



Caring School Community<sup>®</sup>  
The CHARACTER<sup>®</sup>plus Way<sup>®</sup>

## School Report

Wentzville  
Discovery Ridge Elementary

Report Published by Permission

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## A Place We Want to Be

**By Jon C. Marshall and Sarah D. Caldwell**

A teacher offers that every morning as she drives to school, she eagerly anticipates the school day ahead of her. She reflects on the wonderful support provided by her principal and the strong grade level team. Another teacher talks about the high level of trust at his school and the positive relationship between the school administration and teachers. He shares how this provides the foundation for superb student learning at the school.

Teachers at the school hold Wednesday night and Saturday sessions for students who need extra instructional time. Groups of students in a busy classroom are engaged in active learning activities facilitated by teachers, aides and parent volunteers. In a science class, students decide the questions they want answered from a series of experiments. A math teacher leads a class meeting where students talk about the economic and moral principles of interest rates. Students meet once a week in small cross-grade groups to resolve issues to reflect responsible behavior. Principals in the district get together every other week to delve into current educational issues.

## Healthy Schools

Wouldn't it be great if staff and students in every district and every school in the country exhibited these behaviors? Well, they can! To paraphrase a distinguished leader, there is room enough at the top for all schools.

Over the past several years, we have visited hundreds of schools in many districts throughout the nation. Some wonderful things are happening. There are districts with schools where staff and students would rather be at school than anywhere else, where students are excited about learning and show respect and caring for fellow students and staff, and where student behavior is responsible and achievement is high. There are districts where principals and central office staff display respect and trust for each other and work as effective teams. These are schools and districts of character.

## Research

The research from CHARACTER*plus*<sup>®</sup>, a program of Cooperating School Districts of Greater St. Louis, is very promising. Experimental studies indicate that implementation of character education through this process<sup>1</sup> results in substantial positive changes in school environment, improvement in student behavior, and significant increases in student achievement in language arts and math. Student discipline referrals drop as much as 44% and, when compared to PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Support), there is double the drop in discipline referrals.

Field visits to schools of character provide many positive examples – respectful student behavior, students helping students and teachers helping teachers. We saw high school football players, as an eligibility requirement, working in an elementary school library reading to and tutoring children. Secondary school cross-grade teams of students worked together in “Pirate Packs.” We sat in on class meetings where students resolved difficult school behavioral issues and made appropriate learning decisions. We witnessed teachers engaging students in brainstorming questions to be researched by their cross-grade buddies. Teachers used character language when dealing with discipline issues, asking questions of students like “Did that show good character?” or “Was that a responsible thing to do?”

All of these healthy schools have highly effective administrators directly involved in facilitating an environment of good character. The administrators work with leadership teams that provide vision for improving the school environment so that all students have voice in their schooling, feel that they belong to the school community, and are confident in their competence to succeed.

## Making It Happen

Making it happen is straightforward. But first, we educators must take responsibility for the learning of every child who passes through the school doors. We must really care about what happens to every single student. We must believe that every student in our charge can learn; that it is our responsibility to motivate students with interesting content and high quality learning processes. Here are a few of the necessary ingredients to having a healthy school – a school of character.

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<sup>1</sup> The implementation process includes the CHARACTER*plus*<sup>®</sup> Ten Essentials and the four components of Caring School Community<sup>®</sup>. Combined they are referred to as The CHARACTER*plus* Way<sup>®</sup>.

- Identify and define the core values of the school.
- Meaningfully involve parents and community members in establishing and supporting the core values.
- Integrate the core values into everything that is done in the school including student learning, school-home activities and schoolwide activities.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for students to experience leadership and learning including reflection on their own behavior.
- Provide adult role models with good character who exemplify the core values of the school.
- Use data gleaned from parents, staff and students in setting the character initiative goals for students. These goals reflect the importance of providing students with a sense of autonomy, feelings of belonging and belief in their competence.

CHARACTER*plus*<sup>®</sup> is grounded in principles that reflect these necessary ingredients for a healthy district. Strong research and experience speak to the power of these principles to meet the demand for high quality school districts for all children.

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# Interpreting Your School Report The CHARACTERplus Way®

## Interpreting Survey Data

The results are presented in percent positive scores ranging from 0 to 100 with middle of 50. The 0 score indicates that a person responded most negatively to every item on the factor; the 100 score indicates that a person responded most positively to every item on a factor. A perfect positive result is a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 0. This means that all individuals responding marked the positive response for all items.

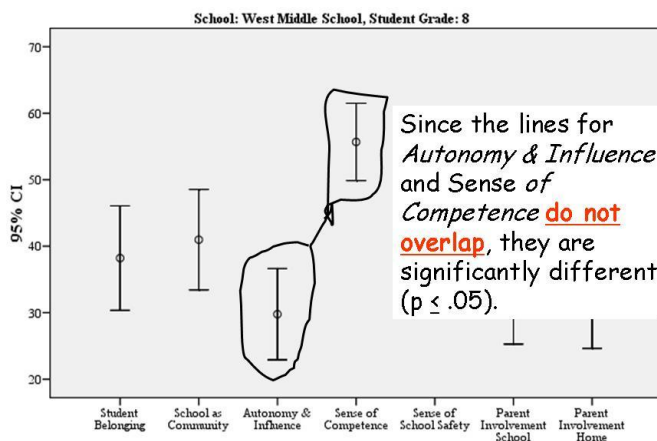
The standard deviation reflects the level of agreement among those responding to the survey items. A low standard deviation, below 10, indicates a high level of agreement among respondents – these people tended to see things in the same way. A high standard deviation, above 20, indicates a high level of disagreement among respondents – these people tended to see things quite differently. The baseline report provides basic descriptive statistics as follows:

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Feelings of Belonging	125	6.26	89.58	57.48	15.88

↓	↓	↘	↘	↓	↓
Factor	Number of Respondents	Range		Average	Measure of differences among individuals

Figure 2. Student Survey Interval Chart

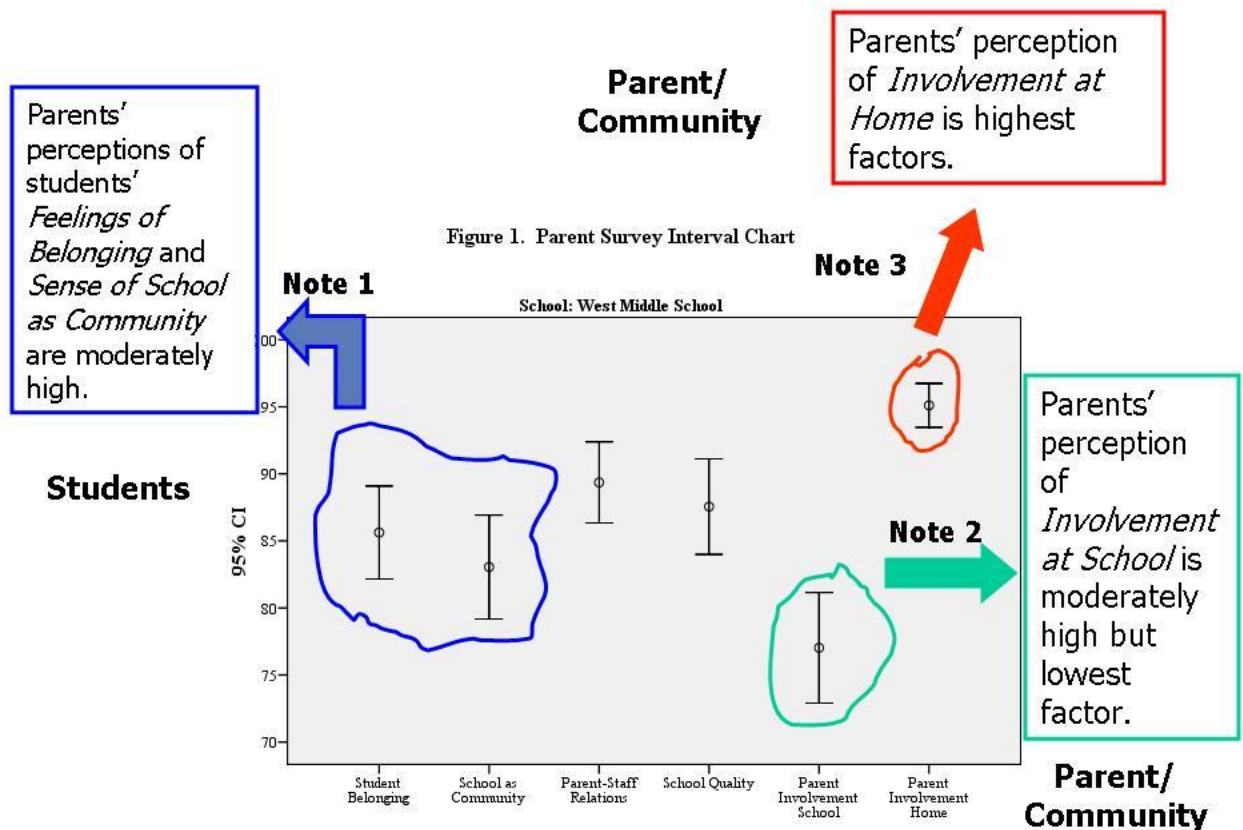


The data are provided in both table and graphic form. The graphic form is an interval graph with the mean as the center point and the range plus and minus two standard deviations of random error. This provides the 95% confidence interval for interpretation. When two interval bars on the graph do not overlap, the factors are statistically significantly ( $p \leq .05$ ) from each other.

