

ABSTRACT

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A study of the implementation of character education, learning environment, and school performance scores in selected parishes in Louisiana
(Major Professor: Cathy Stockton)

The purpose of this study was to investigate two sets of relationships: the relationship between character education and learning environment, and the relationship between character education and School Performance Scores in 17 elementary schools located in five public school districts in northeast Louisiana. Principal and teacher (K-6) respondents completed a 15-item questionnaire designed to measure their perceptions of the level of implementation of character education in the school setting and a 15-item questionnaire assessing perception of the learning environment. Data from surveys completed by school personnel were gathered to allow analyses by school, grade level taught, number of years experience, number of years at present school, certification status, highest degree completed, gender, and ethnicity. Students in grades 4-6 completed a 14-item survey assessing their perceptions of the learning environment in the school. Data were gathered to allow analyses by school, grade level, age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Archival data consisted of School Performance Scores for each participating school for the past three years (2000, 2001, and 2002). A total of 1,039 respondents (8 principals, 100 teachers, and 931 students) participated in this study. Internet access was required for participation in this study, and survey instruments were distributed on the Internet via www.surveymonkey.com.

The researcher used a correlational design to determine if there were relationships among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the relationships among the three variables. Independent samples t-tests were calculated to determine statistical differences between demographic data gathered on respondents and the independent variables, level of implementation of character education and learning environment.

There was no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment, and there was no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores. A significant relationship was found between students' perception of learning environment and School Performance scores at the $p < .037$ level as measured by the Pearson correlation coefficient. Data revealed a positive correlation between students' perception of learning environment and School Performance Scores.