

We R 3C™ Program Effectiveness

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Executive Summary

As educators, lawmakers, and community members work to improve school safety and the educational climate, character education has become increasingly important as a preemptive intervention tool. Research has shown that character education can increase prosocial behaviors and decrease anti-social ones, which leads to youth having improved social skills, academic achievement, mental health, and self-image.¹ Effective character education programs:

- Are based upon sound learning and moral development theories and methodologies.
- Use internal intrinsic motivation as the driver for behavior choices.
- Help students value themselves, others, and their communities.
- Focus on relationships.
- Provide guidance for implementation.

The We R 3C™ Program addresses each of these components. Educators have also reported that, after implementing the We R 3C™ Program, they observed significant improvement in the ways in which students value others; express compassion, empathy, appreciation, and admiration; and relate to each other. However, additional study is required to document how, and the extent to which, the We R 3C™ Program affects character development and behavioral change. As an initial first step to measuring program effectiveness, a survey of participants was conducted to find out if they learned anything new through participation in the We R 3C™ Program.

The sample population consisted of 113 students from three different schools that had completed Theme 1 of the We R 3C™ Program. The students included 35 fifth graders from Elba Elementary School (Elba, NY); 20 fifth and sixth graders from Quest Elementary School (Hilton, NY); and 58 fifth through eighth graders from St. Joseph School (Batavia, NY). The schools had been using other character education programs prior to selecting the We R 3C™ Program.

Overall, a majority (88%) of students reported that they learned something new, and almost all of the students gained knowledge in the areas of how to truly get to know others (99%), how to see value in others (96%), and how to show others that they have value (95%). Since these students had participated in character education programs prior to completing Theme 1 of the We R 3C™ Program, the results suggest that the We R 3C™ Program presents universal character education-related concepts in a way that is more effective than previously implemented programs and/or covers a broader range of character education-related concepts than previously implemented programs.

In regards to the concepts and skills covered by the survey, students most often reported learning new skills. The greatest number of students reported learning skills for engaging in relationships (e.g., getting to know others, showing others they have value, asking questions to learn more about others).

¹ Sklad, M., Diekstra, R., DeRitter, M., Ben, J., & Gravesteijn, C. (2012, November). *Effectiveness of school-based universal social, emotional, and behavioral programs: Do they enhance students' development in the area of skill, behavior, and adjustment?* *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(9), 892-909. (EJ990237)

The least number of students reported learning about the concepts of appreciation, admiration, indifference, classroom community, and love. Therefore, it is likely that the students had some knowledge of character education-related concepts prior to participating in the We R 3C™ Program, but did not know how to use that knowledge for making behavioral choices. The results indicate that the We R 3C™ Program helped the students learn how to apply the concepts to their daily lives.

While additional research will clarify the We R 3C™ Program's impact, multiple data points indicate that it is an effective character education program that fosters positive youth development. The program is based upon widely accepted theories and methodologies, those implementing the program have reported it positively impacts participants, and the participants themselves have indicated learning new knowledge and skills through program participation. The preliminary research findings show that the We R 3C™ Program excels in moving participants from knowledge and understanding to application. Research that identifies the components of the program that bring about this transition would enhance understanding of character education best practices. By furthering what is known about effective character education programs, schools and other youth-related organizations can select the programs that are the most likely to positively impact our nation's youth and communities.

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Introduction

Although National Center for Education Statistics research has shown that our nation's schools are safer today² than they were when school violence peaked in 1993,³ bullying incidents and school tragedies continue to make headlines. At least 10 percent of children are bullied regularly, and close to half of all children will experience school bullying during primary or secondary school.⁴ As educators, lawmakers, and community members work to improve school safety and the educational climate, character education has become increasingly important as a preemptive intervention tool.

Research has shown that educators can influence students' prosocial and empathic behaviors through deliberate encouragement and creation of a positive, interactive social environment.⁵ Numerous studies have linked effective character education programs with positive youth development. Character education can increase prosocial behaviors and decrease anti-social ones, which leads to youth having improved social skills, academic achievement, mental health, and self-image.⁶

Given the positive, lasting outcomes that can be achieved through character education, lawmakers are emphasizing its importance in the school academic program. Several states now require schools to include character education within the curriculum. For example, on July 1, 2012, New York State implemented The Dignity for All Students Act (Chapter 482 Laws of 2010).⁷ This law requires schools to use a systematic approach to ensuring that all students are free from discrimination and harassment; including bullying, taunting, or intimidation; through use of effective school policies and character education programs. Schools in New York State are not only encouraged, but required, to utilize character education to improve school safety and the learning environment.

A variety of character education programs are available to schools; however, not all are research-based and founded upon sound educational learning theories and methodology. The We R 3C™ Program was developed by educators for educators to ensure a sequential, holistic approach to building students' personal relationships and prosocial behaviors. The program's well-defined themes provide a step-by-step process by which students build character, gain interpersonal skills, and resist antisocial behaviors (e.g., bullying). This process-based, sequential learning environment mirrors strategies used in effective academic curricula to stimulate noncognitive skill development. The program's four themes of respect,

² In 2010, when data was last collected.

