A Report to the Nation

Smart & Good High Schools

Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond

Promising Practices for Building 8 Strengths of Character That Help Youth Lead Productive, Ethical, and Fulfilling Lives

Thomas Lickona, Ph.D. & Matthew Davidson, Ph.D.

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility)
State University of New York College at Cortland

Character Education Partnership
Washington, D.C.

Major support provided by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation

Smart & Good Schools

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The SMART & GOOD SCHOOLS INITIATIVE is engaged in research, development, trainings, and dissemination to build a network of Smart & Good Schools.

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Advance Praise for *Smart & Good High Schools*

The genius of *Smart & Good High Schools* is that it uses a values-based approach to address schools' two most important outcomes: academic skills and personal and civic virtues. These twin beacons will resonate with faculties, kids, and families in the independent school world.

—Patrick Bassett, president,
National Association of Independent Schools

Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson have hit a home run with the Smart & Good High Schools model. It ties academic performance to character in a new and exciting way. This model applies equally well to middle and elementary schools.

—Marvin Berkowitz, co-editor,
Journal of Research in Character Education

A fabulous piece of work. It brings together Aristotle and Plato, East and West, traditional and progressive, liberal and conservative, religious and secular, Alasdair MacIntyre and Alfie Kohn without losing firm foundations. Masterfully done. This will do enormous good.

—Karen Bohlin, head of school,
Montrose School

True education is the integration of character and competence. This excellent manual will help our children succeed both personally and professionally.

—Stephen Covey,
The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness

Good character is not just a personal or familial trait but one that positively establishes the tone of our entire social network. Self-control in the sexual arena is similar to self-control in other arenas—it requires practice and persistence. The consequences of adolescent sexual activity, with or without pregnancy, with or without STDs, reverberate in their adult lives. Whereas some writers are reluctant to state the obvious, Lickona and Davidson demonstrate how character and physical and emotional health are linked.

—John Diggs, M.D., Co-Chair,
Massachusetts Physicians Resource Council

An amazing report. The eight strengths of character, the performance character/moral character distinction, and the ethical learning community are all important conceptual advances. This is the most promising pathway for genuine transformation of high schools that I have seen.

—Maurice Elias, Collaborative for Academic,
Social, and Emotional Learning

This ground-breaking study will change forever how we think about the high school experience, how high schools function, and what it means to be a great high school that truly meets the needs of all of its students. It provides example after example of the best practices that the best high schools are using to foster both the academic and character development of their students. A brilliant report—a seminal study—a major new contribution to the field.

—Kristin Danielson Fink, Executive Director,
Community of Caring

We are already using performance character and moral character as a litmus test to assess many aspects of our school's program. So many ideas in this report pass the "Velcro Test"—they're easy to understand and stick to the mind!

—Malcolm Gauld, president,
The Hyde Schools

An outstanding report—well-written, research-based, comprehensive, and compelling. The strong emphasis on democratic learning and on the renewed civic mission of schools is a wonderful contribution to all educators seeking to re-engage students in public life.

—Charles Haynes, Senior Scholar,
First Amendment Center

Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson have put together an extraordinary resource that will strengthen any character development program as well as stimulate innovations—especially in high schools, where attention to character is so much needed.

—Michael Josephson, President,
Character Counts! Coalition

A wonderful piece of work that addresses an urgent need. This timely, thorough, and thoughtful report will provide a strong practical guide for high schools as they work to foster the character development of American adolescents.

—Rachael Kessler, Executive director, The PassageWays Institute

I flat-out *love* the chapter on the Professional Ethical Learning Community. Adding the ethical dimension is brilliant. Can't wait to use this with my faculty!

—Lawrence Kohn, principal, Quest School

The concept of performance character and moral character will be extremely useful at the high school level. I also applaud the inclusion of the spiritual dimension—too often omitted—defined in language that will resonate with a wide range of educators and parents.

—Meg Korpi, president, Character Research Institute

I am awed by this undertaking. The eight strengths of character offer a clear vision of human flourishing. This report will have a long, salutary impact on education generally and will be the standard reference on high school character education for years to come.

—Dan Lapsley, co-editor, *Character Psychology and Character Education*

A great work that provides a road map for high schools. I am already using it with education students in my college classes.

—James Leming, Carl A. Gerstacker Chair in Education, Saginaw Valley State University

***Smart & Good High Schools* will be invaluable to school leaders, individual classroom practitioners, and teacher educators looking for thoughtful approaches to educating for character.**

—Bernice Lerner, Acting Director, Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character

Approximately three-quarters of college students say they have cheated on a test or major assignment in the past year—a problem we need to address *before* students get to college. This report shows us how to engage high school students in creating a culture of character that promotes integrity as a core value.

—Donald McCabe, founding president, Center for Academic Integrity

A milestone contribution to the field of character education and to the entire educational reform movement. Applicable to every level of education, K-16.

—Sanford N. McDonnell, former CEO, McDonnell Douglas; Chairman of the Board, Character Education Partnership

All the way through you know you're enjoying someone's labor of love. This is really going to be helpful to high school educators.

—Kevin Ryan, co-author, *Building Character in Schools*

Sensible recommendations—though not easy or obvious—and written in clear English. Bravo!

—Ted Sizer, founder, Coalition of Essential Schools

There's been an important component of education missing in our high schools for many years: the blending of character development with academic training. Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson have done a marvelous job of putting together a report that shows us how it can be done and how everybody will win. I hope every high school administrator and teacher in the country reads it.

—Hal Urban, high school teacher for 35 years; author, *Life's Greatest Lessons*

Founded in 1994 and located in the School of Education at the State University of New York College at Cortland, the ***Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility)*** promotes a comprehensive approach to character education, one that uses all phases of school life as opportunities for character development. The Center has trained more than 5,000 K-12 educators from over 35 states and 15 countries, helps schools and districts implement character education through its annual Smart & Good Schools Summer Institute and on-site staff development, publishes *excellence & ethics: the education letter of the Smart & Good Schools Initiative*, provides evaluation services, and conducts research on character education. Publications by the Center's staff include *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility, Raising Good Children, Character Education Evaluation Toolkit, Character Matters,* and *Character Quotations*. The *Smart & Good High Schools* report reflects the Center's increased attention to high school character development. Dr. Thomas Lickona directs the Center; Dr. Matthew Davidson, formerly Research Director at the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, is now President and Director of the Institute for Excellence and Ethics, Inc. (IEE), a 501c(3) non-profit organization established to work in partnership with the Center on the research and development of the Smart & Good Schools Initiative.

Founded in 1993 and based in Washington, D.C., the ***Character Education Partnership (CEP)*** is a national coalition of educators, parents, organizations, community groups, and companies dedicated to promoting character education as a means of creating a more civil, just, and compassionate society. Its organizational partners include the American Association of School Administrators, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Council for the Social Studies, the National School Boards Association, and the National PTA. CEP hosts an annual National Forum on K-12 character education, sponsors the yearly National Schools of Character awards, promotes character education in teacher training programs, provides professional development, and publishes character education resources such as the *Journal of Research in Character Education, Eleven Principles Sourcebook: How to Achieve Quality Character Education in K-12 Schools,* and, most recently, *What Works in Character Education: A Research-Driven Guide for Educators.*

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Winifred Lickona

December 15, 1916—April 15, 2005

and

Richard Davidson

July 11, 1937—February 1, 2005

who passed on during our work on this report
but whose influence on our character
will last forever

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Work of excellence is transformational. Once a student sees that he or she is capable of excellence, that student is never quite the same. There is a new self-image, a new notion of possibility. After students have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less.

—Ron Berger, *An Ethic of Excellence*

The good-to-great companies placed greater weight on character attributes than on specific educational background, practical skills, specialized knowledge, or work experience.

—Jim Collins, *Good to Great*

The aim of education is to guide young persons in the process through which they shape themselves as human persons—armed with knowledge, strength of judgment, and moral virtues—while at the same time conveying to them the spiritual heritage of the nation and the civilization in which they are involved.