## Process for Interpreting Report: Step 1

The CHARACTERplus Way® uses a four step process designed for efficient and effective planning. While the data are presented in both table and graphic form, the graphs are often easier to interpret, readily showing factors that stand out as strong or needing improvement. What is seen is organized by four factors of influence: schoolwide (or organization), student, staff and home/community. Step 1 is divided into two parts. The first part is to examine each source of data (parent, staff, etc.) noting the most important strengths and concerns. No more than five minutes should be spent on a single source of information.

- ✓ As you examine the information in the data report, ask yourself, "What do I see?"
- ✓ Do not focus on what it means.
- ✓ Put heads together and write your observations on sticky notes.
- ✓ Write one observation per sticky note. Use two colors, one for strengths, another for concerns.



- ✓ Put the sticky notes on a chart – divided into Organization, Student, Staff and Home/Community (see below). Choose the categories you believe are best. If a sticky note belongs in two or more categories, copy the note and place one in each category.
- ✓ When finished, there should be at least one sticky note in each of the categories.

<b>Organization (Schoolwide)</b>	<b>Student</b>
<b>Staff</b>	<b>Home/Community</b>

When you have finished going through the report, consolidate the sticky notes into 1 to 3 items for each of the four categories – Organization, Student, Staff and Home/Community. Then for each consolidated item, ask, “What does this mean to us?” Write your conclusions on a sheet of paper using a chart organized by these four categories. A conclusion for organization might look like “The current discipline plan needs to be more in line with the district’s character education plan.” A conclusion for students might be, “Students have a limited role in developing their own responsible behavior.”

### **Operational Definitions**

Operational definitions for each factor follow the presentation for each set of tables and graphs. These definitions are based directly on the items in the factors. For example, the items on the student survey for Sense of School as a Community are listed below followed by the operational definition.

*Students in this school...*

1. Are like a family.
2. Help each other learn.
3. Treat each other with respect.
4. Work together to solve problems.
5. Feel good when someone does well.

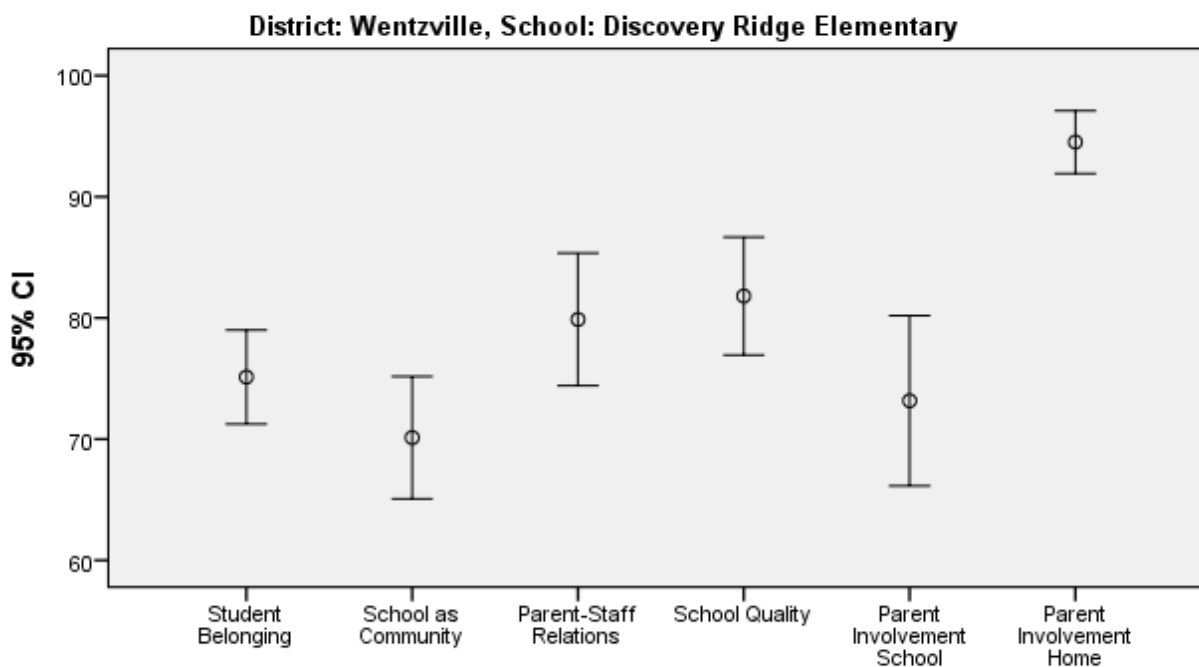
Operational Definition: Students feel that the school is like a family; students help each other learn and treat each other with respect; they work together to solve problems and feel good when someone does well.

**Table 1. Parent Survey Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student Belonging	41	40	100	75.12	12.272
School as Community	41	30	100	70.12	15.988
Parent-Staff Relations	41	38	100	79.88	17.353
School Quality	41	42	100	81.81	15.415
Parent Involvement School	41	15	100	73.17	22.242
Parent Involvement Home	41	70	100	94.51	8.201
Valid N (listwise)	41				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary

**Figure 1. Parent Survey Interval Graph  
2011**



## **Operational Definitions for Parent Survey Factors (High Positive Scores)**

- *Students' Feelings of Belonging* (Items 1 – 5)

Parents perceive that students are nice to each other; they get along; they respect their teachers; they treat each other fairly, and they tell the truth.

- *Students' Sense of School as a Community* (Items 6 – 10)

Parents perceive that students feel that the school is like a family; students help each other learn and treat each other with respect; they work together to solve problems, and feel good when someone does well.

- *Parent and Staff Relations* (Items 11 – 16)

School staff treat parents with respect, make parents feel welcome at school, value parents' ideas and input, encourage parents to be involved in school, communicate effectively with parents, and care about parents and their families.

- *School Quality* (Items 17 – 22)

Parents believe that their children are learning how to work with and respect others, learning to read and write, learning about science and how to do math, receiving a well-rounded education, and getting an excellent education.

- *Parent Involvement at School* (Items 23 – 27)

Parents volunteer to help with school activities, attend parent-teacher conferences, talk with teachers about their children's progress in school, and attend school activities.

- *Parent Involvement at Home* (Items 28 – 32)

Parents set study times at home, are interested in what their children are doing at school, go over their student's homework, talk with their student about what he or she is doing in school, and set up a place at home for their children to do homework.

**Table 2. Staff Survey Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

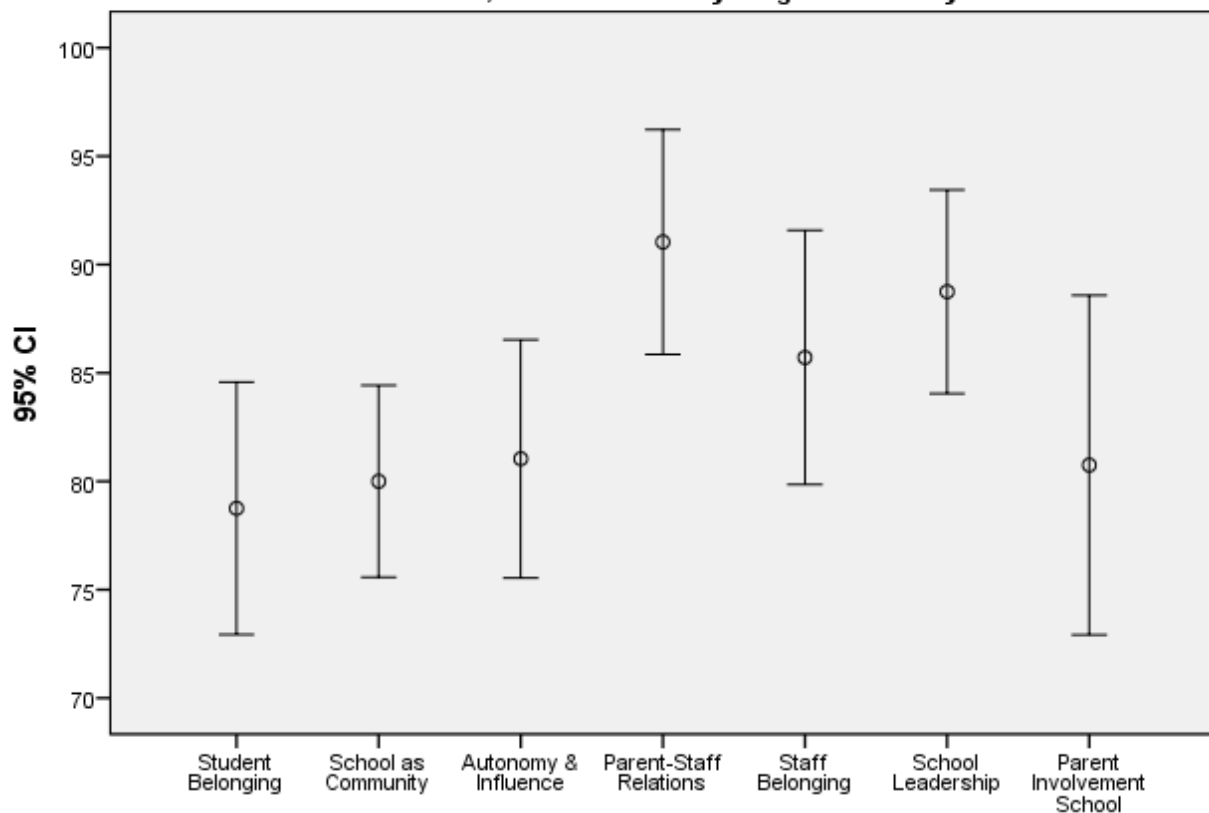
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student Belonging	20	50	100	78.75	12.447
School as Community	20	60	100	80.00	9.459
Autonomy & Influence	20	54	100	81.04	11.744
Parent-Staff Relations	20	71	100	91.04	11.088
Staff Belonging	20	68	100	85.71	12.534
School Leadership	20	71	100	88.75	10.035
Parent Involvement	20	50	100	80.75	16.723
School					
Valid N (listwise)	20				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary

**Figure 2. Staff Survey Interval Graph**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



## **Operational Definitions for Staff Survey Factors (High Positive Scores)**

- *Students' Feelings of Belonging* (Items 1 – 5)

Staff perceive that students are nice to each other; they get along; they respect their teachers; they treat each other fairly, and they tell the truth.

