

ASSESSING A WHOLE-CHILD APPROACH TO STUDENT LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

•In the context of the increased movement towards standards-based accountability, it has become increasingly difficult for schools to meet all of the needs of their students.

•In order to help students develop socially, emotionally, ethically, and intellectually, Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, KY) has started the CARE for Kids initiative, a district-wide reform which emphasizes developing classroom community and unity building through activities such as cooperative/collaborative learning (across content areas-reading, math, science etc.), unity builders, literature components, class meetings, and morning meetings.

•In 2008-2009, the CARE for Kids initiative was rolled out to 28 elementary schools. The current presentation provides information on how the annual Comprehensive School Surveys (CSS) are being used to assess the impact of the CARE for Kids initiative on school culture, student connectedness to school, and staff and parent satisfaction.

•Specifically, the presentation will review the philosophy and practices behind the CARE for Kids initiative, the whole-child design of the CSS items, and how the data from the surveys are being used to inform leadership.

BACKGROUND AND METHOD

The major components of the CARE for Kids initiative are:

1) *Caring Classroom Community*: developing classroom community and unity building-relationships reflective of respect, responsibility, caring and helpfulness through activities such as cooperative/collaborative learning (across content areas-reading, math, science etc.), unity builders, literature components, class meetings, and morning meetings.

2) *Morning Meetings*: Special type of class meeting designed to set the tone for respectful learning and establish a climate of trust.

3) *Classroom Meetings*: Provide a forum for students and teachers to come together as a class to get to know each other, reflect, problem-solve, and make decisions.

4) *Developmental Discipline*: Is a pro-active, prevention approach that utilizes a teaching/learning approach with an emphasis on relationships, modeling, skill development, moving students to self-control and responsibility.

5) *School-Wide Activities*: Designed to link the students, parents, teacher and other adults in the school with a focus on inclusion and participation, cooperation, helping others, taking responsibility, appreciating differences, and reflection.

Measure

• The Comprehensive School Surveys are used to assess the opinions of students, parents, staff, and teachers in JCPS using Likert-type scale items (i.e., strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) as well as Yes/No questions. The instruments are a collection of nine different surveys, adapted to the population of interest: elementary students, middle school students, high school students, parents, classified staff, and certified staff. The current presentation summarizes the data for elementary school students.

• Each survey is divided into sections. The student surveys are organized into the following sections: (A) Student Characteristics, (B) School, (C) Home/Community, (D) Personal Development, and (E) School Operation.

• These surveys were distributed to all classified and certified staff, parents, and students in the Spring of 2008 and Spring of 2009 utilizing the Survey Tailored Design Method (Dillman, 2000).

• Muñoz and Lewis (2009) conducted a reliability study for (a) each survey as a whole, (b) each domain within each survey, and (c) for each construct within each domain. Item-by-item correlations with Cronbach's alphas were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In general, the psychometric properties of the surveys are adequate (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994).

Construct	Items	Alpha
School Engagement	3	.72
School Belonging	3	.53
School Discussion Climate	3	.56
School Political Discussion	3	.63
School Support	3	.57
Personal Safety	3	.62
Conflict Resolution Skills	3	.65
Positive Character	3	.66
Teaching	7	.74
Curriculum	3	.71
School Resources	3	.53
School Services	3	.55
Site Safety	2	.74
Overall Satisfaction	3	.69

RESULTS

• A total of 13,255 4th and 5th grade student surveys were returned for a response rate of 90%. Response rates did not differ between CARE for Kids and non-CARE for Kids schools. Student Comprehensive School Surveys were analyzed to compare the CARE for Kids schools against non-CARE for Kids schools.

• The 2008 and 2009 surveys were analyzed to examine whether CARE for Kids schools 1) improved in their school climate, and 2) if they improved, whether they improved at a greater rate than non-CARE for Kids schools.