—Jacques Maritain

If we lived alone, we wouldn't need the virtues of fairness and compassion. If children could raise themselves, we wouldn't need the family virtues of commitment and fidelity. If wealth could simply be found, we wouldn't need the virtues of initiative and industry to create and sustain wealth. If our society were homogeneous, we wouldn't need the virtues of tolerance and respect for legitimate differences. If our political institutions were authoritarian and a few of us were fit to direct the lives of the rest of us, we wouldn't need the virtues of personal responsibility and active citizenry. The facts of our social life give us the broad contours of a conception of good character. It is the character required for a democratic society.

—William Galston, University of Maryland professor of public affairs

I am an idealist at heart. I agree with Gandhi's philosophy: "You must be the change you want to see in the world."

—A High School Boy

Compassion for others gives my life a sense of purpose. What are we here for, if not to improve the overall condition of mankind?

—A High School Girl

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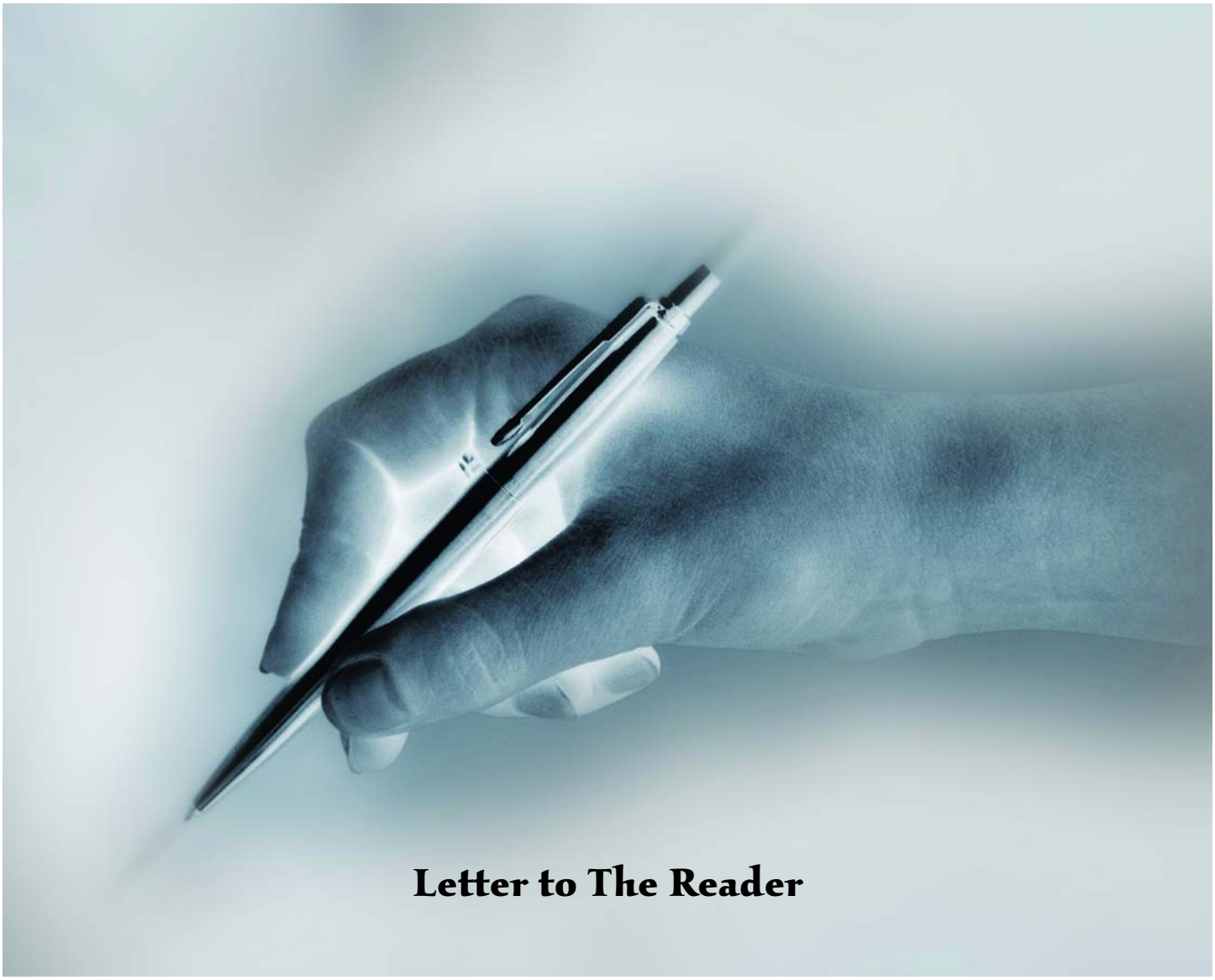


Letter to The Reader

"Are you a hedgehog or a fox?" That's a question management expert Jim Collins asks in his best-selling book, *Good to Great*. The question comes from an essay, "The Hedgehog and the Fox," by Isaiah Berlin and is based on an ancient Greek parable.

The fox, crafty and cunning, knows many things, but the dowdy, porcupine-like hedgehog knows one big thing. The fox plots many different attacks on the hedgehog, but the hedgehog always does the same thing. He curls up into a ball of sharp spikes—and the fox must retreat.

Berlin used this parable to divide the world into two groups of people: foxes and hedgehogs. Foxes pursue many goals at the same time and see the world in all its complexity. They lack focus. Hedgehogs, by contrast, simplify a complex world into a single organizing idea, a basic concept that unifies and guides everything.

What does the parable of the fox and the hedgehog have to do with going from good to great?

Everything, Collins says. Those who built good-to-great companies were hedgehogs. Their goals were constructed from a unique and discerning organizational insight, which they then systematically pursued.

Does the fox and the hedgehog parable apply to schools? We think it does. Under ever-changing pressures from many sources—federal testing mandates, state learning standards, dwindling fiscal resources, increasingly diverse student populations, dissatisfied parents, the latest educational innovations, a changing labor market—schools may feel they don't have the luxury to be hedgehogs.

But if we aren't hedgehogs, we lose focus. We end up with lots of practices that may not help us achieve the central goals of our mission. We may in fact need many practices to achieve our goals—this report describes a plethora of

practices—but in a "hedgehog school," every practice is aligned with its mission.

A major finding of our study of 24 diverse high schools across the United States is that the best schools exemplify the hedgehog concept.

These schools are able to identify and describe a core of "signature practices" that form the basis of their identity. They are very clear about their unifying hedgehog concept—their mission and the key practices that contribute to its realization. Mission drives practices.

Smart and Good

This report proposes an overarching hedgehog concept that we think the best high schools also have in common, namely, that education has two great goals: to help students become *smart* (in the multi-dimensional sense of intelligence) and to help them become *good* (in the multi-dimensional sense of moral maturity). Excellence and ethics. We call a school that is committed to both of these goals a Smart & Good High School.

Character is the pathway to both excellence and ethics. Young people need *performance character*—diligence, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, and perseverance—in order to realize their potential for excellence in any performance or achievement context in school, work, and beyond. They need *moral character*—integrity, respect, cooperation, and justice—in order to be ethical and fulfilled in their relationships.

If young people don't have performance character, they won't develop their talents and lead a productive life. The nation won't have a competent, competitive workforce.

Education has two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good.

If our young don't have moral character, they won't lead an ethical life. Society will be filled with people who lie, cheat, and steal.

In a Smart & Good High School, all things in the life of the school—routines, rituals, discipline, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and unplanned "teachable moments"—are intentionally utilized as opportunities to foster excellence and ethics.

The Essential Questions

With this hedgehog focus, schools don't run around like foxes pursuing many unrelated things. Everything they do is aligned with excellence and ethics. The essential questions asked about any given practice are always:

- **How does it contribute to performance character (the pathway to excellence)?**
- **How does it contribute to moral character (the pathway to ethical behavior)?**

Smart and good. Excellence and ethics. The concept is simple. The operating principle that flows from it is also simple. Work to ensure that everything you do:

- does not *detract* from the cultivation of excellence and ethics
- *contributes maximally* to the development and integration of excellence and ethics.

Character is the pathway to both excellence and ethics.

Who is this report for?