- *Students' Sense of School as a Community* (Items 6 – 10)

Staff perceive that students feel that the school is like a family; students help each other learn and treat each other with respect; they work together to solve problems, and feel good when someone does well.

- *Autonomy and Influence* (Items 11 – 16)

Staff perceive that students feel that they plan things together with their teachers, have a say in what goes on in their classes, decide the rules together with their teachers, help plan what they do in school, are asked by their teachers to help decide what they are to do, and help decide rules for the school.

- *Parent and Staff Relations* (Items 17 – 22)

School staff treat parents with respect, make parents feel welcome at school, value parents' ideas and input, encourage parents to be involved in school, communicate effectively with parents, and care about students' families.

- *Staff Culture of Belonging* (Items 23 – 29)

School staff members are supportive of one another, cooperate, help each other and provide good counsel when there are teaching problems, share the same beliefs about the central mission of the school, and do not fall into conflicting cliques.

- *School Leadership* (Items 30 – 35)

Administrators actively support new ideas; teachers take active roles in school activities; things are well organized; staff are recognized for a job well done; staff are involved in decisions that affect them; and there is interest in innovation and new ideas.

- *Parent Involvement at School* (Items 36 – 40)

Parents volunteer to help with school activities, attend parent-teacher conferences, talk with teachers about their children's progress in school, and attend school activities.

**Table 3. Student Survey Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

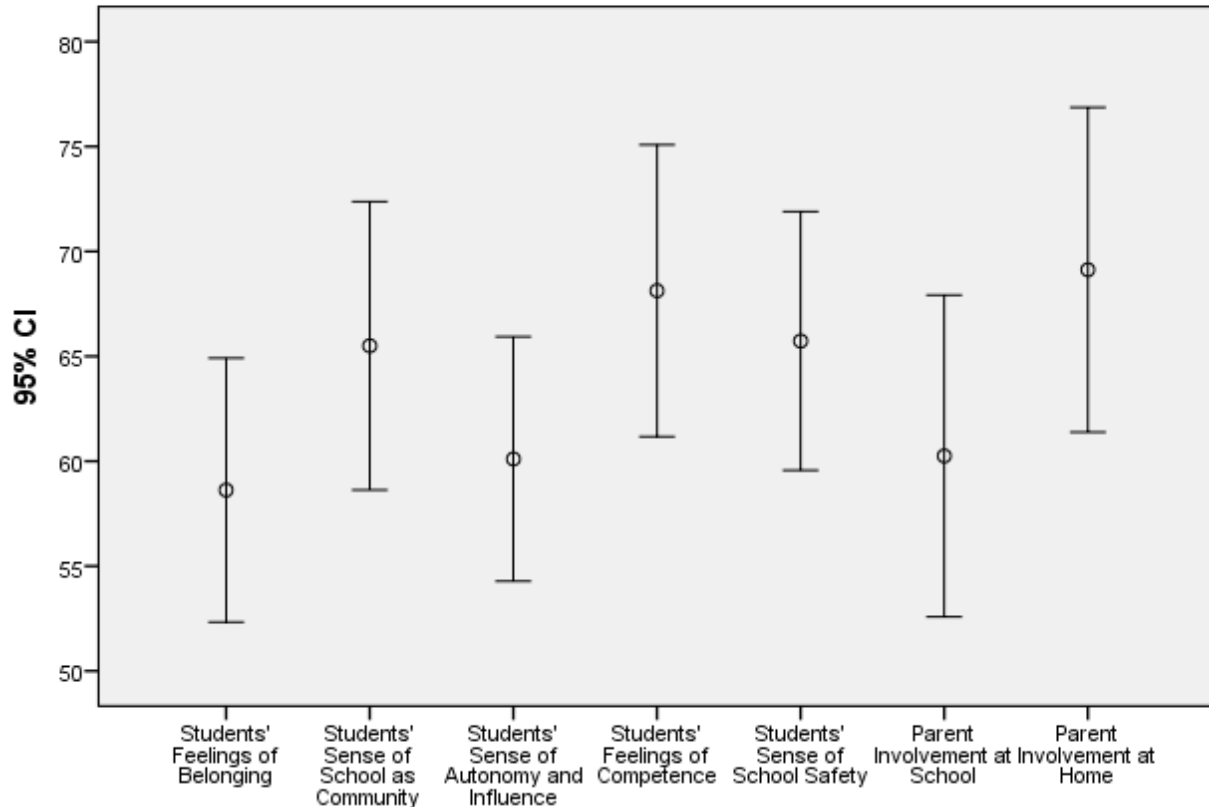
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Feelings of Belonging	41	15	90	58.66	19.430
Students' Sense of School as Community	41	15	100	64.39	22.394
Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence	41	4	100	59.45	18.471
Students' Feelings of Competence	41	11	100	67.77	21.599
Students' Sense of School Safety	41	17	100	65.55	19.072
Parent Involvement at School	41	0	100	59.88	23.783
Parent Involvement at Home	40	0	100	69.13	24.202
Valid N (listwise)	40				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary, Grade Level = 3

**Figure 3. Student Survey Interval Graph**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary, Grade Level: 3**



**Table 3. Student Survey Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

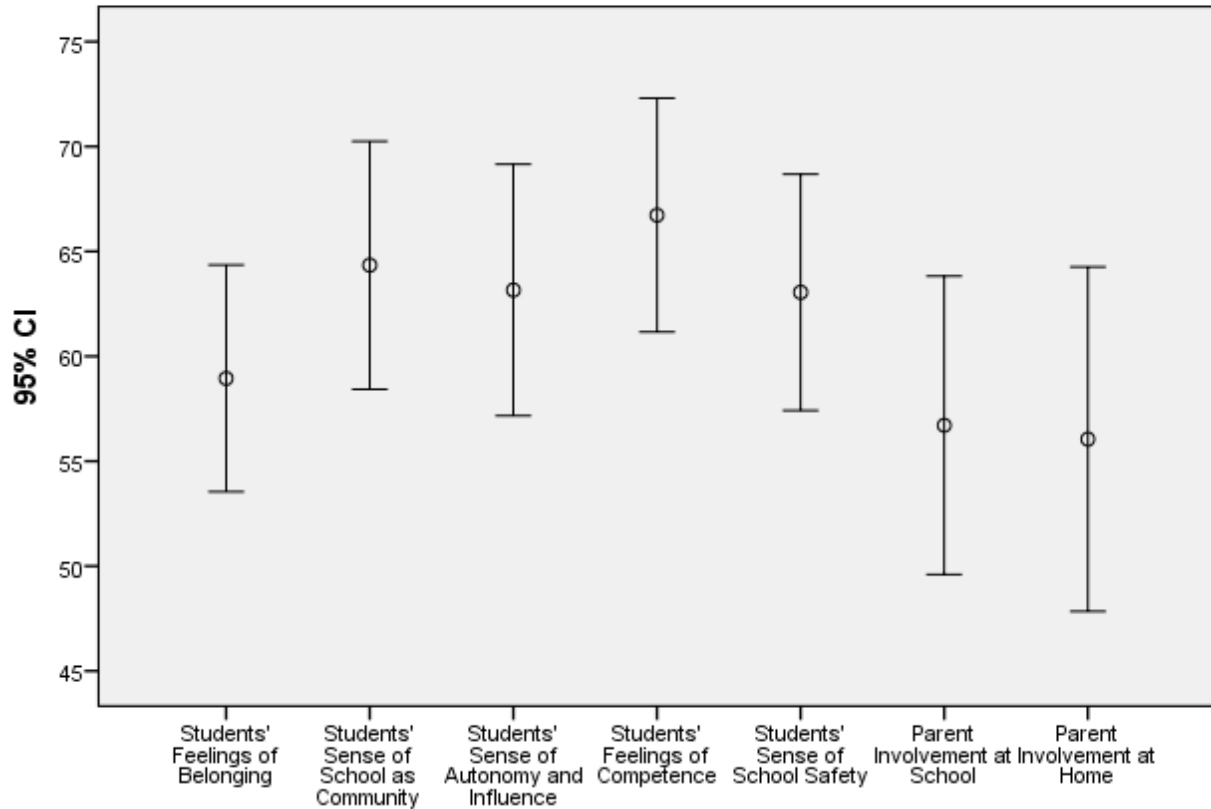
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Feelings of Belonging	38	25	85	58.95	16.446
Students' Sense of School as Community	38	20	100	64.34	17.978
Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence	38	21	96	63.16	18.240
Students' Feelings of Competence	38	36	100	66.73	16.958
Students' Sense of School Safety	38	17	92	63.05	17.143
Parent Involvement at School	38	15	95	56.71	21.632
Parent Involvement at Home	38	15	100	56.05	24.964
Valid N (listwise)	38				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary, Grade Level = 4

