

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT / CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMMING AS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN OPTION AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO PERFORMANCE ON STATE STANDARDIZED TESTS AND REDUCED INCIDENCE OF NEGATIVE STUDENT BEHAVIORS

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The primary purpose of this study was to find existence of a relationship between the implementation of a Character Development / Citizenship program when used as part of the Indiana School Improvement Plan requirements and increased academic achievement as measured by several generally accepted data points provided from ISTEP+ tests. More specifically, the ISTEP+ scores of third grade test takers enrolled at those schools which were identified by the Indiana Department of Education website as having committed to a Character Development / Citizenship program in part to fulfill their School Improvement Plan requirements were compared to those of all other 3rd grade ISTEP+ participants in the state. In order to find evidence of academic growth, for the following year, 4th graders of experimental group schools were again compared to all other Indiana 4th graders who registered an ISTEP+ score. In order to make comparisons and conclusions, the data labeled Median Scale Score, Total Percent Passing and Cut Scores were used.

In addition to strictly academic data retrieved from the Indiana Department of Education databases, building level administrators of those participating Character Development / Citizenship program schools were asked to complete a survey addressing incidence of negative student behavior for the year of program implementation as compared to previous years. Further questions were posed in order to assess the building level administrator's expectations and realizations in regard to improvements shown after the implementation of the programming. Levels of program rigor and fidelity were addressed by asking administrators to indicate the length, frequency and duration of the programs they chose to implement.

While the academic improvement data were mixed in result and generally inconclusive, many individual data points showed improvement in academic achievement for the given comparison category. In addition, building level administrators reported improvements in Academics / Test Scores and Behavior / Discipline after the implementation of a Character Development / Citizenship program at their school. Limitations are discussed and recommendations for further study are included.