

In 2008, the Kansas State Department of Education was awarded funding from the US Education Department's Partnership in Character Education Program (PCEP) to implement the Kansas Character Education Project (KCEP). At that time, KCEP was designed to provide training to trainers at the seven Service Centers throughout the state. These trainers were, in turn, to deliver training and ongoing support to 44 participating high schools comprising experimental (impact) schools and control schools. Impact schools were to receive 2 days of training on the Character Education Partnership's (CEP) 11 Principles of Effective Character Education and the Smart and Good High Schools' *Power to Learn*® (P2L) curriculum. During their 1<sup>st</sup> year of participation, schools in the control group were to receive 1 day of CEP training. These schools would then move into the impact group for their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of participation and receive training on the *Smart and Good High Schools* model.

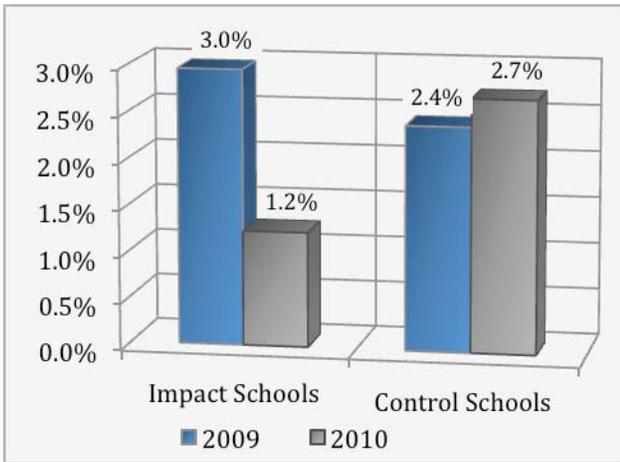
In January 2010, Congress elected not to appropriate funds for the continuation of PCEP. KCEP sustained operations with carry-over funds from 2009, but in a more limited capacity. Following intense lobbying efforts of state legislative leaders, funding was reinstated in August 2010. However, for various reasons, 15 of the 47 schools that were participating at the time that funding was pulled declined to continue their participation in the project. Among the reasons were consolidation/closure of schools, changes in leadership and thus focus, and the uncertainty of funding. Hence, attrition from the program left 19 impact and 13 control schools for 2010-11, with the 13 control schools moving to the impact group for 2011-12. Furthermore, the P2L curriculum, now known as *Power2Achieve*® (P2A), was revised to make it more interactive. Just as P2L, P2A is based on the Smart and Good High Schools model and is designed to increase academic achievement, reduce disciplinary problems, and enhance college and workforce preparation. The P2A curriculum used by KCEP aligns with Response to Intervention (RtI), school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) and social emotional learning competencies/standards (SEL). The curriculum's eight units consist of four lessons each and include instructional materials, lesson plans, lesson extension activities, and multimedia learning resources.

Schools may choose the ways in which they implement the P2A curriculum with their students; however, as part of KCEP they are required to present four of the eight units to all 9<sup>th</sup> graders in weekly 50-minute segments. The four units and lessons include the following: **1) Developing Positive and Productive Relationships: Consider the Perspective of Others** - use communication and social skills to effectively interact with others; use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; exercise flexibility and willingness to make necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal; and recognize feelings and perspectives of others; **2) Communicating and Collaborating with Efficiency and Effectiveness: Assume Shared Responsibility for Collaborative Work and Value Contributions Made by Each Team Member** - collaborate with others; use effective communication strategies in diverse contexts and settings; understand, negotiate, and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions; and work creatively with others; **3) Managing Priorities and Reducing Stress: Utilize Time and Manage Workload Effectively** - understand the principles of effective time management; identify essential drivers and preventers; use a systematic approach to time and task management; and monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight; and **4) Committing to High Standards and Continuous Improvement: Develop the Habits for Excellence** - set internal standards for excellence; go beyond basic mastery of skills to expand your learning, commit to hard work and motivate yourself when things are not easy, and seek external support and incorporate feedback effectively.

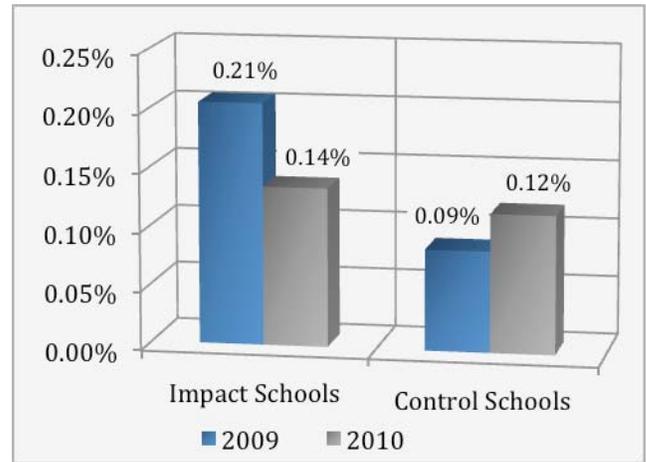
The original evaluation design specified that all impact and control schools were required to participate in several data collection activities. These activities included completion of the Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics (CREE) and the Communities That Care (CTC) surveys, as well as participation in several other activities conducted by Kansas University (KU). Additionally, the evaluation design included a comparison of impact and control schools' discipline data and state test scores. As a result of changes beyond the control of KCEP, the evaluation design was modified. KU is no longer evaluating the project but retains ownership of several data collection instruments; therefore, these instruments are not used in the evaluation. Additionally, CREE and CTC pre/post survey responses were sporadic (i.e., low response rate) and showed no differences between responding impact and control schools. However, discipline and achievement data are useable and the findings follow.