**Figure 3. Student Survey Interval Graph**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary, Grade Level: 4**

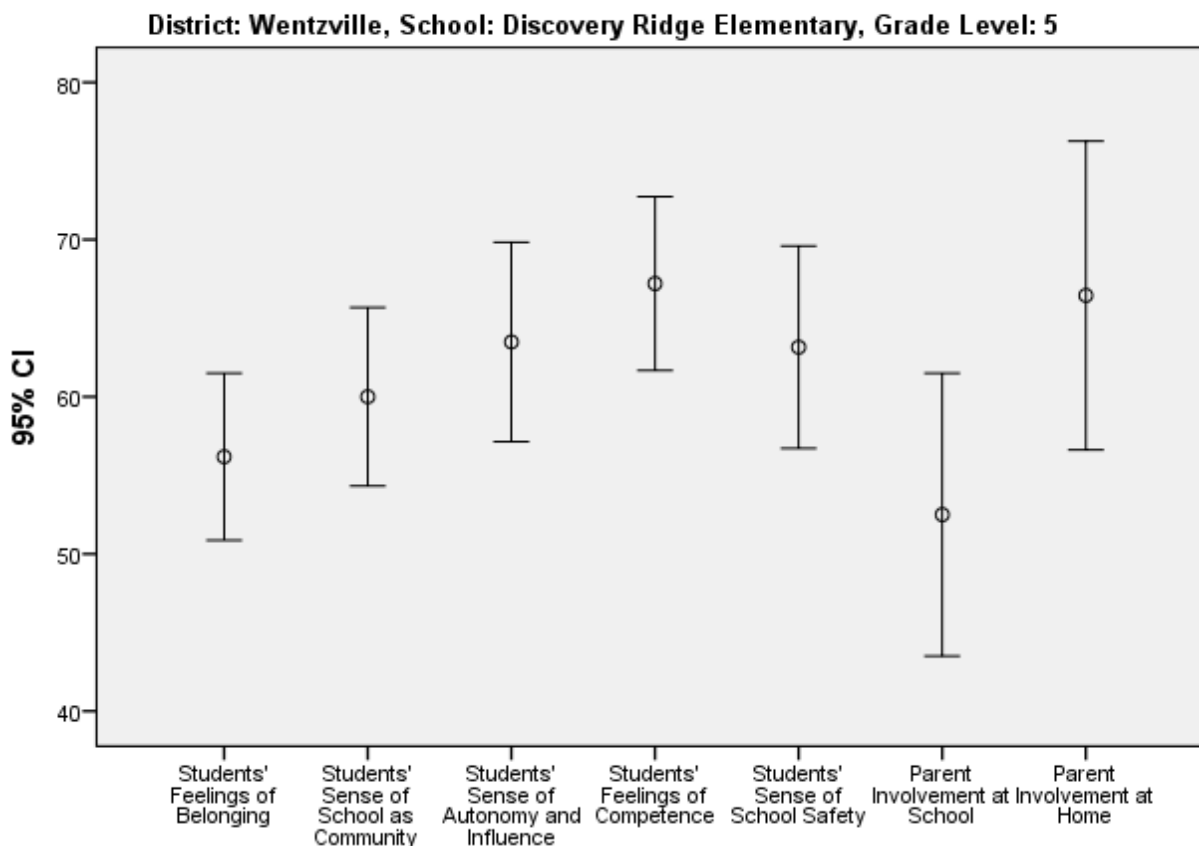


**Table 3. Student Survey Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Feelings of Belonging	38	20	95	56.18	16.168
Students' Sense of School as Community	38	0	80	60.00	17.281
Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence	38	13	100	63.49	19.288
Students' Feelings of Competence	38	36	100	67.20	16.831
Students' Sense of School Safety	38	0	92	63.16	19.604
Parent Involvement at School	38	0	100	52.50	27.355
Parent Involvement at Home	38	10	100	66.45	29.885
Valid N (listwise)	38				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary, Grade Level = 5

**Figure 3. Student Survey Interval Graph  
2011**



**Table 4. Student Survey Descriptive Statistics by Gender<sup>a</sup>**

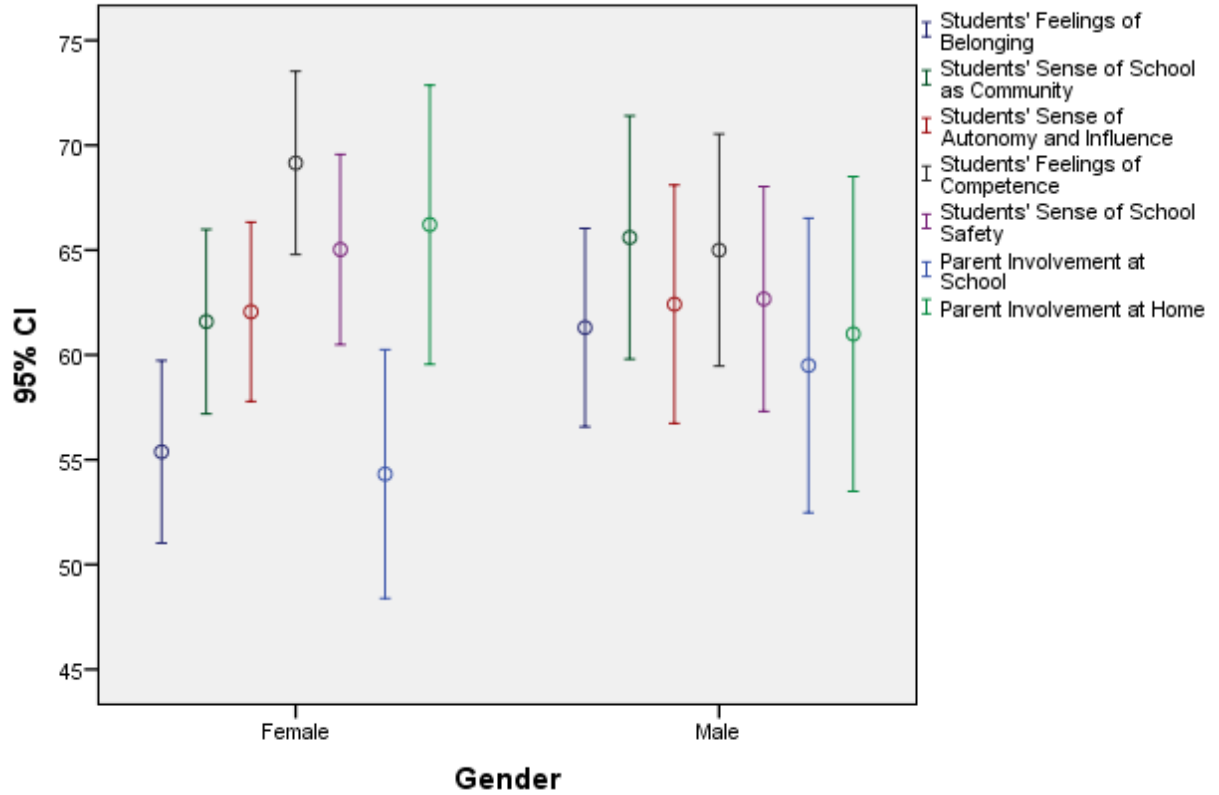
<sup>*</sup> p ≤ .10 <sup>**</sup> p ≤ .05 <sup>***</sup> p ≤ .01				
	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Students' Feelings of Belonging*	Female	55.38	17.701	66
	Male	61.30	16.654	50
	Total	57.93	17.434	116
Students' Sense of School as Community	Female	61.59	17.892	66
	Male	65.60	20.420	50
	Total	63.32	19.042	116
Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence	Female	62.06	17.406	66
	Male	62.42	20.000	50
	Total	62.21	18.485	116
Students' Feelings of Competence	Female	69.16	17.771	66
	Male	65.00	19.482	50
	Total	67.36	18.560	116
Students' Sense of School Safety	Female	65.03	18.459	66
	Male	62.67	18.879	50
	Total	64.01	18.597	116
Parent Involvement at School	Female	54.32	24.129	66
	Male	59.50	24.728	50
	Total	56.55	24.419	116
Parent Involvement at Home	Female	66.21	27.076	66
	Male	61.00	26.419	50
	Total	63.97	26.805	116