³ Neuman, S. (2012, March 16). *Violence in schools: How big a problem is it?* Retrieved March 18, 2013, from <http://www.npr.org/2012/03/16/148758783/violence-in-schools-how-big-a-problem-is-it>

⁴ American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2011, March). *Bullying*. Retrieved from http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/bullying

⁵ Spivak, A. L., & Farran, D. C. (2012). *First-grade teacher behaviors and children's prosocial actions in classrooms*. *Early Education and Development*, 23(5), 623-639. (EJ978324)

⁶ Sklad, M., Diekstra, R., DeRitter, M., Ben, J., & Gravesteyn, C. (2012, November). *Effectiveness of school-based universal social, emotional, and behavioral programs: Do they enhance students' development in the area of skill, behavior, and adjustment?* *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(9), 892-909. (EJ990237)

⁷ New York State Education Department. (n.d.). *The Dignity Act*. Retrieved March 18, 2013, from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>

conflict resolution, self-respect, and bullying are designed to help youth become respectful, kind, compassionate, and community-focused. During the program, youth are taught how to value others and themselves, show love and avoid indifference, forgive others, and heal broken relationships.

Educators who have used the We R 3C™ Program have reported significant changes in the ways in which their students look at the world, treat each other, and behave in the classroom. Learning how to build, keep, and fix social relationships helps students relate better with their peers, families, and communities, which in turn improves the school culture and learning environment. As students become more prosocial, they become better learners.⁸ Educators searching for ways to help their students achieve in life and in the classroom often select the We R 3C™ Program to reach both goals.

Literature Review and Observations

The We R 3C™ Program is founded upon sound youth development and learning theories. The program uses Piaget's model for cognitive development in youth (see Chart 1) and Kohlberg's subsequent research on moral development (see Chart 2) to select youth-appropriate methods for building character and prosocial behaviors. Piaget showed that young children think differently than adults, they are born with a basic mental structure on which all subsequent learning and knowledge is based.⁹ As youth age, they become less egocentric and begin to see the world from perspectives other than their own. This is significant as many character education programs for older youth tend to use rewards (i.e., egocentric-based motivation) to drive behavioral change, which is ineffective given the characteristics of cognitive development for youth ages seven and above. The We R 3C™ Program recognizes that beyond age seven, youth require internal (i.e., intrinsic) motivators for real, lasting change.

Kohlberg used Piaget's research work as a foundation for his study of moral development.¹⁰ Kohlberg proposed six stages of moral development through which youth progress based upon their own thinking about moral problems.¹¹ He argued that social experiences promote development by stimulating youth's mental processes. As youth discuss and debate with others, they find their views questioned and challenged and are therefore motivated to find new, more comprehensive positions.¹² When discussing problems and working out their differences, youth develop conceptions of what is fair and just, and learn how viewpoints differ and how to incorporate them in cooperative activities.¹³

Kohlberg's work shows that youth behaviors can become more prosocial through character education that focuses on relationships and social interaction. Youth learn through experiencing relationships with others. The We R 3C™ Program recognizes this vital component to youth moral development and incorporates it throughout the curriculum. During the We R 3C™ Program, youth build their capacity for engaging in positive relationships and are given the tools and skills to initiate, maintain, and heal them. Interactive exercises, modeling, and experiential learning are combined to help youth practice and establish real relationships in their classrooms, school systems, and communities.

⁸ Rosen, J. A., Glennie, E., J., Dalton, B. W., Lennon, J. M., & Bozick, R. N. (2010, September). *Noncognitive skills in the classroom: New perspectives on educational research*. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International. (ED512833). Retrieved from <http://www.rti.org/pubs/bk-0004-1009-rosen.pdf>

⁹ McLeod, S. A. (2009, updated 2012). *Jean Piaget*. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html>

¹⁰ Crain, W.C., (1985). Kohlberg's stages of moral development. In *Theories of development* (pp. 118-136). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Retrieved from <http://faculty.plts.edu/gpence/html/kohlberg.htm>

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

Chart 1: Piaget’s Cognitive Stages of Development

Cognitive Stage of Development	Features
Sensorimotor (0-2 years)	Characterized by extreme egocentrism : children have no understanding of the world other than their own. Children gain an understanding that objects exist and events occur in the world independently of their own actions. ¹⁴
Preoperational (2-7 years)	Characterized by egocentrism : children cannot see a situation from another person’s point of view, they assume other people see, hear, and feel exactly as they do. Children can mentally represent events and objects (the semiotic function), and engage in symbolic play. Their thoughts and communications are typically egocentric (i.e., about themselves). ¹⁵
Concrete Operational (7-11 years)	Characterized by conservation : youth understand that although the appearance of something changes, the thing itself does not. Youth can now use logical thought or operations (i.e., rules), but can only apply logic to physical objects. They also become less egocentric. ¹⁶
Formal Operational (11+ years)	Characterized by abstract reasoning : youth begin to manipulate ideas in their head without any dependence on concrete manipulation. They can do mathematical calculations, think creatively, use abstract reasoning, and imagine the outcome of particular actions. ¹⁷

Chart 2: Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development¹⁸

Level I. Preconventional Morality: Youth think in the egocentric terms of rewards and punishment.	
Stage 1. Obedience and Punishment Orientation	Youth think what is right is what authority says is right. Doing the right thing is obeying authority and avoiding punishment.
Stage 2. Individualism and Exchange	Youth are no longer very impressed by authority; they see that an issue has different sides. Since everything is relative, they feel free to pursue their own interests, although they see the value in making deals and exchanging favors with others.
Level II. Conventional Morality: Youth think as members of the conventional society with its values, norms, and expectations.	
Stage 3. Good Interpersonal Relationships	Youth emphasize being a good person, which to them, means having helpful motives toward people they value.
Stage 4. Maintaining the Social Order	Youth shift from a concern with obeying laws to maintaining society as a whole.
Level III. Postconventional Morality: Youth are less concerned with maintaining society for its own sake and more concerned with the principles and values that make for a good society.	
Stage 5. Social Contract and Individual Rights	Youth emphasize basic rights and the democratic processes that give everyone a say.
Stage 6: Universal Principles	Youth define the principles by which agreement will be most just.