We hope that this will be helpful to at least four groups of readers: (1) *individual high school practitioners*—teachers, counselors, school psychologists, coaches, student leaders, parents, and all others who play a role in shaping the character of students and the character of schools; (2) *school leaders*—such as principals, superintendents, curriculum directors, teacher leaders, and reform-minded heads of unions—who are in a position to influence whole-school change; (3) leaders, such as *heads of state education departments or educational organizations,* who are in a position to influence educational policies affecting many schools; and (4) *schools of education* responsible for preparing the next generation of teachers and administrators.

Our report's title, *Smart & Good High Schools,* clearly indicates our belief that if you want individual teachers and other staff to pursue the mission of excellence and ethics with students, then you should create a whole-school design (addressing such issues as teaching load and time for planning) and a positive school culture that motivate and help staff implement such a vision. Otherwise, as a member of our Experts Panel commented, "All the noble rhetoric in school mission statements will seem like a cruel joke."

But we also do well to remember that a single adult can make a significant difference in the life of a young person. That is what the research on resilience tells us: Young people who manage to overcome adversity in their backgrounds often cite a single teacher, coach, or other inspiring role model who helped them believe in themselves.[1]

One veteran educational researcher underscored this point: Even as we strive for schoolwide change, we must not lose sight of the potential and responsibility of every individual school practitioner to have a positive impact on the character of students:

Changing whole-school climate is very important but will be a slow, difficult process in most high schools. The Power of One really matters and is at the heart of most high school students' character-forming school experiences. Therefore every high school educator needs to ask, "What can *I* do better to foster character in my work with students? How am *I* modeling character for my students? How can I assess my perceived effectiveness in these areas?"

"The Power of One matters."

Bottom line: Do everything possible to work toward a whole-school environment that supports excellence and ethics. But in the meantime, work at the micro-level—on your own practices, in your own sphere of influence—to optimize your personal contribution to the character development of every student. In our study, we found many individual practitioners who were doing just that, in spite of less than ideal working conditions.

A note on reporting style: In describing promising practices, except when we draw from published material, we do not name the school or teacher. We do gratefully acknowledge the help of participating schools on **page xix.** In the narrative of the report, we describe the particulars necessary for understanding a given practice—keeping the focus on the practice, not the person or the school.

We also want to avoid seeming to hold up, as "exemplary," any particular school or teacher. Unlike an awards program, whose purpose is to give a stamp of approval, our study was not aimed at producing a list of schools or programs that others should go and emulate. Rather, we set out to identify promising practices for high school character development and ended up, from the many good things we saw around the country, developing a new vision: that of a Smart & Good High School in which excellence and ethics are fully integrated—in which every phase of school life is shaped by that dual mission.

We invite everyone, whatever your role, to consider the merits of a hedgehog focus on excellence and ethics as a strategy for helping our high schools—and our youth—flourish.

Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson
Cortland, New York

[1] J. Garbarino, *Raising children in a socially toxic environment.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995); see also B. Benard, "Fostering resiliency in kids," *Educational Leadership,* 1993, 51, 3, 44-48.

How to Read This Report

There are two ways to read this report. One is to begin here and move through the material in the order we have arranged it. Another is to go directly to a chapter or part of a chapter that has special interest for you. We have provided a comprehensive Table of Contents that lists subheadings and pull-out boxes for each chapter. In the electronic version of the report, just click on the chapter or subheading link.

Throughout the document, internal links, ones that take you to another page within the PDF, are highlighted in **purple**. External links, ones that take you to a resource outside the PDF, are highlighted in **red**.

Different icons are used to designate different categories of promising practices that we identified in our study. In Chapter 3 on the Ethical Learning Community (ELC), we use a miniature version of our ELC graphic bearing the acronym "ELC." In Chapter 4 on the Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC), we use the same graphic but with the acronym "PELC."

In Chapter 5 on promising practices that foster our Eight Strengths of Character, we use a segmented octagon, highlighting the segment relevant to the character strength under discussion.

To help you decide how you'd like to approach the report, here's an overview of its content:

The **Front Matter**, especially the section on **Research Methodology**, will give you the background on our study and how we identified promising practices.

Principles of a Smart & Good High School (page xxv) lays out the basic blueprint for developing a school committed to the integration of excellence and ethics.

Chapter 1 sets the context by presenting "performance indicators" (having to do with achievement) and "moral indicators" (having to do with ethical behavior) that offer a picture of today's adolescents. Then we describe two performance challenges and two moral challenges that are among the many faced by American high schools today—and that are most fruitfully addressed by keeping a "hedgehog" focus on excellence and ethics.

Chapter 2 presents a new definition of character—as consisting of performance character (doing our best work) and moral character (being our best ethical self). This is a key theoretical concept in our report.

Chapter 3 presents six principles—and promising prac-

tices related to each—by which faculty and staff, students, parents, and the wider community work together to become an Ethical Learning Community (ELC). The ELC provides the intellectual and moral culture within which performance character and moral character develop.

Chapter 4 shows how those same principles play out in the Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC), the collaborative efforts of all school staff to challenge and support each other in the quest for excellence and ethics.

Chapter 5 presents Eight Strengths of Character that define performance character and moral character, and describes promising practices related to each.

Chapter 6 is a Q & A format, giving our responses to questions commonly asked in presentations we've done thus far on the findings of our *Smart & Good High Schools* study.

Finally, we invite you to visit our website (**www.cortland.edu/character**), where you can view a narrated PowerPoint introduction to the Smart & Good vision and sign up to subscribe (free) to *excellence & ethics: the education letter of the Smart & Good Schools Initiative*. You may also contact us with comments or questions at: **character@cortland.edu**.

Schools Visited in the *Smart & Good High Schools* Study

We made site visits to 24 high schools, all of which had received some form of external recognition, in every region of the country—north, south, east, west, and midwest. The schools ranged in size from 300 students to 4,300 and included public, public charter, independent, and religious schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings. We are deeply grateful to the staff, students, and parents of each of these schools for participating in the *Smart & Good High Schools* study. We also wish to thank those practitioners who were not part of our site visits, but whose promising practices we learned about through other communications or the professional literature.

Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego, California

Adlai Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Illinois

Brighton High School, Brighton, Massachusetts

Community of Peace Academy, St. Paul, Minnesota

Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Greenbelt, Maryland

Fenway High School, Boston, Massachusetts

Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, Devens, Massachusetts

Hudson High School, Hudson, Massachusetts

Hyde School, Bath, Maine

Hyde Leadership Public Charter School, Washington, D.C.

James Logan High School, Union City, California

Montclair Kimberley Academy, Montclair, New Jersey

New Hampton School, New Hampton, New Hampshire

Oakland Technical High School, Oakland, California

Palatine High School, Palatine, Illinois

Quest High School, Humble, Texas

St. Benedict's Preparatory School, Newark, New Jersey

St. Genevieve Catholic School, Panorama City, California

Shalhevet High School, Los Angeles, California

Skaneateles High School, Skaneateles, New York

Souhegan High School, Amherst, New Hampshire

South Carroll High School, Sykesville, Maryland

Terry Sanford Senior High School, Fayetteville, North Carolina

Troup High School, LaGrange, Georgia

National Experts Panel

Patrick Bassett, president, National Association of Independent Schools
Jeffrey Beedy, former headmaster, New Hampton School
Ron Berger, educational consultant and teacher
Marvin Berkowitz, co-editor, *Journal of Research in Character Education*
Sheldon Berman, superintendent, Hudson School District
Karen Bohlin, head of school, Montrose School
Bill Bond, former principal, Paduka High School; resident practitioner, Safe and Orderly Schools, National Association of Secondary School Principals
Geoff Cramer, founder/executive director, Futures for Kids
John Diggs, physician; Co-Chair, Massachusetts Physicians Resource Council
Kristin Danielson Fink, executive director, Community of Caring
Robert Foor-Hogue, science teacher, South Carroll High School
James Garbarino, professor of human development, Cornell University
Malcolm Gauld, president, Hyde Schools
Joanne Goubourn, director, Hyde Leadership Public Charter School
Charles Haynes, Senior Scholar, First Amendment Center
F. Washington Jarvis, former head, Roxbury Latin School
Michael Josephson, president, Josephson Institute of Ethics and Character Counts! Coalition
Rachael Kessler, executive director, PassageWays Institute
Lawrence Kohn, principal, Quest High School
Meg Korpi, president, Character Research Institute
Daniel Lapsley, chair of educational psychology, Ball State University
James Leming, Carl A. Gerstacker Chair in Education, Saginaw Valley State University
Donald McCabe, founder, Center for Academic Integrity
Sanford N. McDonnell, chairman emeritus, McDonnell Douglas Corporation; chairman of the board, Character Education Partnership
Theresa Monteiro, English teacher, Brighton High School
Clark Power, professor, program of liberal studies, University of Notre Dame
Kevin Ryan, founder/director emeritus, Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University
Nancy Faust Sizer, lecturer, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Ted Sizer, founder, Coalition of Essential Schools
Darrick Smith, drop-out prevention coordinator, Oakland Technical High School
Jim Thompson, founder and executive director, Positive Coaching Alliance
Hal Urban, former history and psychology teacher, Woodside High School
Maryann Wolfe, Paideia Program teacher, Oakland Technical High School