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary

**Figure 4. Student Survey Interval Graph by Gender**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



**Table 5. Student Survey Descriptive Statistics by Heritage<sup>a</sup>**

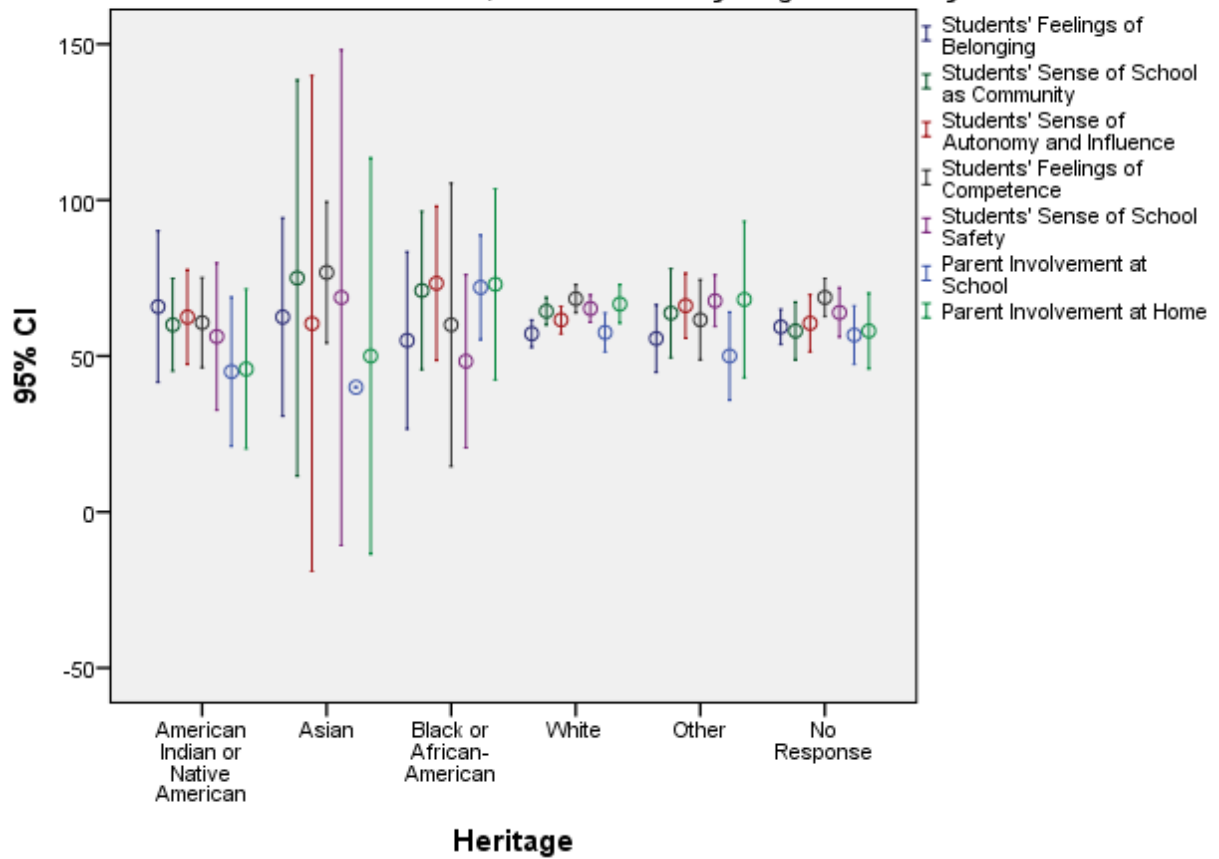
*p ≤ .10 **p ≤ .05 ***p ≤ .01		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
	Heritage			
Students' Feelings of Belonging	American Indian or Native American	65.83	23.112	6
	Asian	62.50	3.536	2
	Black or African-American	55.00	22.913	5
	White	57.15	18.630	72
	Other	55.63	12.939	8
	No Response	59.35	13.082	23
	Total	57.93	17.434	116
Students' Sense of School as Community	American Indian or Native American	60.00	14.142	6
	Asian	75.00	7.071	2
	Black or African-American	71.00	20.433	5
	White	64.38	18.969	72
	Other	63.75	17.061	8
	No Response	58.04	21.359	23
	Total	63.32	19.042	116
Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence	American Indian or Native American	62.50	14.434	6
	Asian	60.42	8.839	2
	Black or African-American	73.33	19.896	5
	White	61.57	18.689	72
	Other	66.15	12.488	8
	No Response	60.51	21.167	23
	Total	62.21	18.485	116
Students' Feelings of Competence	American Indian or Native American	60.71	13.740	6
	Asian	76.79	2.525	2
	Black or African-American	60.00	36.544	5
	White	68.35	19.203	72
	Other	61.61	15.361	8
	No Response	68.79	14.131	23
	Total	68.79	14.131	23

	Total	67.36	18.560	116
Students' Sense of School Safety	American Indian or Native American	56.25	22.477	6
	Asian	68.75	8.839	2
	Black or African-American	48.33	22.361	5
	White	65.22	18.845	72
	Other	67.71	9.898	8
	No Response	63.95	18.361	23
	Total	64.01	18.597	116
	Parent Involvement at School	American Indian or Native American	45.00	22.804
Asian		40.00	.000	2
Black or African-American		72.00	13.509	5
White		57.57	26.511	72
Other		50.00	16.903	8
No Response		56.74	21.722	23
Total		56.55	24.419	116
Parent Involvement at Home		American Indian or Native American	45.83	24.376
	Asian	50.00	7.071	2
	Black or African-American	73.00	24.648	5
	White	66.67	26.364	72
	Other	68.13	29.993	8
	No Response	58.04	28.032	23
	Total	63.97	26.805	116

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary

**Figure 5. Student Survey Interval Graph by Heritage**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



## **Operational Definitions for Student Survey Factors (High Positive Scores)**

- *Students' Feelings of Belonging* (Items 1 – 5)

Students are nice to each other; they get along; they respect their teachers; they treat each other fairly, and they tell the truth.

- *Students' Sense of School as a Community* (Items 6 – 10)

Students feel that the school is like a family; students help each other learn and treat each other with respect; they work together to solve problems, and feel good when someone does well.

- *Autonomy and Influence* (Items 11 – 16)

Students feel that they plan things together with their teachers, have a say in what goes on in their classes, decide the rules together with their teachers, help plan what they do in school, are asked by their teachers to help decide what they are to do, and help decide rules for the school.

- *Feelings of Competence* (Items 17 - 23)

Students believe that they can do the school work teachers ask of them, do not have difficulty with their school work or figuring things out, do not worry when they have to take a test, find school work easy to understand, and feel that teachers' expectations are reasonable.

- *School Safety* (Items 24 – 29)

Students believe that teachers in the school care that they are safe; students feel safe when at school; students do not pick on (or bully) others; students respect school property; students feel safe going to and from school; and students do not take things that do not belong to them.

- *Parent Involvement at School* (Items 30 – 34)

Parents volunteer to help with school activities, attend parent-teacher conferences, talk with teachers about their children's progress in school, and attend school activities.

- *Parent Involvement at Home* (Items 35 – 39)

Parents set study times at home, are interested in what their children are doing at school, go over their student's homework, talk with their student about what he or she is doing in school, and set up a place at home for their children to do homework.

**Figure 6. Parent, Staff and Student Common Factors  
2011**

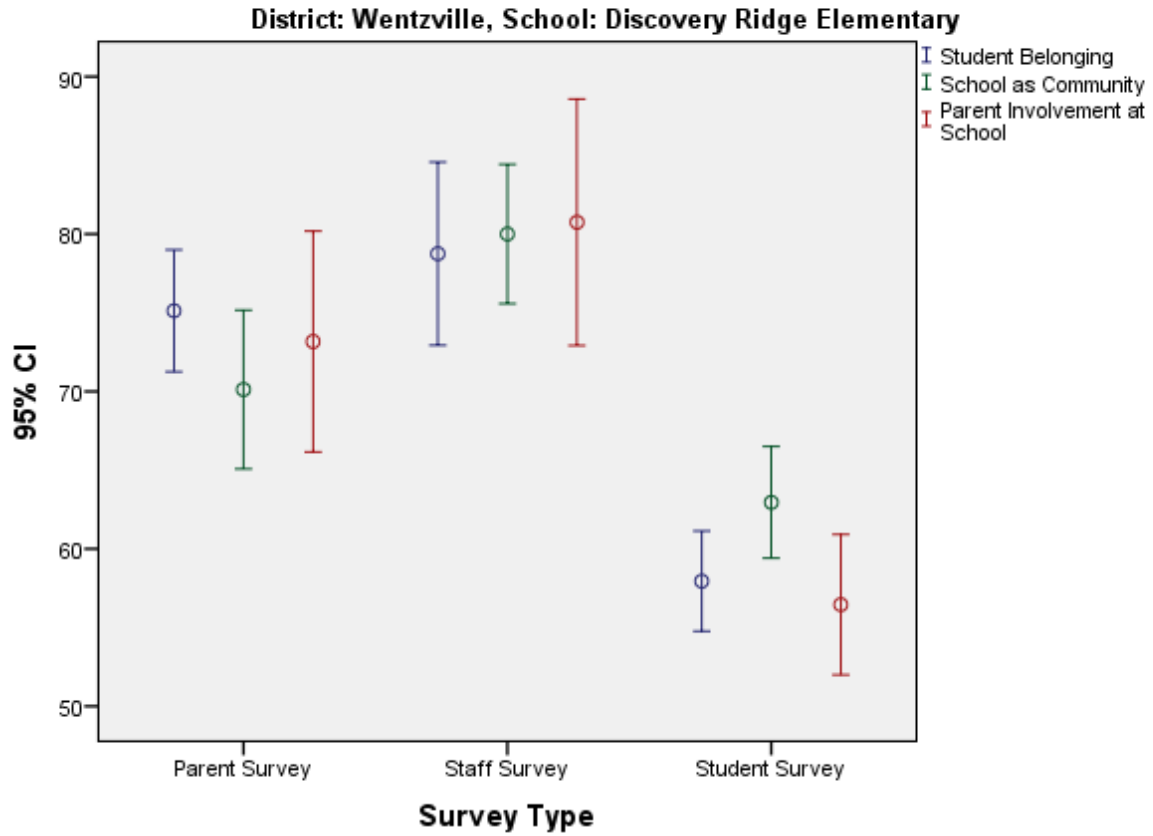
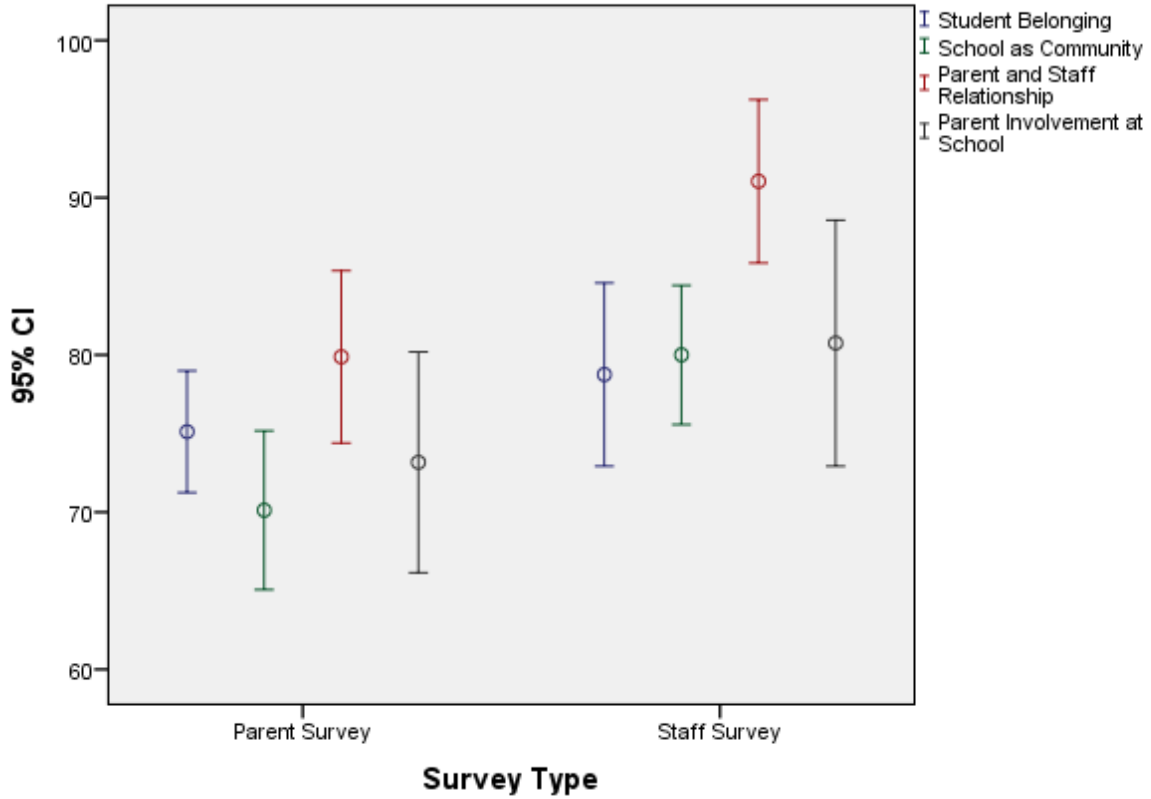