¹⁴ McLeod, S. A. (2010). *Sensorimotor stage*. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/sensorimotor.html>

¹⁵ McLeod, S. A. (2010). *Preoperational stage*. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/preoperational.html>

¹⁶ McLeod, S. A. (2010). *Concrete operational stage*. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/concrete-operational.html>

¹⁷ McLeod, S. A. (2010). *Formal operational stage*. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/formal-operational.html>

¹⁸ Crain, W.C., (1985). Kohlberg’s stages of moral development. In *Theories of development* (pp. 118-136). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Retrieved from <http://faculty.plts.edu/gpence/html/kohlberg.htm>

Both Piaget and Kohlberg show that youth progress from using external forms of motivation to guide behavioral choices to those that are more internal in nature. While research on motivation has generated a variety of theories about motivation and how it impacts human behavior, recent efforts by Ryan and Deci¹⁹ have led to the well-accepted Self-Determination Theory (see Chart 3). According to Gagne and Deci, Self-Determination Theory suggests autonomous (e.g., intrinsic) and controlled (e.g., extrinsic) motivations differ in their underlying regulatory processes and that behaviors can be characterized in terms of the degree to which they are autonomous versus controlled.²⁰ Autonomous motivation and controlled motivation are both intentional and contrast with amotivation, which involves a lack of intention and motivation.²¹

Chart 3: Self-Determination Continuum²²

Behavior	Nonsel-Determined transitions to become more					Self-Determined
Motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
Regulatory Styles	Non-Regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation
Perceived Locus of Causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat External	Somewhat Internal	Internal	Internal
Relevant Regulatory Processes	Nonintentional, Nonvaluing, Incompetence, Lack of control.	Compliance, External rewards and punishments.	Self-control, Ego-involvement, Internal rewards and punishments.	Personal importance, Conscious valuing.	Congruence, Awareness, Synthesis with self.	Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent satisfaction.

Viewing motivation in terms of the Self-Determination Theory shows that educators who seek to implement character education programs that yield lasting change, must select programs that focus on building intrinsic motivation in youth. Once motivation becomes intrinsic, youth exhibit prosocial behaviors regardless of whether or not they will receive rewards or punishment. The We R 3C™ Program motivates youth by helping them move from internal extrinsic motivation to internal intrinsic motivation. As youth become more intrinsically motivated, they become more autonomous and exhibit self-determined behaviors that stem from their values, morals, and character. The We R 3C™ Program begins with regulatory processes such as fostering conscious valuing and awareness building (internal extrinsic motivation) and migrates to those that promote interest, enjoyment, and inherent satisfaction (internal intrinsic motivation) in building positive relationships and helping others.

Further support for the We R 3C™ Program encouraging prosocial behaviors in youth through building personal relationships and using internal motivators based upon sound values, morals, and character is found in the recent body of literature regarding solidarity and prosocial behavior. The way in which

¹⁹ Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000, January). *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being*. *American Psychologist: Positive Psychology*, 55(1), 68-78.

²⁰ Gagne, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). *Self-determination and work motivation*. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26, 331-362.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000, January). *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being*. *American Psychologist: Positive Psychology*, 55(1), 68-78.

youth define a situation significantly influences their behavioral choices.²³ Defining a situation (i.e., the motivational-cognitive process) serves three functions, it: 1) structures and organizes youth's subjective perception of the situation, 2) links their selective perception to motivation (e.g., goal), and 3) is linked with their mental "model" of the social relationships they have with those involved in the situation.²⁴ Given this process, youth's personal relationships are critical components to exhibiting prosocial behavior. Character education programs that assist youth with fostering positive personal relationships are much more likely to yield prosocial behaviors than those that fail to address or downplay the value of, and skills related to, relationships.

The way in which youth frame a situation (i.e., view it from their underlying goal or motivation) also impacts the exhibition of prosocial behavior.²⁵ Youth can frame a situation and choose to act prosocially from motivation that is considered normative (my behavior is appropriate), gain (my behavior benefits me), or hedonic (my behavior makes me feel good).²⁶ While any of these goals can lead to prosocial behavior, the normative perspective is the most likely to generate prosocial behavior without requiring rewards or strong friendships.²⁷ When youth act from a normative perspective, they choose to behave prosocially because it is intrinsically the right thing to do; even when no one is watching.²⁸

A normative goal prevails when relationships and social norms are well-defined and there is the existence of common interest, a widely shared consensus about the importance of acting appropriately, and clear social sanctions.²⁹ The We R 3C™ Program incorporates these concepts to promote framing from a normative perspective so that youth choose prosocial behaviors from internal motivation that is present even when external motivators (like prizes, treats, accolades, etc.) are not.

Research has shown that there is a direct, positive link between youth values and intrinsic motivation.³⁰ For instance, the more youth value positive personal relationships, the more likely they are to be motivated to initiate and maintain those relationships. This prompts youth to choose behaviors (in this case, being good friends) that help them achieve their goal. Therefore, helping youth value themselves, others, and their communities is an effective method for building their intrinsic motivation to act prosocially.