National Student Leaders Panel

Keesha Brooks, Hyde Leadership Public Charter School
Megan Brown, Adlai Stevenson High School
Tremain Caesar, St. Benedict's Preparatory School
Erin Capistrano, Academy of Our Lady of Peace
Tina Cassidy, Quest High School
Alyssa Cimabue, South Carroll High School
Abigail Cohen, Montclair Kimberley Academy
Lanaya Cribbs, Community of Peace School
Nick David, Montclair Kimberley Academy
Doug Denison, South Carroll High School
Adrianna Espinoza, Palatine High School
Djamila Evora, Fenway High School
Norrell Fogle, Hyde Leadership Public Charter School
Corey Friedman, Adlai Stevenson High School
Kathrina Galang, St. Genevieve High School
Sarah Gordon, Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School
Phil Hannam, Eleanor Roosevelt High School
Lear Hackel , Shalhevet High School
Sarah Honig, Shalhevet High School
Casey Horn, Quest High School
Jill Kahane, Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School
Mudit Kaushal, Eleanor Roosevelt High School
Sarah Krongard, Hudson High School
Chayee Lee, Community of Peace School
David Lee, James Logan High School
Michael Linares, St. Genevieve High School
Daisy Lopez, James Logan High School
Thomas McKenney, Souhegan High School
Danielle Murphy, Skaneateles High School
Kathleen Nishimoto, Souhegan High School
Rita Paulino, Hudson High School
Heather Richardson, Palatine High School
Apocalipsis Rosario, Fenway High School
Daniel Ruhlman, Skaneateles High School
Jim Sheldon, Hyde School
Anne Shiraishi, Academy of Our Lady of Peace
Ashley Smith, Troup High School
Emerson Tronchin, St. Benedict's Preparatory School
Johanna Young, Terry Sanford Senior High School
Christine Zanetti, Hyde School

Smart & Good High Schools:
Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond

Executive Summary

Throughout history, and in cultures all over the world, education rightly conceived has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good. They need character for both. They need character qualities such as diligence, a strong work ethic, and a positive attitude in order to do their best in school and succeed in life. They need character qualities such as honesty, respect, and fairness in order to live and work with others.

This report views character, defined to include striving for excellence and striving for ethical behavior, as the cornerstone of success in school and life. A *Smart & Good High School* is committed to developing the performance character and moral character of adolescents within an ethical learning community. By **performance character,** we mean those qualities needed to realize one's potential for excellence—to develop one's talents, work hard, and achieve goals in school, work, and beyond. By **moral character,** we mean those qualities needed to be ethical—to develop just and caring relationships, contribute to community, and assume the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. By an **ethical learning community,** we mean staff, students, parents, and the wider community working together to model and develop performance character and moral character.

Performance character and moral character are, in turn, defined in terms of **eight strengths of character** which, taken together, offer a vision of human flourishing over a lifetime:

1. **Lifelong learner and critical thinker**
2. **Diligent and capable performer**
3. **Socially and emotionally skilled person**
4. **Ethical thinker**
5. **Respectful and responsible moral agent**
6. **Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle**
7. **Contributing community member and democratic citizen**
8. **Spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose.**

Drawing on theory, research, and on-the-ground wisdom, including site visits to 24 high schools that had received external recognition, *Smart & Good High Schools* describes promising classroom and schoolwide practices that can help foster these eight outcomes through an ethical learning community. The report also describes practices that create a **professional ethical learning community** in which staff work together to maximize their positive impact on excellence and ethics and the eight strengths of character.

Research Methodology and Criteria for Promising Practices

Three Research Goals

Three goals guided our two-year research project. Our first was to identify educational practices that could reasonably be considered "promising" for developing adolescent character, defined to include both performance character and moral character. This expanded definition of character led us to look widely for practices supportive of student learning and achievement, as well as for practices supportive of student honesty, respect, and other aspects of moral maturity. Our second goal was to describe and illustrate these practices in sufficient detail to make them accessible to practitioners. Third, we wanted to generate theory—to develop a working theoretical model of a high school that develops and integrates both excellence and ethics.

Three Sources of Knowledge

In our search for promising practices, we have drawn on three sources of knowledge: (1) theory, (2) research, and (3) on-the-ground wisdom—the voices and experiences of school practitioners, parents, and students.

A Grounded Theory Approach

Our research on promising practices used a "grounded theory approach." Grounded theory has been described as "the discovery of theory from data."[1] A grounded theory approach does not presume a theoretical blank slate. Rather, it typically begins with a partial framework of concepts or principles. In our case we began with a 16-part typology of practices (e.g., discipline practices, curricular integration practices, practices that develop healthy lifestyles). During and after our field work, we reviewed our data, looking for emerging themes of interests such as the contribution of character to the realization of excellence. This process resulted in new theoretical categories such as "performance character" and specific outcomes such as "diligent and capable performer" that were supported by our observation and interview data. These emerging categories were then elaborated, clarified, and refined through additional field work. We also compared and integrated the findings from our field work with knowledge gained from our ongoing review of the relevant theoretical, empirical, and practical literature.

Research Methodologies

Our research over the two-year period included: (1) assembling a database of relevant literature; (2) site visits to 24 diverse high schools; (3) guidance from two panels; and (4) supplemental interviews.

1. Assembling a database of relevant literature. We gathered and examined relevant theoretical and empirical literature on adolescent development, high school reform, and character education, assembling a database of more than 1,400 references (books, studies, reports, essays, etc.).

2. Site visits to diverse schools. We conducted site visits to 24 high schools, large and small, public and private, secular and religious, representing all geographical regions of the country. We began by identifying schools receiving external recognition (for example, designation as a National School of Character, U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School, Coalition of Essential Schools Leader School, National Service Learning Leader School) and then created a sample of schools stratified by geographic location, school size, type, and our desire to observe a wide range of practices. Site visits to these schools utilized a mixed-methods design, including:

- **Focus groups with stakeholders (staff, students, and, when possible, parents)**
- **Classroom observations, typically followed by an interview with the teacher**
- **Interviews with the principal/head of school and other school leaders**
- **Observing, in action, particular school programs identified by a school as its "signature practices"**
- **Individual or paired interviews with the two students nominated by the school for our National Student Leaders Panel**
- **Analysis of program materials and archival data.**

3. Guidance from two panels. A *National Experts Panel,* comprised of academics and practitioners with expertise in adolescent development, high school education, or character education, gave us both theoretical and methodological guidance before and during our study and offered suggestions on a draft of our report. A parallel *National Student Leaders Panel* provided input through on-site interviews, a written survey, and feedback on the draft of the report.[2]

4. Supplemental interviews. In addition to the site-visit interviews, we also conducted interviews, in person or by phone, with practitioners, parents, program developers, and other individuals implementing practices relevant to our focus outcomes.

Three Criteria for Promising Practices

With the help of our National Experts Panel, we established three broad criteria (with specific sub-criteria) by which a practice would be considered "promising": (1) research validation (in which case the practice can be considered empirically substantiated, not merely promising); (2) relevance and face validity; and (3) the testimony of credible sources. The **box** on page xxiv presents the three criteria and sub-criteria by which we considered a practice promising.