Figure 7. Parent and Staff Common Factors

2011

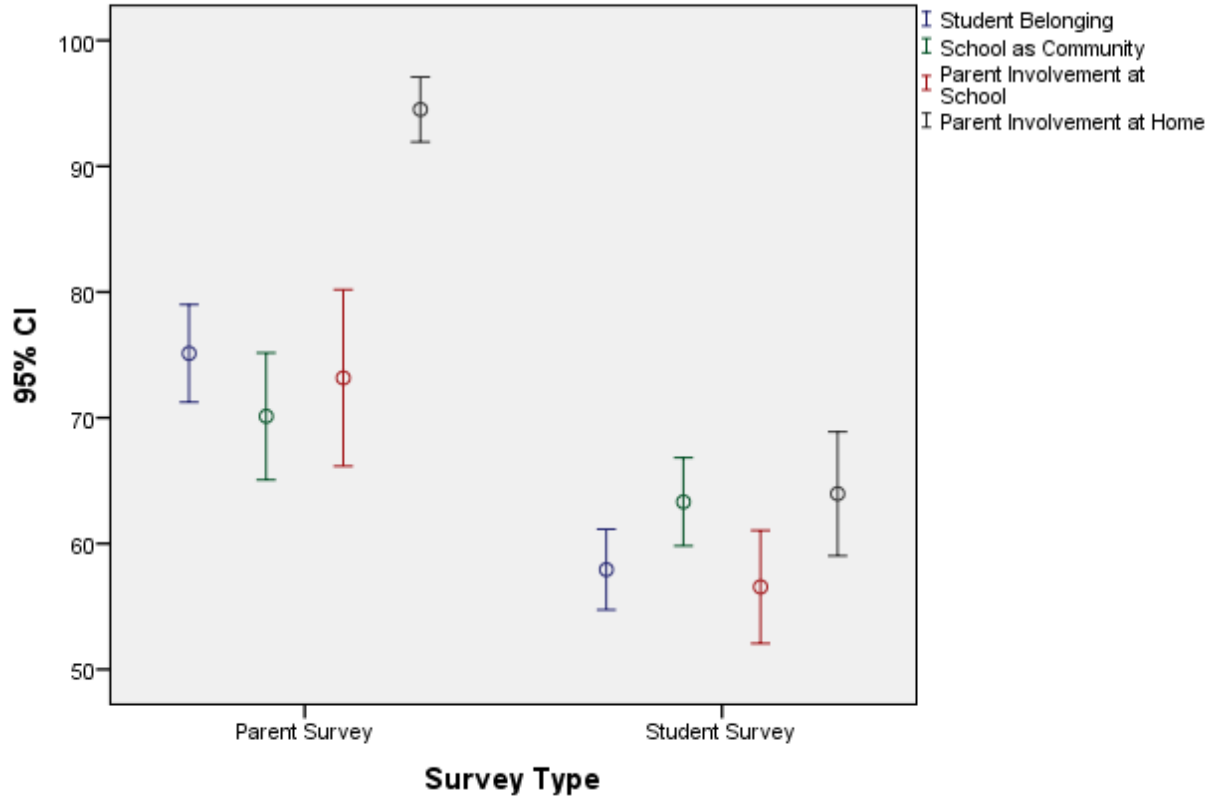
District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary



**Figure 8. Parent and Student Common Factors**

**2011**

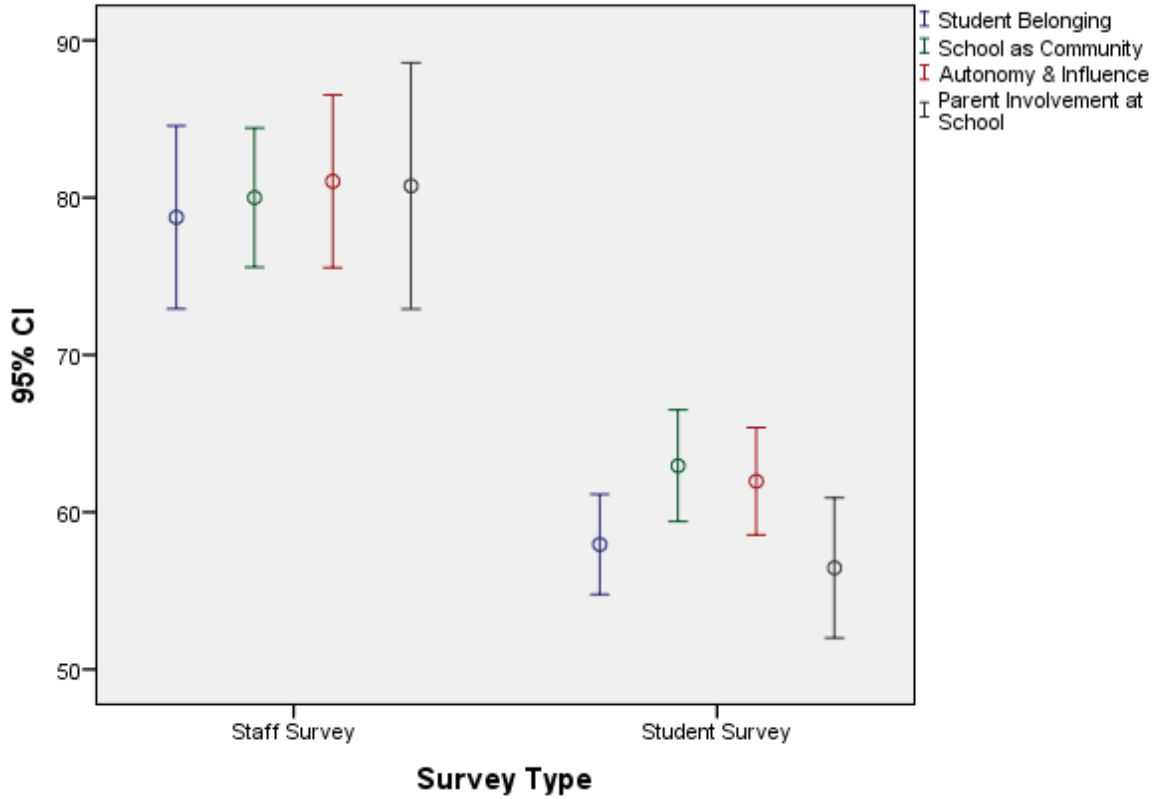
**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