Youth motivation is responsive to intentional efforts to increase it.³¹ Educators can influence students' motivation to behave prosocially through deliberate encouragement and creation of a positive,

²³ Lindenberg, S., Fetchenhauer, D., Flache, A., & Buunk, A. P. (2006). Solidarity and prosocial behavior: A framing approach. In D. Fetchenhauer, A. Flache, A. P. Buunk, & S. Lindenberg (Eds.), *Solidarity and prosocial behavior: An integration of sociological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 3-19). New York, NY: Springer.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Lindenberg, S. (2006). Prosocial behavior, solidarity, and framing processes. In D. Fetchenhauer, A. Flache, A. P. Buunk, & S. Lindenberg (Eds.), *Solidarity and prosocial behavior: An integration of sociological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 23-44). New York, NY: Springer.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Rosen, J. A., Glennie, E., J., Dalton, B. W., Lennon, J. M., & Bozick, R. N. (2010, September). *Noncognitive skills in the classroom: New perspectives on educational research*. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International. (ED512833). Retrieved from <http://www.rti.org/pubs/bk-0004-1009-rosen.pdf>

³¹ *Ibid.*

interactive social environment.³² Educators who conduct exercises that target students' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs can also lead to positive motivational change.³³ Additionally, it has been found that when youth are challenged to make a positive impact, they are more motivated to do so and respond with improved respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness, and compassion.³⁴

The We R 3C™ Program provides educators with a comprehensive guide for implementing each lesson in a way that promotes positive development of values, morals, and character that leads to intrinsic motivation. Educators without training in youth psychology or sociology can effectively implement the program without extensive training or research of best practices. This ensures that every classroom can benefit from use of the We R 3C™ Program and that a uniform, district-wide implementation can be achieved. Programs that omit best practice-based guidance for educators risk their programs being ineffectively implemented resulting in no change in youth prosocial behaviors.

In summary, a review of the literature has identified several components to effective character education programs. **Effective character education programs:**

- **Are based upon sound learning and moral development theories and methodologies.** They recognize the ways in which youth internalize new knowledge and develop in response to that new knowledge.
- **Use internal intrinsic motivation as the driver for behavior choices.** These programs understand that the only way in which to promote real, long-lasting behavioral change in youth is by fostering internal intrinsic motivation.
- **Help students value themselves, others, and their communities.** They see the connection between values and motivation and know that when youth value something, they are motivated to act prosocially toward it.
- **Focus on relationships.** They recognize that relationships are a significant factor in youth's decisions to act prosocially.
- **Provide guidance for implementation.** These programs understand that the learning environment matters and assist educators with using best practices for developing values, morals, and character in youth.

As the We R 3C™ Program addresses each of these components, there is substantial evidence to suggest that it is an effective character education program. Preliminary qualitative data informally collected from educators implementing the We R 3C™ Program provides further support for program effectiveness. Educators have reported that after implementing the We R 3C™ Program, they observed significant improvement in the ways in which students value others; express compassion, empathy, appreciation, and admiration; and relate to each other. This improvement is illustrated in the following examples.

³² Spivak, A. L., & Farran, D. C. (2012). *First-grade teacher behaviors and children's prosocial actions in classrooms*. *Early Education and Development*, 23(5), 623-639. (EJ978324)

³³ Yeager, D. S., & Walton, G. M. (2011, June). *Social-psychological interventions in education: They're not magic*. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 267-301. (EJ923888)

³⁴ Gaines, S. A. (2012, November-December). *Developing individual and team character in sport*. *Strategies: A Journal for Physical and Sport Educators*, 25(8), 30-32. (EJ987286)

Example 1: In a fifth grade classroom, a boy was bullying his classmates with inappropriate behaviors and language. By using the We R 3C™ Program concepts, students were able to fix the situation so that within two weeks the bullying stopped. The students:

- **Identified why the boy was acting like a bully.** They listed what they knew about the boy and decided that he probably felt sad because his parents worked a lot, so he did not see them often, and since his parents were gone a lot, he probably did not get to play his favorite sport, baseball.
- **Developed and felt compassion and empathy for the boy.** They listed how the boy might be feeling and felt empathy for him. As one girl stated, “I feel so sad for him.”
- **Forgave the boy for his behavior.** The students let go of their negative feelings toward him and any need for revenge.
- **Developed a plan to reach out and show the boy he was valued.** They used the methods, skills, and tools learned through the We R 3C™ Program to list ways they could help the boy feel valued.
- **Implemented the plan.** Each student contributed to helping the boy feel valued. For instance, during PE class, one of the students said that when the boy was up to bat he yelled, “He’s a really good hitter, be careful!”
- **Healed the relationship.** The boy began to feel valued and wanted by his community. The relationship between him and his classmates healed and within two weeks the bullying behaviors stopped.

Example 2: A high school art teacher was having trouble with a student who would not clean up his station after art class. She routinely told him that he needed to be responsible for his space and clean it. She also told him that she was not happy about his leaving the mess for her to clean up. After repeated attempts, the teacher used the We R 3C™ Program approach. She took the student into the hallway and said to him, “You know, it makes me feel very devalued by you when you leave your workstation a mess and then I’m stuck with cleaning it up. It makes me feel like you don’t care about me.” The student said, “Mrs. _____! I like you a lot! I’m sorry that it made you feel that way! You’re one of my favorite teachers!” Then he gave her a hug. From that point forward, he cleaned his workstation before he left class. By helping the student understand how his behavior was showing devaluing and hurting his teacher, he was able to change it to show that he valued her.

