions and written responses gave positive feedback on how students interact with

each other and how they should live their lives. This was very evident in the written

responses dealing with growth and service (Appendix C; Appendix D).

The results also indicated that the Sioux Center Christian School's Christian character education program also met the requirement of an effective character education program having distinct goals (Benninga et al, 2006; Lickona et al, 2007). The results showed evidence of three goals identified by growth, service, and worship (Appendix C; Appendix D; Appendix E).

The research also showed that the goals set up by the school to help fulfill its mission statement are also being met. The school set up goals to help students in three areas of their life: their spiritual growth, service to others, and meaningful worship. The research showed that these goals all had high marks and had positive feedback. The goal of growth had the largest number of written responses. Most of the responses reflected different themes or characteristics taken from the different Christian character education programs at the school.

The multiple-choice questions based off of the goal of growth also saw the widest ranges of answers with two questions receiving a ranking of "never" (Table 2; Table 3). These questions asked how students resolved conflict with each other and if students step in to stop conflict. This shows there is room for improvement for how students resolve conflict with each other.

The multiple-choice questions based off of the goal of service scored well showing Sioux Center Christian School's Christian character education program is meeting its goal of helping the students learn how to serve God and others. Most of the participants responded with positive answers towards how to help others and how to share Christ with others. The one question that scored lower was the question that dealt with teachers allowing students to work with other classes (Table 9). This question

shows there is room for improvement if the school wants to build a community among its students.

The written responses that reflected service (Appendix D) also came back positively showing evidence that Sioux Center Christian School's Christian character education program is encouraging students to serve God and others. This category was not as large as the category of growth, but still had many positive responses. Many responses talked about the importance of helping others in the classroom and outside of school. One thing that was missing in the responses was specific ways to help others.

The goal of worship was smallest of the three written responses categories (Appendix E). It received very positive responses showing Sioux Center Christian School's Christian character education program is meeting its goal of encouraging the students to worship God in everything that they do. Most of the responses reflected a meaningful worship experience during school chapels. Part of the school's goal was to help the worship God in every area of their life. This aspect was missing in the written responses. Participants did not express different ways to worship God outside of school.

The multiple-choice questions based on worship scored the highest out of all the multiple-choice questions. The responses show that the school is giving students different opportunities to worship God at school. The one thing the responses do not show is if the students are carrying the different ways to worship outside of the classroom.

After looking at the results of the research, there is evidence that goals that the program set up six years ago are being met and are having a positive impact on the students' lives. The program is also helping the school fulfill its mission "to develop in

each of God's children a knowledge and understand of Christ and his creation so that they can obediently serve God and others as they work and play" (About Sioux Center Christian School, n.d.).

The research has shown there is room for improvement in some of the goal areas. One area of improvement that the survey indicated is how the students resolve conflict with each other. This area scored lower than the rest and the research showed students don't always handle conflict in a non-violent manner. The Christian character education program should find ways to incorporate more problem solving skills in their program.

The research also indicated that students are not being given the opportunity to work with other students in the school as often as they would like. If a goal is to build community in the school, then the students need to be given opportunities to work with other students in the school. This would be an area that the Christian character education program could focus more attention on and find different ways to allow students to work together.

Another area that the research indicated needs attention is helping the students find different ways to take what they have learned about worship and to apply it to their lives outside of the classroom. Worship scored high on the survey, but there was no evidence in the written responses that showed that the students are finding different ways to worship God outside the classroom. This is another area that the Christian character education program can focus more attention to help the students worship God in every area of their life.

Limitations

As with any research, there are some of the limitations to this research study. For example, one limitation is that the participants were not able to express their reasons to the forced response questions. The questions allowed them to pick a response ranging from never to always, but did not allow them to express their opinion or express why they picked the answer that they did. Some of the multiple-choice questions also asked the participants to answer a question that had multiple parts or things to consider (Table 4; Table 7; Table 12; Table 14). Participants may have felt more favorable or less favorable towards one component to the question thus changing their response.