Research validation obviously constitutes the strongest kind of support, and practices meeting multiple criteria (e.g., supportive studies and practitioner testimony) are more persuasive than those meeting only one criterion. It is possible that a practice which teachers say "works" or students find meaningful will later be shown by formal research to be less effective than such testimonies suggest, or effective in influencing different outcomes than originally hypothesized, or even ineffective. We have, however, intentionally designed our criteria to cast a wide net, preferring to catch *potentially* valuable practices even if some are ultimately not supported by research.

In most cases the promising practices we recommend are at least indirectly connected to a research base, even if a particular practice itself has not been researched. For example, the power of shaking students' hands at the classroom door as a way of strengthening the teacher-student relationship has, to our knowledge, not been empirically validated, but the importance of fostering "school connectedness" in preventing teen risk behavior has.

In the qualitative tradition, we often provide "rich, thick descriptions"[3] of practices so that readers might understand the implementation nuances that are likely to make the practice effective. Where possible, we have included the voices of practitioners and students. We hope that this level of detail will enable readers to test these practices against their own judgment and experience and decide which practices seem adaptable to their settings.

In the end, identifying promising practices is as much art as science. Ultimately, it is an effort to make judgments that are informed by what research tells us. Our hope is that our identification of these promising practices will be followed by further research on their effectiveness.

Character is power.

—Booker T. Washington

Endnotes

[1] See B.G. Glaser & A.L. Strauss, *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1967). Also, A.L. Strauss & J. Corbin, "Grounded theory methodology: An overview," in N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

[2] The student panel included a male and female student from 92% of participating schools.

[3] C. Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays.* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

Criteria for Promising Practices

1. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

- *Experimental validation.* Experimental research has shown the educational practice to be effective; students who experience this practice are superior on some measure(s) of performance character or moral character compared to those who do not experience the practice.
- *Pre-post differences.* Students show improvement on some character measure(s) after experiencing the practice, although there is no comparison group.
- *Experimental support from other developmental levels.* Though the practice hasn't yet been empirically evaluated at the high school level, it has been shown to be effective at the elementary, middle, or post-secondary levels.
- *Support from correlational research.* Research finds a positive association between students' experience of the practice and some desirable character outcome.
- *Link to a mediating variable.* The practice fosters a variable, such as a sense of community, that has been shown to mediate positive character outcomes.

2. RELEVANCE AND FACE VALIDITY (USUALLY USED IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER CRITERIA)

- *Relevance to important adolescent outcomes and face validity.* The practice is relevant to one or more of the eight developmental outcomes (e.g., diligent and capable performer, respectful and responsible moral agent, democratic citizen) in our study and also has face validity, based on our direct observation of the practice and/or our professional judgment (informed by a combined 45 years of experience in the field of moral/character education). We judged practices to have face validity, for example, if they demonstrated strong potential to stimulate students' thinking, engage them in striving for excellence, motivate them to moral action, and so on.
- *Relevance to important school outcomes and face validity.* The practice is relevant to important school outcomes (e.g., improved academic performance and graduation rates and reduction of bullying, discipline problems, and sexual activity) and has face validity.

3. THE TESTIMONY OF CREDIBLE SOURCES (USUALLY USED IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER CRITERIA)

- *External recognition.* The practice or program has received an award for excellence from a credible educational organization (e.g., National School of Character Award, U. S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Schools Award, National Service Learning Award).
- *Practitioner testimony.* Teachers, school leaders, or other practitioners testify to the effectiveness of the practice, based on their experience with it.
- *Testimony of students.* Students say this practice has positively impacted their performance character and/or moral character.

Principles of a Smart & Good High School

The Principles of a Smart & Good High School are intended to provide a blueprint for building a school committed to excellence and ethics. We expect these Principles to evolve as we work with schools seeking to put them into practice.

1 Make the development of performance character and moral character—the integration of excellence and ethics—the cornerstone of the school's mission and identity. Define performance character and moral character in terms of 8 strengths of character needed for human flourishing over a lifetime.

Place the development of performance character and moral character at the center of your school's mission and identity. View this integration of excellence and ethics as essential for realizing success in school, work, and beyond. Commit to promoting excellence and ethics by developing the eight strengths of character that define performance character and moral character: (1) lifelong learner and critical thinker, (2) diligent and capable performer, (3) socially and emotionally skilled person, (4) ethical thinker, (5) respectful and responsible moral agent, (6) self-disciplined person, (7) contributing community member and democratic citizen, and (8) spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose.

2 Work to establish the conditions that support the implementation of the Smart & Good High Schools vision.

Take steps to create the conditions that support the development of a Smart & Good High School. These conditions include strong leadership, optimal school size, time for planning and reflection, supportive scheduling, manageable teaching loads, a safe and orderly environment, trusting and respectful relationships, and adequate budgetary resources. Continually address these factors in order to create the optimal conditions for successful implementation.

3 As individual practitioners, capitalize on the Power of One—your personal contribution to the performance character and moral character of every student.

While striving for a whole-school environment that supports excellence and ethics, work as individual practitioners in your own sphere of influence to maximize your personal contribution to the character development of every student. Educational research and students' own voices point to the Power of One—an adult who has made an enduring difference in the life of a young person. Whether as a school leader, classroom instructor, coach, advisor, parent, or member of the support staff, examine your practices—including your modeling of performance character and moral character—with the goal of optimizing your impact on students' growth in character. To amplify the Power of One, seek out other, like-minded individuals—another teacher, another coach, another parent—and work together.

4 Develop an Ethical Learning Community (ELC)—a partnership of staff, students, parents, and the wider community.

Work to develop an Ethical Learning Community (ELC)—an active partnership of staff, students, parents, and the wider community—that shares responsibility for modeling and fostering performance character and moral character. View the ELC as the school culture that provides support and challenge for all its members in developing excellence and ethics. Build this culture of character around six ELC operating principles:

1. ***Develop shared purpose and identity.*** Cultivate a schoolwide sense of purpose, identity, and community based on a shared commitment to promoting performance character and moral character.
2. ***Align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research.*** View everything in the life of the school—curriculum, co-curricular activities, discipline, routines, and traditions—as opportunities to develop performance character and moral character. Ask, How does a given practice contribute to the integration of excellence and ethics—performance character and moral character? What is the evidence of its effectiveness?
3. ***Have a voice; take a stand.*** Create a democratic community that maximizes participation in the quest for excellence and ethics; challenge all members of the Ethical Learning Community to use their voices with courage and integrity.
4. ***Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.*** See yourself as a work in progress; pursue your personal best.

5. ***Practice collective responsibility.*** Care enough to expect the best from others; commit to the norm of "care-frontation" in relationships.

6. ***Grapple with the tough issues—the elephants in the living room.*** Address the critical issues—in school and outside school— that affect excellence and ethics.

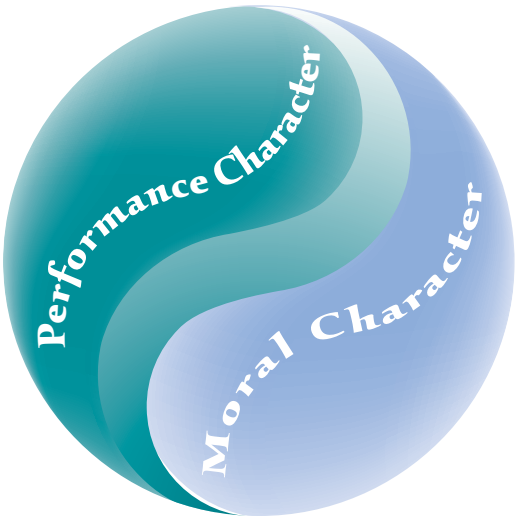
5 Develop a Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC) among faculty, staff, and administration.

Build a Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC) that provides the essential leadership for developing the ELC and that acts upon Gandhi's exhortation to "be the change you wish to see in the world." Define the PELC to include all staff—administrators, teachers, counselors, coaches, custodians, secretaries, and all other adults whose example and work affect the character of the school and the character development of students. Develop the PELC around the same operating principles that guide the ethical learning community. Promote collegiality, collaboration, and a culture of critique in order to help all staff continually reflect on their own development of performance character, moral character, and the eight strengths of character.