Example 3: In an eighth grade classroom, students learned how to make someone feel valued and “special”. Their classroom had just started the We R 3C™ Program and was implementing the activity from Theme 1, Lesson 1: Love and Indifference. They were grouped in pairs and, based on their partner’s hobby, were asked to tell their partner that they either appreciated or admired what he/she could do. Prior to this activity, students had learned:

- Love means something has enormous value to someone.
- Indifference is love’s opposite. It means something has no value to you.
- Appreciation shows that you value people because what they love to do is special to them.
- Admiration shows appreciation and esteem for the individual or accomplishment.

After the conversations, the students shared the results of their interactions. For one pair, a student told his partner that he admired her for her ability to play the piano. She smiled and said that made her feel “special.” The theme leader then said that special was the opposite of indifference, and noted that it had only taken 10 seconds to help another feel that way. By gaining competence in using this skill,

students were able to practice showing others they had value, which is an important component to building, maintaining, and healing relationships.

Reviewing the literature and gathering observations from those implementing the We R 3C™ Program provides an initial indication of program effectiveness. However, additional study is required to document how, and the extent to which, the We R 3C™ Program affects character development and behavioral change. In the next section of this paper, the results of a preliminary research study will be discussed to broaden understanding of We R 3C™ Program effectiveness.

Preliminary Research Study

The We R 3C™ Program is a process-based, sequential, holistic approach for teaching the skills associated with character education and prosocial behavior. It is designed for participants nine years of age and up and can be integrated into a variety of educational settings. For example, the program can be implemented as a school or classroom curriculum, youth group character development program, or faith-based community development course of study.

The We R 3C™ Program is comprised of four themes: 1) The Meaning of Respect, 2) Fixing a Problem, 3) The Meaning of Self-Respect, and 4) Bullying. There are two lessons for each theme, and each lesson includes a series of learning blocks (i.e., concepts to be learned by the participants). Theme leaders are provided with an in-depth guide that instructs them on how to introduce each theme, teach each lesson, and address each learning block. Multi-media presentations, experiential learning activities, handouts, worksheets, etc. are provided with the program to assist theme leaders with implementation and ensure participant learning in both the cognitive and affective domains.

Implementation of the We R 3C™ Program consists of theme leaders reviewing the Theme Leader's Guide to familiarize themselves with the instructional materials provided for the program. Once this review has been completed, the theme leader incorporates the learning activities into their schedules, preparing the learning environments, and then carrying out each lesson as outlined and assisted by the guide. The Theme Leader's Guide includes an in-depth explanation of this process (i.e., the process model) along with a complete process-model diagram and in-depth explanation (see Appendix B).

The process model consists of six components: preparation; explanation, depiction, and introduction; demonstration and modeling; guided practice; independent practice; and application. The theme leader and participants pause and reflect after each component, review together, and decide if they are ready to proceed to the next component of the model. The program materials provide process points for each theme to facilitate assessment of participants' understanding throughout the learning process. Reinforcement activities and engagement exercises included within the program also help theme leaders gauge the level of participants' comprehension. Successful progression through the model requires truthful evaluation of learning so participants move confidently toward self-review and independent application.

Theme leaders start with Theme 1 and progress sequentially through Theme 4. The pace at which each theme is covered is at the discretion of the theme leader. Upon completion of the first four themes, an additional fifth theme is available. This theme focuses on applying what participants have learned in Themes 1-4 to a real life, real-time community setting. While serving as a capstone to the program, Theme 5 also allows participants to work within the highest domains of learning by having them synthesize their knowledge for application to a given community and goal, and then evaluate the results of their efforts.

Currently, the We R 3C™ Program evaluation component is being expanded to formally measure the amount of learning and behavioral change that takes place through implementation of the program. Program developers are designing valid and reliable evaluation tools that provide theme leaders and administrators with the information needed to guide future programmatic decisions. As an initial first step to measuring program effectiveness, a survey of participants was conducted to find out if they learned anything new through participation in the We R 3C™ Program.

The sample population consisted of 113 students from three different schools that were implementing the We R 3C™ Program. The students included 35 fifth graders from Elba Elementary School; 20 fifth and sixth graders from Quest Elementary School; and 18 fifth, 8 sixth, 11 seventh, 7 eighth, and 14 fifth-eighth graders (grade not noted on survey) from St. Joseph School. The schools had been using other character education programs prior to selecting the We R 3C™ Program. Therefore, the students had been exposed to character education-related concepts before participating in the We R 3C™ Program.

Elba Elementary School is located within the Elba Central School District in Elba, NY (Genesee County). The school serves 244 students in preschool through grade six with an average class size of 16 students.³⁵ Within the K-6 student body, 43% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 15% are considered limited English proficient, and 87% of the students in grade six were enrolled in the previous school year (i.e., school stability).³⁶ The majority of the racial/ethnic composition of the school is 76% white, 21% Hispanic or Latino, and 1% black.³⁷ Elba, NY, has a population of 676 individuals with a median household income of \$67,596.³⁸

Quest Elementary School is located within the Hilton Central School District in Hilton, NY (Monroe County). The school is a school of choice, requiring an application for admittance, and offers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme.³⁹ It serves 441 students in preschool through grade six with an average class size of 21 students.⁴⁰ Within the K-6 student body, 25% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 0% is considered limited English proficient, and 100% of the students in grade six were enrolled in the previous school year (i.e., school stability).⁴¹ The majority of the racial/ethnic composition of the school is 89% white, 5% Hispanic or Latino, 2% black, and 1% Asian or Pacific Islander.⁴² The school serves students from the towns of Parma, Greece, Clarkson, and Hamlin,