Another limitation to the written responses is the age and the developmental level of the participants. The ages of the student participants ranged from ten to fourteen. Some of the participants may not have truly understood the impact the Christian character education program had on their lives.

Another limitation to this research is the sample size. Only ten student participants were selected from each grade level, or twenty to thirty percent of each grade level. There were only ten teachers or administrators who participated in the survey, or about twenty percent of the teachers and administrators on staff. The results of the survey may not reflect the opinion of the all the students, administration, or teaching staff at the school, rather it reflects the opinions of the sample.

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Appendix A
Parental Consent Form

Dear Parents,

I am currently working on a master's degree at Dordt College. I am conducting research on Sioux Center Christian's school wide theme. I have created a survey that I would like to receive feedback from some of our students. I would appreciate your help by allowing your son or daughter to participate in my study.

Over the past six years our school has developed a character education program based off of biblical characteristics. We set up goals when we started the school wide theme program, and my research will help give feedback on how well we are still meeting our goals.

It is completely up to you and your child whether or not he or she can participate in this study. There will be no harm or risk to your child. The children will be responding to an online survey. All responses will remain anonymous because students will not give their names. I will ask classroom teachers to allow participating students to use class time to take the survey during their free periods. I am asking permission to publish data taken from your child's responses in my master's thesis.

If you have any questions about my study, please contact me at 722-0928 or email me at cvandam@siouxcenterchristian.com. I will be happy to share the results of my study with you when it is completed. If you and your child have decided to let him or her participate in this study, please read the statement below with your child and sign both of your names.

Thank you for your help!

Curt Van Dam

I understand the information on this page and I am willing to allow my child to participate in this study.
Please have your child return this form to Mr. Van Dam by Friday, January 24, 2014.

_____
Child's Signature

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

Appendix B
Survey questions

1. Students treat classmates with respect.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

2. Students work hard to keep the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and playground clean.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

3. Theme chapels allow students to worship God in a meaningful way.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

4. When students see another student being picked on, another student will try to stop it.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

5. Students share what they have with others.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

6. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

7. Students are given opportunities to praise God in the classroom, art class, music, p.e., and at recess.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

8. Teachers give students opportunities to work with students from other classes.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

9. Classroom devotions encourage students to ask questions about your faith.
   - o Never
   - o Rarely
   - o Sometimes
   - o Often
   - o Always

10. Students listen to each other in class discussions or class conversations.
    - o Never
    - o Rarely
    - o Sometimes
    - o Often
    - o Always

11. When a student needs help with a problem, another student will try to help them.
    - o Never
    - o Rarely
    - o Sometimes
    - o Often
    - o Always

12. Students try to comfort other students who have experienced sadness.
    - o Never
    - o Rarely
    - o Sometimes
    - o Often
    - o Always

13. Students include those who are different (e.g., belong to a different race, gender, or from a different culture.)
   o Never
   o Rarely
   o Sometimes
   o Often
   o Always

14. Students are given class time to study God's word and His creation.
   o Never
   o Rarely
   o Sometimes
   o Often
   o Always

15. Teachers encourage students to help others (e.g., peers, siblings, parents, grandparents, neighbors)
   o Never
   o Rarely
   o Sometimes
   o Often
   o Always

16. When students do something hurtful to another student, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize, help them up, or do something nice)
   o Never
   o Rarely
   o Sometimes
   o Often
   o Always

Write a response:
17. What are three things that you have learned or taken away from the different themes that we have had at Sioux Center Christian?

Thank you for taking the survey!