Principles of a Smart & Good High School

1. Make the development of performance character and moral character—the integration of excellence and ethics—the cornerstone of the school's mission and identity. Define performance character and moral character in terms of 8 strengths of character needed for human flourishing over a lifetime.
2. Work to establish the conditions that support the implementation of the Smart & Good High Schools vision.
3. As individual practitioners, capitalize on the Power of One—your personal contribution to the performance character and moral character of every student.
4. Develop an Ethical Learning Community (ELC)—a partnership of staff, students, parents, and the wider community.
5. Build a Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC) among faculty, staff, and administration.

Integrating Excellence & Ethics . . .
for success in school, work, and beyond



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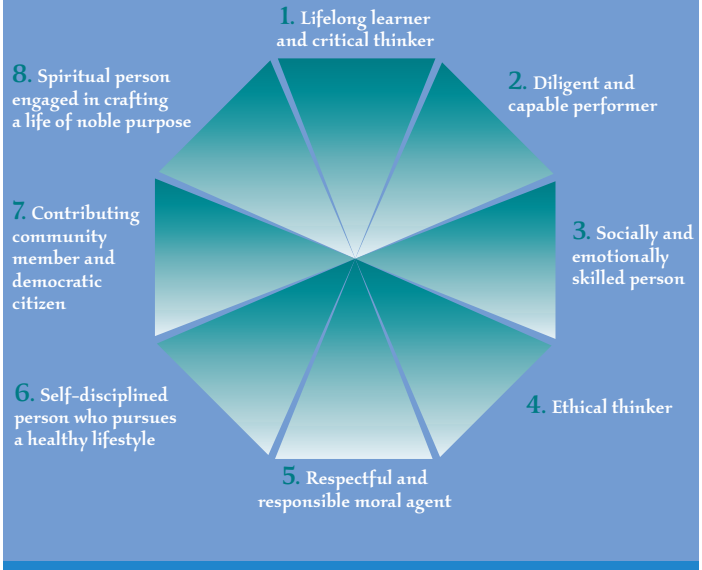
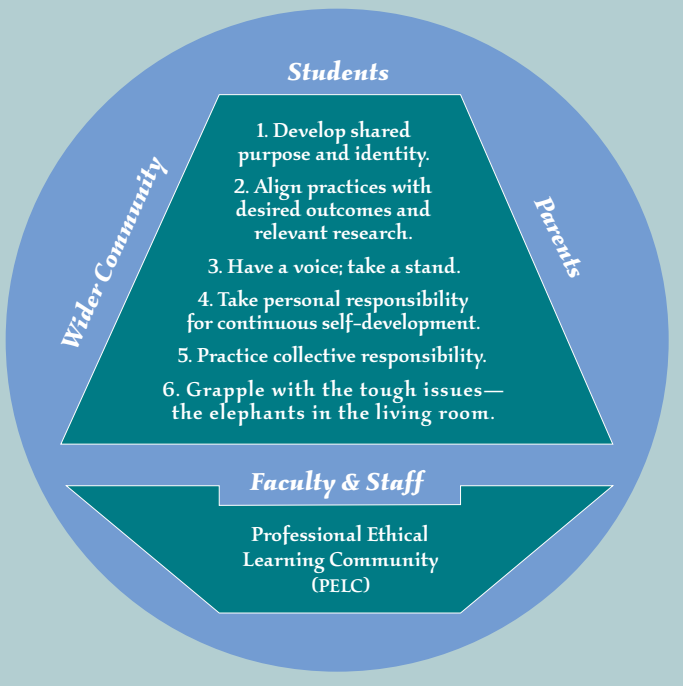
8 Strengths of Character



Ethical Learning Community (ELC)



Every individual has the power and responsibility to contribute to the ELC and to develop the 8 Strengths of Character in self and others.

Power of 1

CHAPTER 1

The Call to Character: Performance and Moral Challenges Facing American High Schools

My 9th-grade civics teacher, Mrs. O., nurtured my performance character in its young stages. When I was a freshman, I found that most of the study habits I had learned in middle school were just not good enough. When Mrs. O. gave us assignments, she'd walk us through an example of how it was to be done. When it came to tests, she taught us how to make flashcards. When we had research projects, she showed us different search engines we could use and how to set deadlines for the different parts of the project. She encouraged us to attend community events that pertained to history and brought in information about colleges she thought we might be interested in. Every student was one of her children.

—A High School Girl

Students today are growing up in a world where it seems okay to cheat to get ahead. When I find out about an incident of cheating in my class, I give a little talk to my students:

"There are two roads in life: a high road and a low road. The high road is harder, but it takes you somewhere worth going. The low road is easy, but it's circular—you eventually find yourself back where you started. If you cheat now, you'll cheat later. Your life won't get better—and *you* won't get better—on the low road."

—A High School Teacher

"Within the character of the citizen," Cicero wrote, "lies the welfare of the nation." The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "Character is destiny." "Education worthy of the name," said Martin Buber, "is essentially education of character."

"Education worthy of the name is education of character."

Character matters. As a society, we are recovering this ancient wisdom. Cultural indicators from every sector of American life—political and military, business and education, sports and entertainment, families and communities—demonstrate the need to develop citizens of all ages who lead ethical and purposeful lives and contribute to a productive, just, and caring society.

In recent years, there has been a growing societal effort to meet this need for character. Evidence of this response includes increased public discourse about character, employers' emphasis on character in the workplace, attention to character in educational research and social science, and, perhaps most notably, a resurgence of character education in our schools and communities.

With remarkable swiftness, character education has grown into a national movement. Thus far, however, this movement has been overwhelmingly an elementary school phenomenon, with modest progress at the middle school level. By contrast, intentional, schoolwide attention to character education in high schools is relatively rare—at the very developmental stage when the need is arguably the greatest.

We define character to include both performance character and moral character.

For several compelling reasons—to develop the positive intellectual and ethical potential of adolescents, reduce negative teen behaviors that injure self and others, and create safe, caring, and effective schools—high schools must embrace educating for character as central to their mission. Currently, it is the missing link. Information on existing high school character-building practices is little known, not theoretically integrated, and vastly underused by the administrators and teachers in a position to make a difference.

In this report, we offer a blueprint for developing character in high schools. What is character? Asked that question, one high school student answered, "Character is who you are. It's a way of life." There is a rich history of efforts to define character. The box on the next page, A Character Lexicon, provides some of the definitions, metaphors, and distinctions we think contribute to an understanding of this important concept.

In this report, we define character in a new way—to include both performance character (striving for excellence) and moral character (striving for ethical behavior). We describe promising practices culled from the research and from high schools and individual practitioners across the country that are helping adolescents learn to do their

A Character Lexicon: 7 Ways to Think About Character

1. Character as a "distinguishing mark." The English word *character* comes from the Greek *charakter*, which means "enduring or indelible mark." Our consistent patterns of behavior "mark" us, as individuals, communities, or cultures; they become the distinguishing sign by which others know us. "Ben is a hard worker." "Jefferson High School is a caring and respectful community." The dictionary also defines character as "the aggregate of qualities" belonging to an individual or group. This use of character encompasses all the attributes, vices as well as virtues, that distinguish us—the bad side of our character as well as the good.

2. Virtue as the content of good character. "Character" is also frequently used as shorthand for "good character." For example, character educators argue that developing character should be a high priority in schools. The content of good character is virtue. Virtues such as justice, honesty, and caring are held to be objectively good human qualities, good for the individual person and society. The recent book *Character Strengths and Virtues* identifies 6 universal virtues—wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.[1] The book *Character Matters* names "ten essential virtues"—wisdom, justice, fortitude, self-control, love, positive attitude, hard work, integrity, gratitude, and humility—that are affirmed by nearly all philosophical, cultural, and religious traditions.[2]

3. Character as habits, or positive values in action. A "value" is something we hold to be important. Values, unlike virtues, can be good or bad. As one writer noted, "Hitler had values, but he didn't have virtues." An ethically good value such as justice becomes a virtue—a habit—only when we develop the motivation and skills to act on it. From this perspective, character is *positive values in action.* Aristotle said, "Virtues are not mere thoughts but habits we develop by performing virtuous actions."