As seen in Figure 1, between 2009 and 2010, suspensions trended downward in impact schools while trending upward in control schools. Moreover, in 2010 the percentage of suspensions in impact schools (1.2%) was less than half the percentage in control schools (2.7%), a reversal from 2009 when suspensions in the impact group (3%) had been higher than in the control group (2.4%). Figure 2 illustrates a downward trend in expulsions in both the impact and the control groups, with significantly greater declines seen in the impact group than in the control group. In 2010, the percentage of expulsions in impact schools (0.14%) was comparable to that in control schools (0.12%) whereas in 2009 expulsions in impact schools (0.21%) had been more than twice the percentage in control schools (0.09%).

**Figure 1. Suspensions, 2009-10\***



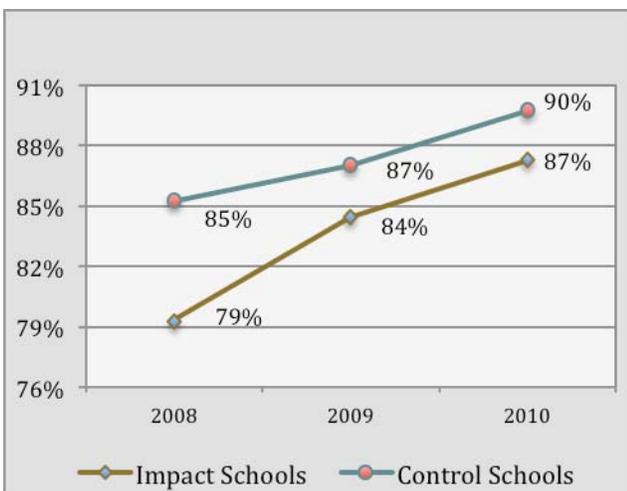
**Figure 2. Expulsions, 2009-10\***



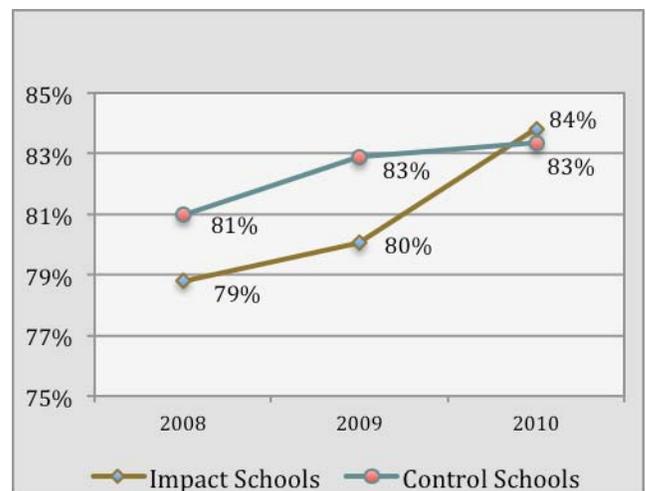
\* Due to a change in

Figure 3 indicates that between 2008 and 2010, the 6-percentage-point gap in reading achievement between impact and control schools narrowed to 3 percentage points. Additionally, in 2010, a 3-percentage-point rate of increase in reading achievement occurred in both the impact group and the control group. Figure 4 shows that between 2008 and 2010, math achievement increased 5 percentage points in impact schools as compared to 2 percentage points in control schools. In 2010, math achievement in the impact group (84%) exceeded that in the control group (83%), reversing the trend during the previous 2 years when math achievement in impact schools had been lower than in control schools.

**Figure 3. Reading Achievement, 2008-10**



**Figure 4. Math Achievement, 2008-10**



In the spring of 2011, Dr. Thomas Likona conducted focus groups and interviews with students and teachers at two of KCEPS's impact schools. While KCEP in and of itself cannot be credited with the positive changes in behavior and achievement that are illustrated above, the following statements made by students and teachers during the focus groups are indicative of the kinds of changes that are occurring as a direct result of the project.

- Our school used to be really bad. There used to be fights in the hall and name-calling. There's still some name-calling, but it's from the kids who often skip (P2A) Seminar.
- It used to be that when you came into this school and went from class to class, there'd be talking in the back of the room most of the time. Now, for the most part, there may be just one or two kids talking in the back. You can really hear and understand the teacher. I think this program has helped people be a little more respectful.
- Teachers are being more friendly. They're getting to know us better.
- It's about building character. We're creating books to show little kids how to build good character by hard work, perseverance, etc.
- It's helped me stop stealing.
- The biggest P2A lesson that worked for me is compromising, because it applies to real-life situations like dealing with your parents.
- When I'm talking with my mom, and I want to go somewhere and she says no, it's easier to negotiate now. Instead of yelling back and forth, we can actually talk and not get into a fight.
- I learned to work hard in life and to not procrastinate. I look at my future and want to succeed in it. I want people to think highly of me and respect me. I want to make a good living and have a family. Every Wednesday [P2A Seminar], I'm reminded of how important my choices are in life.
- P2A fits right into my approach to teaching this course. I've always used it to prepare students for school success and life success. During the first nine weeks of Freshman English, my basic message to students is: "Welcome to High School! This class is about helping you learn the skills you need to succeed not just in this class but across the board."
- Is it hard to practice with focus, intensity, and consistency? Sure it is. Finding the will to start is probably the hardest part. When I began running, it was so hard. The only way I was able to get started was that I had this little thing that told me, "Walk for 8 minutes, then run for 1 minute." That was my goal at first. I thought, "I can do anything for one minute." Even an old ex-smoker like me. So that's how I began. And last Friday, would you believe it, I ran two and a half miles!
- I'm giving them respect, and I'm getting respect. I think they're picking up on my example.