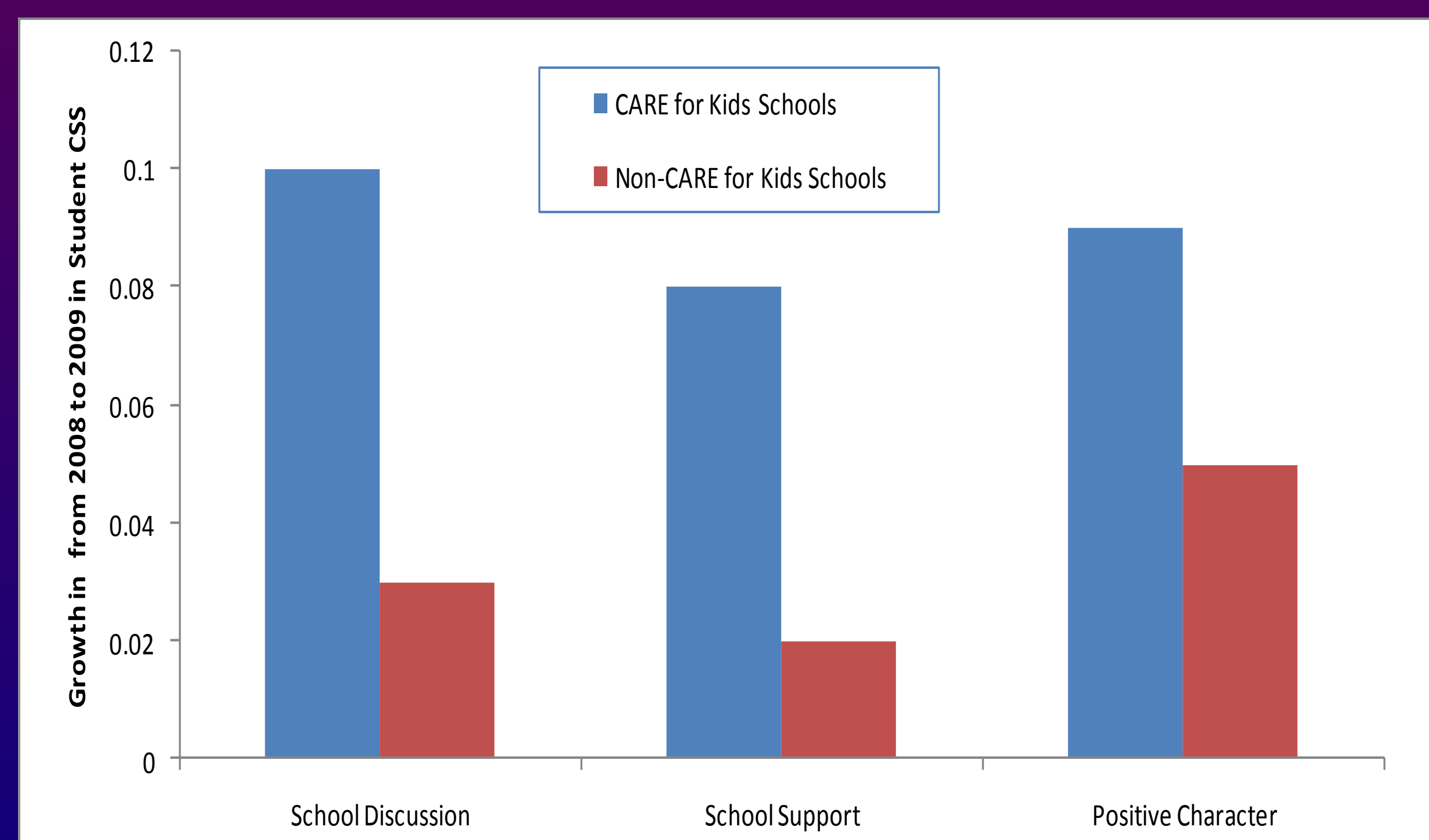
• First, in terms of overall change from 2008 to 2009, CARE for Kids school showed statistically significant improvements in each of the major areas. The largest gains were in the areas of School Belonging, Political Discussion, and Overall Satisfaction.

CSS Student Construct	2008	2009	Change*
Overall Satisfaction	3.12	3.23	0.11
School Engagement	2.97	3.06	0.09
School Belonging	3.13	3.25	0.12
School Discussion	3.03	3.13	0.10
School Support	3.33	3.41	0.08
Personal Safety	3.10	3.19	0.09
Political Discussion	2.69	2.80	0.11
Conflict Resolution	3.13	3.22	0.09
Positive Character	3.27	3.37	0.09

*all statistically significant at the .05 level

• Next, CARE for Kids schools were compared to the non-CARE for Kids school in terms of growth from 2008 to 2009. A multivariate analysis of variance utilizing the 9 CSS constructs as the dependent variables showed that CARE for Kids schools were marginally different from non-CARE for Kids schools, $F(1, 88) = 1.89, p = .06$.

• Follow-up univariate analyses showed that CFK and non-CFK school differed in three areas-School Support, School Discussion, and Positive Character. Students at CARE for Kids schools significantly showed more gains in these three areas compared to students at non-CARE for Kids schools (see figure below).



DATA INFORMING LEADERSHIP

• Data from the CSS were shared with each school's principal and Leadership Team in April 2009. A report with selected items on the 2008 and 2009 Comprehensive School Surveys for students, teachers, and parents were presented in order for school faculty to be able to examine the data in the different ways including:

- 1) What were the highest and lowest rated items?
- 2) Does your school's data show improvements from 2008 to 2009?
- 3) Are teacher responses aligned with student responses?

• A typical example of how a school used their data was 1) the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) viewed all results of the student surveys, 2) the ILT discussed the results with the rest of the school staff, 3) discuss as a staff the areas of professional development needed for 2009-2010.

SUMMARY

• When examining 2008 and 2009 Comprehensive Survey results, CARE for Kids schools significantly improved in all major areas from 2008 to 2009.

• Multivariate and follow-up univariate statistical analyses found that *students who attended CARE for Kids schools showed significantly more growth* in the areas of School Discussion Climate, School Support, and Positive Character than students in non-CARE for Kids schools.

• An additional 27 elementary schools will be implementing CARE for Kids in 2009-2010. The evaluation will continue to monitor and provide data for quality improvements.

• JCPS will continue the process of aligning the CSS framework with the Core Beliefs, the Theory of Action, and the District Goals and Strategies.

CARE FOR KIDS PRINCIPLES

- 1) At the heart of a caring school community are *respectful, supportive relationships* among and between students, educators, support staff, and parents.
- 2) Learning becomes more connected and meaningful for students when social, emotional, and ethical development is an *integral part* of the classroom, school, and community experience.
- 3) Significant and engaging learning, academic and social, takes place when students are able to construct deep understandings of broad concepts and principles through an *active process of exploration, discovery, and application*.
- 4) Community is strengthened when there are frequent opportunities for *students to exercise their voice, choice, and responsible independence* to work together for the common good.
- 5) Classroom community and learning are maximized through frequent opportunities for *collaboration and service* to others.
- 6) Effective classroom communities help students develop their *intrinsic motivation* by meeting their basic needs (e.g., safety, autonomy, belonging, competence, usefulness, fun, & pleasure), rather than seeking to control students with extrinsic motivators (e.g., rewards and punishment).

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