

# CHARACTER EDUCATION: A STUDY OF BEHAVIORAL CHANGE AMONG PROGRAM EDUCATORS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine degrees of internalization of character traits across four position groups (teachers, administrators, Extension staff, and community leaders) with varying years of character education professional and program development activities.

An online survey was developed to analyze the description of the respondents (gender, age, position, years of involvement), extent of character education professional and program development activities, degree of internalization and behavioral change of character education, and comparison of character education items by position, age of participants, and years of involvement with character education. It was administered via the World Wide Web, with 135 individuals completing the online survey. The majority were females, with nearly one-half of respondents being employed as teachers.

When looking at the degree of internalization and behavioral change, respondents felt their value systems were affected quite a bit, and their involvement in community activities increased somewhat as a result of character education. Additionally, as a result of integrating character education into teaching curricula, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to modeling character building behavior.

Post-then-pre data comparisons demonstrated significant levels of change in behaviors, including considering other peoples' feelings and resolving conflict in a peaceful manner. All post-then-pre data demonstrated that respondents at least frequently lived their lives in accordance with the post-then-pre statements.

Teachers worked easier with diverse populations than did Cooperative Extension staff. In addition, individuals involved with character education for a longer period of time worked at modeling character building behavior more than those respondents involved with character education for a lesser period of time.

Recommendations for future research included (1) marketing character education professional development opportunities to a broader audience; and (2) increasing ongoing and intensive multicultural training of Cooperative Extension staff.