³⁵ New York State Education Department. (n.d.). *New York State School Report Card: Accountability and Overview Report 2010-2011: Elba Elementary School*. Retrieved March 25, 2013, from <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/files/2010-11/AOR-2011-180901040001.pdf>

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *2010 Demographic Profile*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

³⁹ Hilton Central School District. (n.d.). *Quest Elementary School Application Process*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from <http://www.hilton.k12.ny.us/info/IB-PYP.htm>

⁴⁰ New York State Education Department. (n.d.). *New York State School Report Card: Accountability and Overview Report 2010-2011: Quest Elementary School*. Retrieved March 25, 2013, from <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/files/2010-11/AOR-2011-261101060002.pdf>

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

and the village of Hilton,⁴³ which have populations of 5,886 to 96,095 individuals with median household incomes of \$55,049 to \$66,243.⁴⁴

St. Joseph School is a private, Roman Catholic school in Batavia, NY (Genesee County). The school serves about 300 students from 3-year-old preschool through eighth grades and the average class size is 20 students.⁴⁵ The student body includes students from 11 different school districts in Genesee County.⁴⁶ The county is a mix of urban (40%) and rural (60%) communities⁴⁷ that has a racial composition of 93.4% white, 3.0% black, 2.9% Hispanic or Latino, 1.7% multiracial, 1.1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.7% Asian.⁴⁸ The county has a population density of 122 people per square mile and a median household income of \$50,861.⁴⁹

The survey consisted of a Likert-like scale to measure specific attitudes concerning the new information students learned as a result of participating in the We R 3C™ Program. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A. The survey consisted of 14 questions that students answered based upon a 3-point scale of one (I did not learn anything new), two (I learned a few new things), and three (I learned a lot of new things). The questions pertained to Theme 1, The Meaning of Respect, and asked students how much they learned about concepts and skills related to community, values, respect, and love and indifference. When completing the survey, students were encouraged to respond honestly. They were told there were no right or wrong answers.

At the time surveys were conducted, the participants had completed Theme 1 of the We R 3C™ Program. The surveys were conducted October 17, 2011, at St. Joseph School; December 16, 2011, at Quest Elementary School; and January 17, 2012, at Elba Elementary School. Once the surveys were collected, the results were analyzed in terms of the percentage of the total survey sample.

Results

On average, 88% of the sample population indicated that they acquired knowledge in all surveyed concepts. When combining the students' responses for "I learned a few new things" and "I learned a lot of new things", the responses ranged from 77% to 99%. The results showed 90% or more of all surveyed students learned about their school as a community (Q1), how to truly get to know others (Q3), how to see value in others (Q4), how to show others they have value (Q5), respect (Q6), asking questions to learn more about others (Q7), and how to show others admiration (Q13). The overall ranking of survey questions in terms of percentage of students who reported learning a few new things or a lot of new things is outlined in Chart 4.

⁴³ Hilton Central School District. (n.d.). *About the Hilton, NY Community*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from <http://www.hilton.k12.ny.us/about-community.htm>

⁴⁴ United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *2010 Demographic Profile and 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

⁴⁵ St. Joseph School. (n.d.). *Fast Facts about St. Joseph School*. Retrieved March 25, 2013, from <http://www.sjsbatavia.org/fast-facts.html>

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ City-Data.com (n.d.). *Genesee County, New York (NY)*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from http://www.city-data.com/county/Genesee_County-NY.html

⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2013, March 11). *State & County QuickFacts: Genesee County, New York*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36037.html>

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Chart 4: Overall Rank of Survey Questions

Survey Question	All Students (n=113)		Rank
	#	%	#
How much did you learn about:			
3: How to truly get to know another person	112	99	1
4: How to see value in other people	109	96	2
5: How to show other people that they have value	107	95	3
1: Your school as a community	106	94	4
6: Respect	104	92	5
7: Asking questions to learn more about other people	103	91	6
11: How to show others you admire them	103	91	6
13: How to show others you appreciate them	97	86	7
14: All people should be treated as if they have value	96	85	8
8: Ways to define love	95	84	9
2: Your classroom as a community	94	83	10
9: Indifference	91	81	11
10: The word admire	92	81	11
12: The word appreciate	87	77	12

Responses for “I did not learn anything new” ranged from 1% to 23% and averaged 12% when considering all surveyed concepts as a whole. Appreciation (Q12) had the highest rate of responses at 23%. The concepts of indifference (Q9) and admiration (Q10) had the second highest response rate at 19%.

Students in grades 5-6 responded more often that they learned a lot of new things than students in grades 7-8. While over half of all 5-6 and 7-8 graders responded that they learned a lot about truly getting to know others (Q3) and that all people should be treated as if they have value (Q14), over half of 5-6 graders additionally noted learning a lot about how to see value in others (Q4), how to show others they have value (Q5), respect (Q6), and indifference (Q9). When both responses were considered, on average, 93% of 5-6 students indicated they learned new things through participation in the program while 76% of 7-8 graders responded as such.

The students who did not indicate their grade level on the survey had the least number of responses for learning a lot. Overall, a majority of this group indicated that they learned a few new things about truly getting to know others (Q3), showing others they have value (Q5), respect (Q6), and ways to define love (Q8). When their responses for learning a few new things and a lot of new things were combined, more than half of them indicated they learned something about all items except Q7, asking questions to learn more about others.

The results of the survey data analysis are presented in the following charts. They show response rates for “I learned a few new things”, “I learned a lot of new things”, and the sum of “I learned a few new things” and “I learned a lot of new things”. Chart 8 displays how the responses of students in grades 5-6 compared to those in grades 7-8.