4. Character as a "muscle." The dictionary also defines character as "moral vigor or firmness, especially as developed through self-discipline." This definition focuses on character as an inner strength or psychological "muscle," which is developed through exercises—challenging situations—that optimally engage the muscle. Just as the "character muscle" is strengthened by use, it can also atrophy through neglect. Like muscles, our character has a potential realized through training and development.

5. Performance character vs. moral character. Performance character is a mastery orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as diligence, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, perseverance, ingenuity, and self-discipline—needed to realize one's potential for excellence in school, the workplace, or any area of endeavor. Moral character is a relational orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as integrity, justice, caring, respect, responsibility, and cooperation—needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior. (See Chapter 2.)

6. Character vs. personality. Personality can be thought of as consisting of traits or tendencies, such as shyness or being outgoing, that are largely a matter of our inborn temperament. While we may change our personality to some degree, we do not create it. Character, by contrast, is something that we largely create by our choices. Our character can moderate our personality. If I am naturally inclined to be impatient, but discipline myself to be more patient, my character development is moderating or "pushing back" against my natural personality.

7. Character vs. brain maturity. Some brain researchers argue that immature brain development may explain why adolescents often act impulsively, without thinking of the consequences. But that theory doesn't explain individual behavioral differences among youth of the same age; adolescents with comparable physical brain maturity often differ dramatically in the degree to which they demonstrate mature behaviors such as good decision-making, self-control, and honesty. Moreover, adolescents from different cultures, subcultures, or historical periods often show very different behavior patterns, both pro-social and anti-social. Such behavioral variations among same-age youth tell us that regardless of brain maturity, culture—something we can shape—is a powerful influence affecting teenagers' character and conduct. So even if the immature brain development of young people is a factor in impulsive behavior, our job as parents and teachers is not to simply wait for the brain to mature, but rather to provide appropriate challenges that foster greater maturity of character and optimal functioning.

best work and be their best ethical self.

A Motto That Matters

In our visits to 24 diverse high schools—large and small, public and private, secular and religious—we saw a number of school mottos. One that stood out:

Work hard.
Be yourself.
Do the right thing.

Serving mostly minority youth, this small urban school graduated 95% of its students and sent 90% to college. The principal said to us, "Our motto pretty much sums up everything we want our kids to do." He continued:

We want them to give their best effort in everything. We want them to think hard about one of the essential questions we study each year: "How do you do the right thing in the face of injustice?" Ten years out, we want the education they got here to still matter in these ways: "Are you an ethical person?" "Are you involved in your community?" "Are you a leader in some way?"

> Character is the one test you can't cram for.
> —A University President

Work hard. Be yourself. Do the right thing. "Working hard" speaks to performance character; "doing the right thing" speaks to moral character; and "being yourself," in the highest sense, speaks to following your conscience instead of the crowd and striving to develop, not waste, your full potential for excellence and ethics.

The best teachers, like the best schools, have always worked at these goals. We go into education to change lives—to make a difference in the kind of persons our students are becoming. By helping them find their direction, strive for excellence, and act ethically in all that they do, we hope to make a positive difference in the world.

Facing the Brutal Facts

How well are we achieving these goals—helping young people learn to work hard, do the right thing, and lead purposeful and productive lives? In *Good to Great,* Jim Collins reports that great companies are great in part because they "face the brutal facts." They are committed to making decisions based on the data, whatever the data show.

The same is true for schools and whole societies. If we're going to get better—if we're going to be great—we need to face the brutal facts.

A Profile of America's Adolescents

Let's begin with the facts about youth, who unfailingly reflect the condition of our schools and society. About the state of America's 13 million high school adolescents, there is both good news and bad news. The box on page 4 divides the data into "performance indicators" and "moral indicators." Some trends are positive (adolescent drug use, sexual intercourse, and most forms of violence are down); some are negative (cheating is up, preparedness for college-level work upon high school graduation is down); and some (dropout rates, the achievement gap, our poor ranking in international test comparisons) are stubbornly stable. On balance, one could choose to see the glass as half full and take heart from the promising reform initiatives described in reports such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals' *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform.*

But even while affirming the positive, no one would disagree that, in Robert Frost's famous phrase, "we have miles to go before we sleep." Even some of the positive youth trends mask trouble—levels of a particular problem that, in absolute terms, are disturbingly high. For example, although teen suicide began to decline in the 1990s, after tripling between 1960 and 1991, about one in five teens say they have seriously considered suicide in the past year.

Similarly, while 54% of high-schoolers say they have not had intercourse (the highest percentage in two-and-a-half decades) 55%, in a 2002 survey, said they had engaged in oral sex.[4]

Some adolescent trends are positive; some are negative; some are stubbornly stable.

Overall violence is down, but one in three high school students reported being in a fight in 2003, and problems such as bullying and hazing are widespread. And despite the national emphasis on standards and increased rigor in the curriculum, feedback from the labor market indicates that many graduates lack the math, reading, and writing skills to do even entry-level jobs.[5]

A caveat: It is a mistake, we think, to base the case for developing character solely on its utilitarian potential for reducing social and academic problems. Clearly, strength of character can ameliorate problems like these. However,

America's Adolescents: The Good News and the Bad News

Performance Indicators

The achievement gap. *The good news:* A 2003 Educational Testing Service research review finds a strong trend for students of all ethnic and racial groups to take a more rigorous curriculum, one of the predictors of higher achievement.[6] *The bad news:* For several decades, despite various reform efforts, gaps in school achievement among racial and ethnic groups, and between poor and non-poor students, have been large and persistent.[7]

Graduation rates. *The good news:* American public high school graduation rates rose significantly in the second half of the 20th century. *The bad news:* An estimated 30% of America's high school freshmen never graduate from high school[8]; in many schools more than 50% do not graduate.[9]

Grades and study time. *The good news:* Among freshmen entering college, students who earned A averages in high school reached a high of 47% in 2003, compared to 17% in 1968.[10] *The bad news:* The increase in A's may be partly due to grade inflation and cheating (on the rise). Study time continues to decline; only a third of high schoolers report that they spent 6 or more hours per week studying or doing homework.[11]

International comparisons. *The good news:* In 2003, U.S. 9-year-olds scored above international norms. *The bad news:* Our 13-year-olds slip below average; 17-year-olds are near the bottom.[12]

Readiness for college. *The good news:* The percentage of high school students who go to college has steadily risen. *The bad news:* Of those high school students who go to college, one-third to half seek remedial help in reading, writing, or mathematics once they get there.[13] Enrollment in remedial courses is a strong predictor of dropping out and defaulting on loans.[14]

Moral Indicators

Civic engagement. *The good news:* Among college-bound high school students, there has been a decade-long increase in volunteerism. One-third of 2003 entering freshman students said "keeping up-to-date with political affairs" is an important life goal, reversing a three-decade decline.[15] *The bad news:* Most of the reported rise in youth volunteerism is episodic rather than ongoing.[16] Voting among 18-24-year-olds has declined by 15% since 1972 (though it improved in the 2004 presidential election).[17] On a recent National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 9% of high school seniors could list two ways that a democratic society benefits from citizens' active participation.