**Figure 9. Staff and Student Common Factors**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



**Table 6. Implementation Survey Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

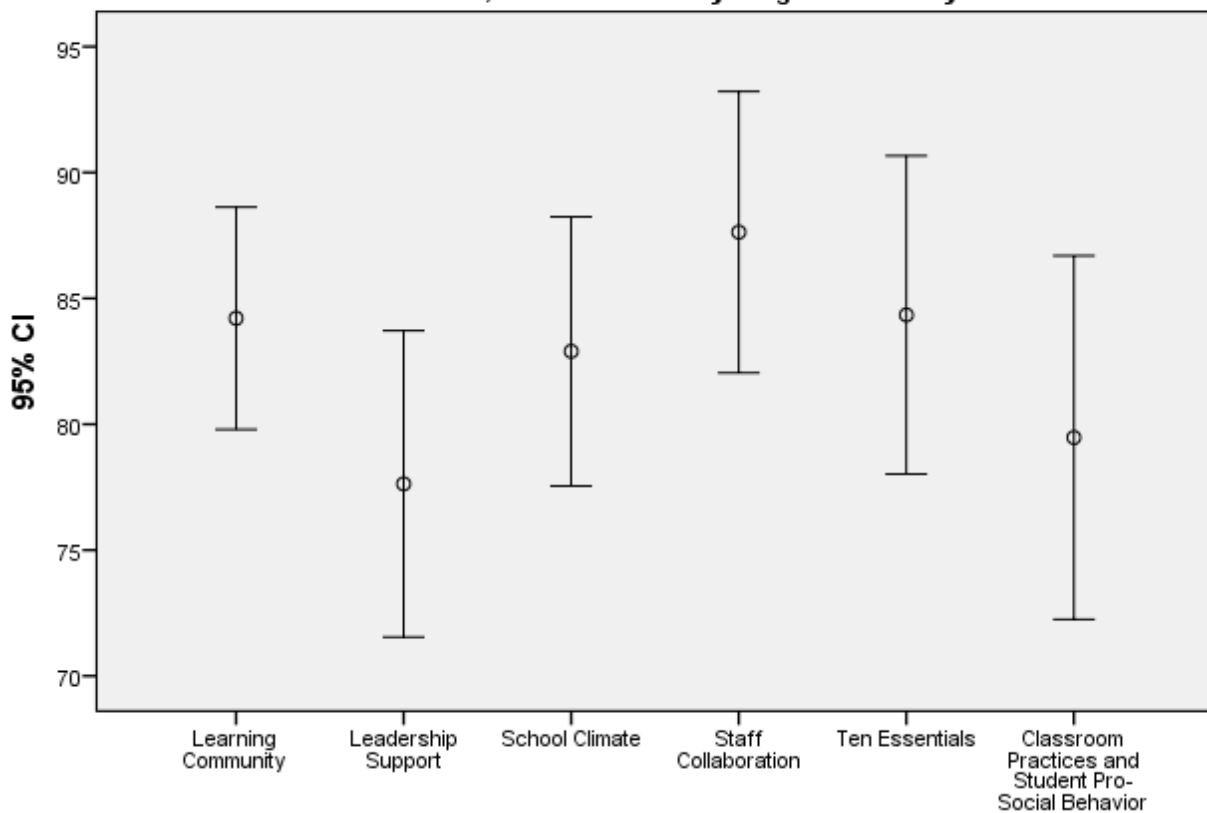
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learning Community	19	70	100	84.21	9.169
Leadership Support	19	60	100	77.63	12.624
School Climate	19	55	100	82.89	11.095
Staff Collaboration	19	60	100	87.63	11.591
Ten Essentials	19	50	100	84.34	13.119
Classroom Practices and Student Pro-Social Behavior	19	50	100	79.47	14.990
Valid N (listwise)	19				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary

**Figure 10. Implementation Survey Interval Graph**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



## **Operational Definitions for Implementation Survey (High Positive Scores)**

- *School is a Learning Community* (Items 1 – 5)

School has a safe, orderly learning environment; students are supported emotionally and academically; parents have opportunities to experience the school as a learning community; school leaders understand the characteristics of a program to build a caring environment; administration, staff, and students share the core values of the school.

- *School Leadership* (Items 6 – 10)

District leaders visit the school on a regular basis; school climate data are collected from parents, students, staff, and community members; staff analyze and discuss the implications of data collected from parents, staff, and students; budget and other resources are provided to develop and sustain a caring school environment; and school and district leaders support implementation of a program to build positive school climate.

- *School Climate* (Items 11 – 15)

Staff create partnerships with parents; students take part in setting classroom norms and rules; student pairs work collaboratively on activities that are aligned with the academic curriculum; students learn to work cooperatively; and students feel competent to achieve academic success.

- *Staff Collaboration* (Items 16 – 20)

Teachers collaborate on instructional planning; staff share ideas, strategies, and successes; staff form collaborative teams; staff engage together in reflection on the results of instructional activities; and teachers take a major role in shaping the school's norms, values, and practices.

- *Classroom Practices and Student Pro-Social Skills* (Items 21 – 25)

Cross-grade student pairs engage in interviewing, listening, speaking, and helping; students are taught to reflect on their personal values; take-home activities relate to academic, social, and citizenship themes that are important to the instructional program; reflection on what has been learned from experiences of working together is encouraged; and students have a sense of democratic values.

- *Ten Essentials* (Items 26 – 35)

Specific character traits have been defined for the school (or district); students reflect on character traits in their education process; character education is defined in terms of core ethical values; character traits defined for the school/district include both thinking and feeling; district commitment for character education processes is evident in high levels of continuous support; the character process is infused throughout the school day; all school staff help carry out the school's character education process; the character education process is planned and proactive; frequent communications on character education are common among school, parents, and broader community; regular assessments are made of students, parents, and staff to check the impact of the character education process.

**Table 7. Eleven Principles Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

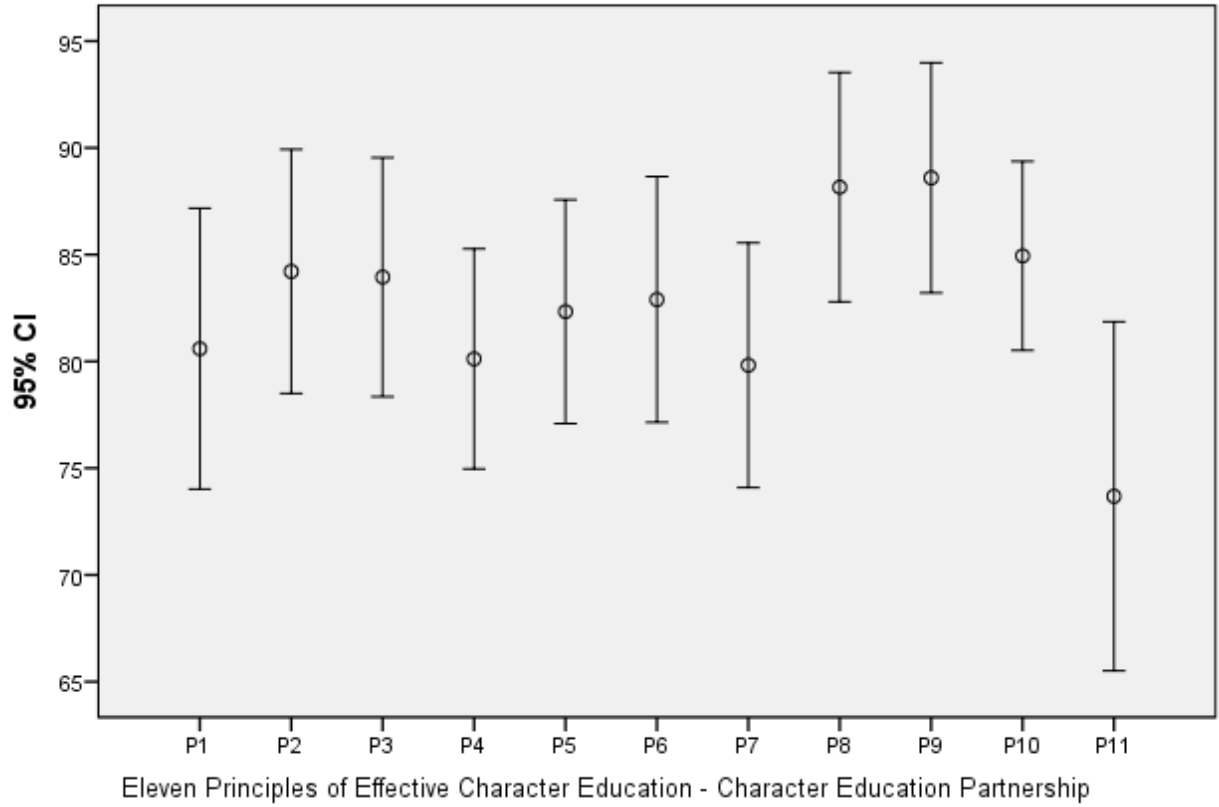
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P1	19	50	100	80.59	13.645
P2	19	50	100	84.21	11.853
P3	19	60	100	83.95	11.616
P4	19	58	97	80.12	10.689
P5	19	61	96	82.33	10.877
P6	19	58	100	82.89	11.939
P7	19	50	100	79.82	11.888
P8	19	63	100	88.16	11.134
P9	19	67	100	88.60	11.184
P10	19	72	100	84.94	9.181
P11	19	50	100	73.68	16.957
Valid N (listwise)	19				

a. District = Wentzville, School = Discovery Ridge Elementary

**Figure 11. Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education**

**2011**

**District: Wentzville, School: Discovery Ridge Elementary**



## **Operational Definitions for CEP Eleven Principles (High Positive Scores)**

### **Eleven Principles**

- P1** Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
- P2** Character is comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
- P3** Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
- P4** The school is a caring community
- P5** To develop character, the school provides students opportunities for moral action.
- P6** Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them to succeed.
- P7** Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation for developing good character.
- P8** The school staff is a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
- P9** Staff and students demonstrate moral leadership.
- P10** The school recruits parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.
- P11** Evaluation of character education assesses the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

## Ideas for Improving School Health The CHARACTER<sup>plus</sup> Way<sup>®</sup>

### **Improving School Culture**

- Identify, define and systematically revisit the core values (character traits) of the community, district and school.
- Integrate the core values (character traits) into all aspects of the school.
- Implement collaborative teams to share ideas and strategies and reflect on results of instructional activities.
- Celebrate successes.
- Implement strong leadership for character by school administrators, teacher leaders, and student leaders.
- Allocate time in staff and team meetings to discuss strategies for integrating core values (character traits) into the curriculum, schoolwide activities and school-home activities.
- Allocate time in staff and team meetings to discuss expectations for staff behavior and role modeling.
- Continuously monitor infusion of character into the school.
- Engage staff in professional development activities that promote intentional infusion of character into all aspects of the school.