Chart 5: Percentage of Surveyed Population that Responded: “I learned a few new things”.

Survey Question	All Students (n=113)		Elba Grade 5 (n=35)		Quest Grades 5-6 (n=20)		St. Joseph Grades 5-6 (n=26)		St. Joseph Grades 7-8 (n=18)		St. Joseph Grades 5-8 (n=14)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
How much did you learn about:												
1: Your school as a community	86	76	23	66	17	85	22	85	17	94	7	50
2: Your classroom as a community	73	65	22	63	13	65	17	65	14	78	7	50
3: How to truly get to know another person	43	38	13	37	5	25	7	27	5	28	9	64
4: How to see value in other people	44	39	9	26	9	45	10	38	7	39	7	50
5: How to show other people that they have value	56	50	11	31	11	55	12	46	14	78	8	57
6: Respect	52	46	14	40	6	30	12	46	11	61	9	64
7: Asking questions to learn more about other people	59	52	18	51	14	70	13	50	11	61	3	21
8: Ways to define love	56	50	15	43	8	40	14	54	11	61	8	57
9: Indifference	47	42	16	46	11	55	5	19	8	44	7	50
10: The word admire	57	50	15	43	11	55	16	62	9	50	6	43
11: How to show others you admire them	66	58	14	40	14	70	15	58	11	61	7	50
12: The word appreciate	57	50	19	54	12	60	11	42	8	44	7	50
13: How to show others you appreciate them	53	47	16	46	11	55	9	35	14	78	3	21
14: All people should be treated as if they have value	29	26	10	29	5	25	8	31	5	28	5	36
Average	56	49	15	44	11	53	12	47	10	58	7	47

Chart 6: Percentage of Surveyed Population that Responded: “I learned a lot of new things”.

Survey Question	All Students (n=113)		Elba Grade 5 (n=35)		Quest Grades 5-6 (n=20)		St. Joseph Grades 5-6 (n=26)		St. Joseph Grades 7-8 (n=18)		St. Joseph Grades 5-8 (n=14)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
How much did you learn about:												
1: Your school as a community	20	18	11	31	3	15	4	15	0	0	2	14
2: Your classroom as a community	21	19	4	11	7	35	9	35	0	0	1	7
3: How to truly get to know another person	69	61	22	63	15	75	18	69	10	56	4	29
4: How to see value in other people	65	58	25	71	10	50	14	54	6	33	6	43
5: How to show other people that they have value	51	45	23	66	9	45	13	50	3	17	3	21
6: Respect	52	46	17	49	14	70	11	42	5	28	5	36
7: Asking questions to learn more about other people	44	39	12	34	6	30	13	50	2	11	3	21
8: Ways to define love	39	35	17	49	12	60	7	27	2	11	1	7
9: Indifference	44	39	14	40	9	45	19	73	1	6	1	7
10: The word admire	35	31	13	37	8	40	9	35	3	17	2	14
11: How to show others you admire them	37	33	16	46	5	25	11	42	2	11	3	21
12: The word appreciate	30	27	9	26	8	40	10	38	1	6	2	14
13: How to show others you appreciate them	44	39	14	40	9	45	16	62	1	6	4	29
14: All people should be treated as if they have value	67	59	20	57	15	75	15	58	11	61	6	43
Average	44	39	16	44	9	46	12	46	3	19	3	22

Chart 7: Percentage of Surveyed Population that Responded: “I learned a few new things” and “I learned a lot of new things”.

Survey Question	All Students (n=113)		Elba Grade 5 (n=35)		Quest Grades 5-6 (n=20)		St. Joseph Grades 5-6 (n=26)		St. Joseph Grades 7-8 (n=18)		St. Joseph Grades 5-8 (n=14)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
How much did you learn about:												
1: Your school as a community	106	94	34	97	20	100	26	100	17	94	9	64
2: Your classroom as a community	94	83	26	74	20	100	26	100	14	78	8	57
3: How to truly get to know another person	112	99	35	100	20	100	25	96	15	83	13	93
4: How to see value in other people	109	96	34	97	19	95	24	92	13	72	13	93
5: How to show other people that they have value	107	95	34	97	20	100	25	96	17	94	11	79
6: Respect	104	92	31	89	20	100	23	88	16	89	14	100
7: Asking questions to learn more about other people	103	91	30	86	20	100	26	100	13	72	6	43
8: Ways to define love	95	84	32	91	20	100	21	81	13	72	9	64
9: Indifference	91	81	30	86	20	100	24	92	9	50	8	57
10: The word admire	92	81	28	80	19	95	25	96	12	67	8	57
11: How to show others you admire them	103	91	30	86	19	95	26	100	13	72	10	71
12: The word appreciate	87	77	28	80	20	100	21	81	9	50	9	64
13: How to show others you appreciate them	97	86	30	86	20	100	25	96	15	83	7	50
14: All people should be treated as if they have value	96	85	30	86	20	100	23	88	16	89	11	79
Average	100	88	31	88	20	99	24	93	14	76	10	69

Chart 8: Comparison of Grades 5-6 and Grades 7-8.