Appendix C

Comments Identified in the Written Responses Coded as Growth

Growth
- We are ordinary people, but we can do extraordinary things through God's power and grace.
- I also have learned about the different people and heroes in the bible and how they fully depended on God thanked, praised, glorified, and preached about him!
- Ordinary people extraordinary God- I learned that we are all ordinary but God sometimes calls us to do extraordinary things in his name
- That even though we are ordinary people, God is awesome.
- Ordinary People; Extraordinary God: I learned that even I, or any ordinary person can do great things for His world and His creation
- The CSI was good because it was discovering about God.
- The armor of God was good because it shows that all of those things can flow through us and God
- Put on the armor of God.
- To protect yourself form evil.(armor of God)
- In kindergarten I liked learning about the armor of God.
- That we should display the fruits of the spirit in our daily lives.
- Fruit of the Spirit-- I have learned to always love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, to others.
- We need to be all the fruits of the spirits.
- Got fruit- we learned that to flourish in spirit you need the fruit of the spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.)
- We've learned to display the Fruit of the Spirit more frequently.
- I have learned more about the fruit of the spirit in first grade.
- That we are to put the fruits of the spirit in everyday life.
- What the fruit of the spirit is.
- iFollow-- Taught me to always stay on God's path, and keep my focus on him.
- iFollow: I learned that we always need to follow God's path and that my relationship with him is THE most important thing to get me through life.
- In ifollow I learned a lot about people following God.
- Among the nations- I learned that disciples need to be many things before we go out in the world to worship him
- I have learned that there may be many other countries, but God can be with all of them.
- Disciples are bold.
- Among the Nations: So far I've learned that being a disciple of God and being his child is also very important. Being accepting, compassionate, hospitable, and forgiving are all ways to show God's love to the world.
- I like how our themes are always based on scripture or connected to a Bible story, so that children see how the foundation of their faith is God's Word.

- They have brought out things in a bible story that I had never thought about before.
- That we are loved for anything and everything that we do.
- That God loves us.
- God cares for us.
- We can always be loved and accepted by God and our Christian community.
- God will forgive you so you should forgive others.
- Trust in God in every aspect of life, for he will provide.
- That God protects us from everything.
- I have learned that God is with you no matter what.
- God is always with us.
- God will always protect and be with you.
- God is all powerful watches over us always.
- God is everywhere and watches us wherever we are.
- We've learned God is always with us and will strengthen us.
- We are made in God's own image.
- God made everyone unique, even if they seem different.
- God thinks we're all created in a unique in a way.
- That we everything is possible with our God.
- I can only do things with God's help.
- Growing in our relationship with Christ.
- We continue to learn that we as students can ask God anything.
- To serve God.
- By being a disciple.
- I have learned how to use what I have for God's glory.
- We should keep our faith with God.
- I have learned to try and be a faithful servant through obedience and love.
- Forgive people
- We need to be kind and helpful.
- Be compassionate
- They make me think of new ways how to be nice and encouraging.
- I need to show love, respect, and have a good attitude toward others, myself, and God.
- Honesty, fairness, and truth
- Always be honest and don't lie.
- Treat people with respect.
- I should be accepting and try to follow in God's footsteps.
- Another thing is that we need to respect others.
- Accept others
- One more thing is that we always need to think of others differences
- Not judging others
- Be accepting of others
- We need to respect other cultures.
- Read the bible.

- (Depends how much you know) and just learning more and more everyday!
- I need to be the best I can be.
- My values decide who I am and how I affect others around me.
- What it means to be a Christian in the world.
- We all have a purpose in the world and we are not perfect all because of sin.
- At SCCS we all have a purpose in life and it can be anything in the world if we want to we have freedom and we have kindness we have God!
- Everything happens for a reason. God won't send you through a hardship just because he feels like it. He does it so that someday, it will make you a better person. Don't think there isn't a reason for anything in God's creation.
- Friends are the best things you can have, next to God.
- The real message of Christmas.
- When I was younger I was afraid my teacher would be mad if I was late in line, into the classroom (etc.). But now I know they will never be mad at you for doing the right thing.