### **Improving Classroom Culture**

- Provide opportunities for students to voice their ideas about class norms, individual and group behavior, and learning processes.
- Use collaborative structures to engage students in active learning.
- Have frequent class meetings that include both thinking and feeling.
- Use cooperative learning strategies such as “heads together,” “pair-share,” and “reading-writing dialogue teams.”
- Engage students in reflection on learning activities, character traits and social engagement.
- Implement cross-grade learning activities – elementary teachers can establish “buddy” classrooms; high school coaches can have student athletes “buddy” with elementary or middle school students in media centers.

### **Improving School – Parent – Community Culture**

- Engage parents and other community members in discussion of core values.
- Share school character with parent and community groups:

- PTO
- Church and civic groups
- Business groups
- Business leaders
- Develop school-home learning activities where students engage their parents or others in the learning process.
- Work with area businesses to support the school character process within their business – character traits listed on grocery or bank receipts and gas station pumps, character banners placed in store windows, and character columns printed in local newspapers.
- Engage parents and community members in schoolwide activities – school picnics, fairs and celebration breakfasts; academic, fine arts and athletic events; career sharing.

### **Improving Academics**

- Provide opportunities for students to voice their ideas about class norms, individual and group behavior, and learning processes.
- Use collaborative structures to engage students in active learning.
- Implement service-learning activities that involve students in active planning, implementation and reflection; tie activities to the academic curriculum; activities often effectively involve parents and other community members.
- Have frequent class meetings that include both thinking and feeling.
- Use collaborative learning strategies such as “heads together,” “pair-share,” and “reading-writing dialogue teams.”
- Engage students in reflection on learning activities, character traits and social engagement.
- Implement cross-grade learning activities – elementary teachers can establish “buddy” classrooms; high school coaches can have student athletes “buddy” with elementary or middle school students in media centers.

### **Results**

Systematic implementation of these strategies results in a healthy school environment. This will be evident in high positive scores (with low standard deviations<sup>2</sup>) on survey factors and

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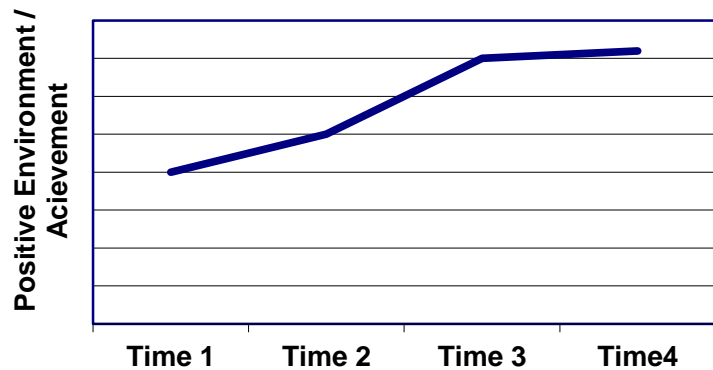
<sup>2</sup> Low standard deviation (0-10) shows agreement among survey respondents; high standard deviation (20+) shows disagreement among survey respondents.

optimization of student achievement. These changes can be substantial – 30%, 60% or more. The level of results depends on the emphasis placed on implementation of the recommended strategies. Early change can be expected in survey factors assessing the Ten Essentials and Eleven Principles. Next will be changes in other staff and implementation factors such as school leadership and staff culture of belonging. Typically changes in students’ feelings of belonging, autonomy and competence follow changes demonstrated by the faculty and staff. As the changes in student survey factors occur, student discipline<sup>3</sup> and academic achievement will also improve.

Improvement is a long-term process. The initial change in staff perceptions (such as the Ten Essentials and Eleven Principles) is generally seen during the first year of implementation. It may take two, three or more years of implementation to see high level student results. Continual emphasis on the improvement process is required to reach and maintain these high level results.

Survey results can be used to assess change as implementation occurs and to track maintenance of a healthy school environment when it is achieved.

**Change Over Time Implementing CHARACTERplus**



<sup>3</sup> Student discipline is defined as office discipline referrals.

## Step 2: Focusing Your Thoughts

The framework for improving schools by developing a caring school community uses the ABCs and Glasser’s fundamental needs of survival (or safety), power, love, belonging, freedom and fun as the foundation for focusing our thoughts in the planning process. These constructs are defined as follows.

### Autonomy and Influence

Students are provided opportunities to engage in meaningful conversation to help decide class norms, work with others, engage in meaningful relationships, and enhance their learning. These opportunities address the basic needs of power and freedom. It has been shown that person-centered learning has a strong influence on teacher-student relationships, student pro-social behavior, and student achievement.

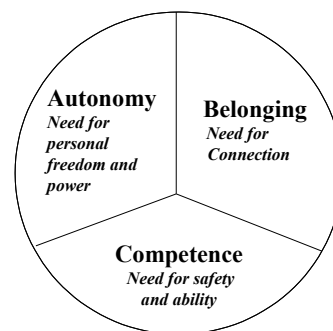
### Belonging

Students feel connected to their school and classroom. The basic needs of love and belonging fit within this construct. A strong positive association between students’ feelings of belonging and behavioral and academic outcomes has been shown in the research. In addition, decreased drug, gang and related behaviors are associated with students having a high sense of school bonding. It is sense of belonging that gives students the confidence, competence, and motivation to learn.

### Competence

Students feel safe in the school and classroom and able to meet expectations. Safety is a basic issue that includes both the physical and emotional school environments. Students feel competent when they know that they are safe and they have the support of others who care, listen, understand, respect them, and are honest, open and sensitive.

### Developing Healthy School Culture



The factors on the parent, student, staff and implementation surveys assess various aspects of the ABCs and implementation of the CHARACTERplus® Ten Essentials. How the survey factors directly impact the ABCs is illustrated below.

<b>ABCs</b>	<b>Survey Factors</b>	<b>Ten Essentials</b>
<b>Autonomy and Influence</b>	<b>Autonomy and Influence</b> <b>School Climate</b> <b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>The following Ten Essentials directly impact all the ABCs.</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Participation</b></li> <li>• <b>Character Education Policy</b></li> <li>• <b>Character Traits</b></li> <li>• <b>Integrated Curriculum</b></li> <li>• <b>Experiential Learning</b></li> <li>• <b>Adult Role Models</b></li> <li>• <b>Student Leadership</b></li> </ul>
<b>Student Belonging</b>	<b>Feelings of Belonging</b> <b>Sense of School as a Community</b> <b>School as Learning Community</b> <b>School Climate</b> <b>Classroom Practices</b> <b>Parent and Staff Relations</b> <b>Parent Involvement</b>	<b>Collaborative Structures</b>
<b>Student Competence</b>	<b>Parent Involvement</b> <b>Leadership</b> <b>Competence</b> <b>Safety</b> <b>Classroom Practices</b> <b>School Climate</b>	<b>The following collaborative Practices directly impact all the ABCs.</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Class Meetings</b></li> <li>• <b>Cross-Grade Grouping</b></li> <li>• <b>School-Home Activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Schoolwide Activities</b></li> </ul>

A school of character has an environment that embraces student autonomy and influence, belonging in a caring environment, and competence. These schools provide for student input into the learning setting. Students learn to solve problems, exhibit good character without extrinsic rewards, and instruction is focused on collaborative processes and high level discussions. Parent and school relationships are focused on a sense of partnership.

The following list includes examples of the changes that are expected when schools become healthy schools of character.

<b>LESS</b>	<b>→</b>	<b>MORE</b>
		<b>Student Autonomy</b>
Teacher lecture	→	• Student input
Teacher intervention	→	• Student problem-solving
Benevolent dictatorship	→	• Student-centered democracy
		<b>Student Belonging</b>
Independent seatwork	→	• Cooperative learning
Competition	→	• Caring community
Parent-school isolation	→	• Sense of partnership
		<b>Student Competence</b>
Literal comprehension	→	• High level discussions
Extrinsic motivation	→	• Intrinsic motivation
Focus on punishment	→	• Focus on good character

- ✓ Using the form on the next page, as a planning team rate where your school is with each of these practices. Identify where you believe you are now based on your school data and where you believe you should be a year from now.
- ✓ Identify what is already in place supporting where you want to be (Step 2a).
- ✓ Which of these practices are most important for you to work on next year (Step 2b)?

Put an X where you now; Put a √ where you want to be a year from now.						Focusing: Step 2a. What is already in place supporting where you want to be?
LESS	1	2	3	4	5	
Teacher lecture						Student input
Teacher intervention						Student problem-solving
Benevolent dictatorship						Student-centered democracy
Independent seatwork						Cooperative learning
Competition						Caring community
Parent-school isolation						Sense of partnership
Literal comprehension						High level discussions
Extrinsic motivation						Intrinsic motivation
Focus on punishment						Focus on good character

**Step 2b: What are your priorities for next year?**

### **Step 3: Action Planning**

Action planning is based on the priorities that you have set and questions you answered in Step 2. There are three aspects to action planning:

1. What do we want to see, feel or hear?
2. How are we going to tell if it is working?
3. What are we going to do?

Complete the action planning worksheet on the next page.

### **Step 4: Responsibilities and Budget**

Who is going to do what, when and where? There are four aspects to this step:

1. Who will be responsible for each of the strategies and the monitoring described in the action plan? When and where are they going to do what?
2. When is the planning team going to meet?
3. What is the cost associated with each strategy and the monitoring activities?
4. How will we share the action plan with every teacher, administrator and staff member in the school?

<b>1. Desired outcomes or effects (What do we want to see, feel or hear?)</b>			
<b>Organization (Schoolwide)</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Home/Community</b>
<b>2. Evaluation (How are going to tell if it is working?)</b>			
<b>Organization (Schoolwide)</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Home/Community</b>
<b>3. Specific strategies (What are we going to do?)</b>			
<b>Organization (Schoolwide)</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Home/Community</b>