Survey Question	All Grades 5-6 A Few New Things (n=81)		St. Joseph Grades 7-8 A Few New Things (n=18)		All Grades 5-6 A Lot of New Things (n=81)		St. Joseph Grades 7-8 A Lot of New Things (n=18)		All Grades 5-6 Both (n=81)		St. Joseph Grades 7-8 Both (n=18)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
How much did you learn about:												
1: Your school as a community	62	77	17	94	18	22	0	0	80	99	9	64
2: Your classroom as a community	52	64	14	78	20	25	0	0	72	89	8	57
3: How to truly get to know another person	25	31	5	28	55	68	10	56	80	99	13	93
4: How to see value in other people	28	35	7	39	49	60	6	33	77	95	13	93
5: How to show other people that they have value	34	42	14	78	45	56	3	17	79	98	11	79
6: Respect	32	40	11	61	42	52	5	28	74	91	14	100
7: Asking questions to learn more about other people	45	56	11	61	31	38	2	11	76	94	6	43
8: Ways to define love	37	46	11	61	36	44	2	11	73	90	9	64
9: Indifference	32	40	8	44	42	52	1	6	74	91	8	57
10: The word admire	42	52	9	50	30	37	3	17	72	89	8	57
11: How to show others you admire them	43	53	11	61	32	40	2	11	75	93	10	71
12: The word appreciate	42	52	8	44	27	33	1	6	69	85	9	64
13: How to show others you appreciate them	36	44	14	78	39	48	1	6	75	93	7	50
14: All people should be treated as if they have value	23	28	5	28	50	62	11	61	73	90	11	79
Average	38	47	10	58	37	46	3	19	75	93	14	76

Discussion

While the survey was conducted as a small, preliminary research study, it gives an indication of whether or not students felt that they learned new concepts through participation in the We R 3C™ Program. Overall, a majority (88%) of students reported that they learned something new, and almost all of the students gained knowledge in the areas of how to truly get to know others (99%), how to see value in others (96%), and how to show others that they have value (95%). Given that these students had participated in character education programs prior to completing Theme 1 of the We R 3C™ Program, the results suggest that the We R 3C™ Program presents universal character education-related concepts in a way that is more effective than previously implemented programs and/or covers a broader range of character education-related concepts than previously implemented programs.

In regards to the concepts and skills covered by the survey, students most often reported learning new skills. The greatest number of students reported learning skills for engaging in relationships (e.g., getting to know others, showing others they have value, asking questions to learn more about others). The least number of students reported learning about the concepts of appreciation, admiration, indifference, classroom community, and love. Therefore, it is likely that the students had some knowledge of character education-related concepts prior to participating in the We R 3C™ Program, but did not know how to use that knowledge for making behavioral choices. The results indicate that the We R 3C™ Program helped the students learn how to implement character education-related concepts and apply them to daily life. As these skills were not acquired through prior programs, it is possible that the previously implemented character education programs did not effectively help students move from knowledge acquisition to application.

The difference in learning reported between grades 5-6 and 7-8 is likely due to older youth having more exposure to character education. With 7-8 graders possessing additional years of character education participation, it is plausible for them to have greater knowledge of character education-related concepts than their younger peers. Though some may consider private school students more likely to have greater knowledge of character education-related concepts than their public school counterparts due to a socioeconomic advantage, it is unlikely for this sample population. The demographics of the county in which the 7-8 grade students reside do not suggest these students have a greater socioeconomic status than the other students included in the sample population. Therefore, it is unlikely that this difference is attributed to the type of school attended. The inclusion of private school 5-6 graders in the 5-6 grade population further ensures minimal difference between the 5-6 and 7-8 grade groups in regards to school type. Additionally, the difference identified in the results may dissipate with a larger survey population as the 5-6 grade and 7-8 grade populations differed greatly in number. The 7-8 grade population was about one quarter the size of the 5-6 grade population.

We R 3C, Inc. is conducting ongoing research to measure how, and the extent to which, the We R 3C™ Program affects character development and behavioral change. The results of the preliminary research study provide guidance for directing future research. Implementing a pre-post survey design will provide an initial assessment of participant knowledge prior to participating in the program to more effectively document knowledge acquisition. Interviews with theme leaders regarding participant behaviors before, during and after participation in the We R 3C™ Program will also help document the program's impact on behavioral change. The preliminary research findings indicate the We R 3C™ Program excels in moving participants from knowledge and understanding to application (i.e., egocentrism to Piaget's concrete operational stage). Additional research that identifies the components

of the program that bring about this transition would enhance understanding of character education best practices.

The literature review and informally gathered qualitative data, along with the results of the preliminary research study, indicate that the We R 3C™ Program is an effective character education program. While additional research will assist in clarifying its impact, multiple data points provide evidence for its positive affect on youth. The program is based upon widely accepted theories and methodologies, those implementing the program have reported it positively impacts participants, and the participants themselves have indicated learning new knowledge and skills through program participation. As character education continues to be emphasized as an important tool for combating bullying and fostering positive youth development, efforts that enhance the best practices literature base for character education programs are vital. By furthering what is known about effective character education programs, schools and other youth-related organizations can select programs that are the most likely to positively impact our nation's youth and communities.

Appendix A: Survey



We R 3C™
Anonymous Feedback Form

Please answer these questions honestly. There are no right or wrong answers!

	I did not learn anything new	I learned a few new things	I learned a lot of new things
How much did you learn about your school as a community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about your classroom as a community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about how to truly get to know another person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about how to see value in other people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about how to show other people that they have value?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about respect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about asking questions to learn more about other people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about ways to define love?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about indifference?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about the word admire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about how to show others you admire them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about the word appreciate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about how to show others you appreciate them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much did you learn about the idea that all people should be treated as if they have value?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments about the We R 3C™ curriculum? Please tell us below.

WeR3C.org



email: info@wer3c.org

Appendix B: We R 3C™ Program Process Model