Appendix D

Comments Identified in the Written Responses Coded as Service

Service
- I have learned how to serve God better in my daily life.
- We're called to spread God's Word to others.
- Go and make disciples of all nations.
- Go and make disciples
- Life is better when I commit myself to serving God and every one else around me.
- And how to be a better disciple.
- My priorities should be God, others, then myself.
- Following God and sharing my beliefs with others is the way I need to live my life.
- To help others in their faith.
- I should help others know about God.
- To show others the love of Jesus.
- Good reminders to serve others.
- To serve one another in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.
- You're surrounded by friends who can help you with your problems about Faith.
- To help others in need.
- Showing kindness to others even when it's hard will always be the best option.
- Be compassionate to others
- Be kind to others, because others will be kind to you.
- To not pick on others.
- Include everyone.
- Treat other as you would treat yourself.
- I also learned about how much of a difference it makes when you help others with their small problems!
- That I should be nice to one another.
- That I should encourage others to do their best.
- We are always aloud to go out of our way to be nice.
- How to be nice to your friends and family
- I should also be respectful to my classmates such as listening to their opinions.
- Never be mean to someone even if they have been very hurtful to you before. Try to get along with others, even if they aren't trying to get along with you.
- Encourage and be kind.
- Try to help someone whoever it is even if you don't like them.
- How to encourage students throughout the year.
- God wants us to be kind to others.
- Be kind always.
- Focus on service to others.
- To help others in need.

- We need to learn to involve and be kind to everybody whatever nationality they are or even if they're in our class we need to respect them.
- Also the theme among the nation is really good because we get to talk about different cultures and that we should include everybody in everything that we do. (example Disciples are accepting and hospitable.)
- Among The Nations-- My school has taught me to be careful of what I feel about different race and always be nice to them!
- We've learned to respect other cultures.
- The different ways people help in different countries.
- How to build community.
- How to unite the whole school.
- It unites the school.
- A common language and direction that connects our student body, staff and parents.

Appendix E

Comments Identified in the Written Responses Coded as Worship

Worship
- The k-8 concert is a highlight for parents and grandparents.
- Students learn best from other students (drama troupe), but I do wonder if that is still being effective? It's hard to tell if students are catching on to the concepts when I don't see how it shows itself in the classroom.
- I have learned about many different cultures and their ways of worshiping and that we need to respect others cultures and religions.
- Also we can learn about God more in each chapel.
- I've learned that the songs fit each and every different theme.
- We have the groups that we can talk to.
- The skits so the littler kids came get it.
- We always pray in the beginning an the end and we sing
- The privilege to worship/celebrate God with students and staff.
- The time to get to know the younger students through theme devotions.
- My students look forward to the new themes and to chapel. We talk about what they saw/heard in chapel afterwards, and there is usually a good understanding.
- I appreciate the atmosphere of worship that has been created with music going in and out of the gym.
- I have enjoyed interacting with students at different ages.
- It is a pleasure to watch our older children work with the younger ones. I am so proud of how well they do.
- The older kids have opportunities to use talents with younger students in small groups.
- I LOVE the change in our chapel time. It shows that serving God is exciting and fun!
- The themes help us to fulfill the mission and vision of Sioux Center Christian in terms that are simple and meaningful.
- Themes have joined our school around a common purpose. But I often wonder if we should be incorporating or implementing it more? There are times that it gets forgotten until the next monthly chapel.
- They have brought out things in a bible story that I had never thought about before.
- You also have your entire school with you including teachers, students, staff, and others.
- Worshiping God with our gifts.
- Next I have learned how to pray throughout the years, how to praise and NOTICE the many blessings, talents, and gifts.
- I have learned to pray and thank God for these things, I learned this through years of school and teachers, chapel, and God who gives me these gifts.
- You will never be foolish for praising God, be bold, be strong, be courageous, be a leader.

- They make me think about different ways that I can worship GOD. It makes me think about ways that I can get closer to GOD that I have never thought of before
- Application for everyday life, especially for students who watch chapel presenters role play a variety of situations that students can relate to.
- Nothing is ever finished. You are never done reading God's word or helping others. There is no checklist that you have to complete and be done.
- We have to worship him in everything

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