

Assessing Program Impact

Year-by-Year Findings

Shirley-Anne S. Paul & Peter Hart, University of Leeds



Illustration by Jeff Anderson © Narnian Virtues

To try to capture program effects, we used a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative measures. Here we report just selected findings; for all results go to <https://narnianvirtues.leeds.ac.uk>.

Overall Impact

Our most robust data were obtained in Years 2 and 3, when we had a matched control group. Our *main finding*: On average, students who experienced the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum performed better on our various character outcome measures than control group students.

Quantitative Findings: Year 1

The Year 1 findings are based on pre- and post-test data from 543 students (from seven UK schools) who studied *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* curriculum.

We found statistically significant gains for program students on: (1) our *Narnian Virtues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire*, which asked students to

write definitions of “virtue,” “vice,” “good character,” and each of the 6 Narnian virtues; and (2) the *Online Survey*, which asked students to select, from a list of 4 items, the two that were correct examples of a particular virtue. Program students also showed significant gains on two of our nine psychometric sub-scales: *Attitudes to Virtues* and *Empathy*.

Sample Empathy Items

- I know when people need help.
- I understand how other people are feeling.
- If I see someone hurting, it makes me feel sad.

Year 2 Findings

Year 2 findings are based on pre- and post-test data from 1,226 students (822 experimental and 404 control students) across seventeen UK schools (9 experimental and 8 control), who studied a revised version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* curriculum.

Only the program students showed significant gains in knowledge and understanding of the virtues on the *Online Survey*. Both groups showed gains on the *Narnia Virtues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire*. For program students only, there was an increase in empathy that approached significance.

Year 3 Findings

Year 3 results are based on pre- and post-test data from 741 students (443 experimental and 298 control) across ten schools (5 experimental and 5 control), who studied the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* curriculum. Scores on the *Narnia Vir-*

tues Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire significantly increased for the experimental group only. However, scores on the *Online Survey* of virtue understanding increased significantly for both groups. During year 3, program students showed no significant gains on other survey sub-scales. Control students showed significant *decreases* on every sub-scale except *Empathy*.

On average, program students performed better on the various character measures than control group students.

Parental Involvement: Years 2 and 3

Year 2 parental involvement data are based on 259 parents (from seven schools), who completed Home Activities with their children based on *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* curriculum. Year 3 parent data are based on 47 parents from one school only. In Year 2, the *number* of Home Activities completed by parents and children predicted positive student character outcomes. But for Year 3, it was the *time spent* (total minutes) on each activity that predicted positive outcomes.

Parent Interviews

The results of our interviews with 12 parents (who volunteered) from five schools suggest that *Narnian Virtues* positively impacted students’ character development and enabled parents to be effectively involved in their child’s character education (see box). ■

Shirley-Anne Paul was a Research Fellow at the Univ. of Leeds and is now with the Department of Health Sciences, Univ. of York (shirley.paul@york.ac.uk). **Peter Hart** is a Research Fellow with the School of Education, University of Leeds (P.J.Hart@leeds.ac.uk).

“Parents perceived positive effects on their child’s character and their parenting style. The virtues vocabulary gave parents a tool for addressing behavioral issues. The structured Home Activities and the spontaneous ‘character conversations’ that became more common in family life also helped students to see everyday family situations through an ethical lens and respond appropriately.

“For some parents, these interactions appeared to facilitate a shift in parenting style from authoritarian to authoritative. This is a positive outcome because research indicates that adolescents with authoritative parents are more likely to be confident and socially responsible.”

—Shirley-Anne S. Paul, Peter J. Hart, Paula J. Clarke, and Mark A. Pike, “Parents’ Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Home-Based Character Education Activities” (to be submitted).