Academic honesty. *The good news:* When high schools have an honor code, students are significantly less likely to cheat.[18] *The bad news:* Trend data show that cheating has steadily increased at every educational level, including high school, in recent decades.[19]

Violence. *The good news:* Most violence-related behaviors among U. S. high school students decreased from 1991 to 2003. *The bad news:* One in three high school students reported being involved in a physical fight in 2003.[20] Homicide deaths among 15 to 19-year-old U. S. males are five times higher than in Canada.[21] Nearly half of all students who belong to high school organizations report being subjected to hazing.[22]

Suicide. *The good news:* After tripling between 1960 and 1991, suicide among 15 to 19-year-olds began to decline between 1990 and 2000.[23] *The bad news:* About 20 percent of U.S. teens say they have seriously considered suicide in the past year.[24] According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year-olds, surpassed only by car accidents and homicide.[25]

Drug, tobacco, and alcohol use. *The good news:* According to the 2003 Monitoring the Future Survey, illicit drug use among 8th, 10th, and 12th-grade students showed decline for all three prevalence periods (lifetime, past 12 months, past 30 days). Broad declines in illicit drug use included decreases in marijuana and ecstasy for all three grades and prevalence periods.[26] *The bad news:* About one-quarter of 12th-graders are current smokers. Seventy-seven percent have consumed alcohol by the end of high school; 58% of 12th-graders report having been drunk at least once in their life; and one in three teens say they engage in binge drinking (five or more alcoholic drinks within a few hours) at least once a month.[27]

Sexual activity. *The good news:* The number of high school students who say they have never had sexual intercourse rose by eight percent between 1991 and 2001 and in 2001 became a majority (54%: boys, 51%; girls, 57%) for the first time in 25 years.[28] Nearly a third of those who have had intercourse say they are "currently abstinent." *The bad news:* The U.S. teen birth rate remains one of the highest among developed nations.[29] Teens and young adults account for almost half of all STD cases.[30] Eleven-and-one-half million teens (45%) say they have friends who regularly view and download pornography from the Internet.[31]

character is necessary not only to avoid problems, but also to achieve one's full human potential—to be prepared to lead a flourishing life. As one psychologist put it, "To flourish means, in part, not to engage in risk behavior, but problem-free is not fully prepared." Our report's concept of performance character and moral character is defined in terms of eight strengths of character that, we think, do fully prepare young people to flourish over a lifetime.

Our purpose, then, in presenting "the good news" and "bad news" about youth trends is to offer a balanced picture of today's youth and the challenges facing them. Considering these indicators, one school head commented: "These data give reason for both concern and optimism. So many character education books and articles focus on the lack of character in our schools and families. When we see the evidence of good behavior, we are reminded of the larger purpose of character education—not just to inhibit the negative, but also to develop the positive."

Critical Challenges Facing High Schools

In helping young people become the best persons they can be, high schools face many other challenges besides those represented by youth trends. For example, they face formidable institutional challenges. They must find ways to establish the schoolwide conditions that support the implementation of a holistic vision of education that helps students realize their potential for excellence. Such conditions include strong leadership, optimal school size, time for staff planning and reflection, supportive scheduling, manageable teaching loads, a safe and orderly environment, trusting and respectful relationships, and adequate budgets. To implement best practice, schools also need a way of dealing with the mounting pressures regarding test scores.

Schools must create the conditions that support a holistic vision.

Individual practitioners, for their part, need to maintain their idealism, energy, and commitment to maximizing their positive impact on students even when school conditions are less than optimal. Working in schools they experience as non-supportive, many diligent teachers, coaches, and other staff have nevertheless touched students' lives in transformative ways.

In the box on page 6, two veterans of the school reform movement offer their thoughts about how high schools can meet the myriad challenges they face. In later sections of the report, especially in **Chapter 4** on practices for developing a Professional Ethical Learning Community, we will return to these vital questions of how to create a school context that is friendly to change.

In the rest of this chapter, keeping in mind the school's dual mission to foster excellence and ethics, we wish to zero in on two critical challenges facing high schools in the performance domain and two critical challenges in the moral domain. The order in which we treat these is not meant to convey that one is more important than another; nor is our selection of these challenges meant to minimize other critical challenges that arguably could just as well have been chosen. (In subsequent chapters, we address a wider range of issues.)

Critical Challenges Facing High Schools in the Performance Domain

One Performance Challenge:

High schools and employers aren't working together to meet the needs of students who enter the workforce after graduation.

James Rosenbaum, a professor of sociology, education, and social policy at Northwestern University, argues in his book *Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half,* that the country has a large and growing problem: Many high school graduates cannot find decent jobs in a labor market that offers fewer opportunities for youth; at the same time, many employers complain that high school graduates, because of poor work habits and poor academic skills, cannot handle even the entry-level jobs that are available. Rosenbaum writes:

> A crisis is emerging in the American labor market. Young people who do not get college degrees have been called "the forgotten half" because society offers them no way to enter adult roles. They either experience enormous difficulty get-

> Happiness is the reward of virtue.
>
> —Aristotle

Challenges Facing High Schools: Observations from Two Veteran Reformers

We asked two national leaders in school reform for their perspectives on the challenges facing high schools. The first has headed a national organization that has promoted high school reform for nearly 30 years. He said:

Mission statements are easy; they are just words. School design and sustained practice are much, much harder. High schools won't become better places unless they are willing to make some hard choices about the basic design and functioning of school—issues such as student load per teacher.

Anonymity is the first curse of the typical American high school. Too-much-crammed-into-too-little-time-and-space is the second curse. "This is the way it is, so don't rock the boat" is the third curse.

Concerning the first curse: If the student-teacher ratio is 120:1, with the 120 shuffled repeatedly throughout the year, kids realize that few teachers know them well. Students conclude from this that knowing each student well is a low priority for the school. And when a teacher does not know a student well, it is easy for that student to cheat, cut corners, and "fake it." The lesson the student learns from anonymity is, "I must not count for much here because the school does not know me, and so I have to take care of myself."

Do high schools, in practice, attach a high value to creating a community of character? Consider the cues that a great many do not: what Denise Pope has wisely called "doing school," students doing what they need to do to get the grades they want but not taking their education seriously; the rushed, bell-driven quality of school life; teachers' "this is not my area" partitioning off of their responsibilities; the athletics pecking order; the expected "attitude" at games, as depicted in *Friday Night Lights*; those hostile places called Bathrooms and Locker Rooms; the disrespect shown cafeteria staff and others; the general lack of civility and manners.

The character of the adult community is crucial in selling a community of character to the entire school community. As Deborah Meier reminds us, trust starts with the community of grown-ups.

Most schools today worry almost exclusively about tests. Morality and decency are not on the syllabus.

The second advocate of school reform was a public school teacher for nearly three decades and now travels the country working with schools. He commented:

I am struck by how obsessed the country is with test scores and exclusively academic measures of success. It's not easy to persuade schools that we need to focus on the kind of people we are building for our future. Everywhere I go, people are so deeply distracted by academic pressures that they can, at least at first, hardly hear me.

I have found it useful to lead with stories of schools that work with low-income kids that have beaten all the odds and transformed these students into positive, polite, academically successful students who typically go to college. There are countless examples of these high schools. All these schools work with low-income students; all of them focus very deeply and holistically on character issues; and all of them send an incredible percentage of their students on to college.

When people hear the statistics of how successful these schools are in the realm of academics, they are often open to learning about the strategies they use. In every case, those strategies involve building a school culture that is an ethical learning community, led by a strong professional learning community. We need to shout out these success stories.

Schools that are willing to try to implement change will then need help with first steps. Should they start with curriculum? Pedagogy and instruction? The staff culture? The climate of the building? An honor code? Should they make structural changes so that a teacher doesn't see 140 students a day—a set-up for disaster? We might believe that a good high school has to include all of these things joined together, but a school can't take on everything at once.

When I work with schools, I find it helpful to suggest multiple entry points. For many schools, there will be mandatory beginning points, such as a climate of physical and emotional safety for all students and structures to ensure that the building is clean, attractive, and showcases student achievements. Without those things, it's hard to even begin.

ting jobs or take dead-end jobs that offer low status, little training, and pay too low to support a family. Even at age thirty, a large portion of high-school graduates continue to hold low-paying, high-turnover jobs.

Youth who do not go to college are "the forgotten half" because society offers them no way to enter adult roles.

In Rosenbaum's research, plant supervisors gave example after example of high school graduates who lack basic skills in math, English, or reading. One suburban manufacturer said, "Today's high school students don't comprehend as much. It takes them longer to catch on to instructions, and they can't read manuals as well as they used to." A Chicago metal-parts manufacturer complained that even though his entry-level jobs require only 7th-grade reading and math skills, he has a "terrible time getting even a 10% yield" for these skills in the applicants he interviews.[32]

What has brought about this state of affairs?

Rosenbaum pinpoints several factors:

- **Many high school students don't work hard and develop strong academic skills because they think grades don't matter.**

The research shows that high school grades: (a) predict job performance, and (b) have strong effects on later earnings (although no effects on early earnings). But, Rosenbaum says, *this is not known either by high school students or employers, neither of whom see high school grades as important.*

Believing, erroneously, that high school grades don't predict job performance, employers unwittingly contribute to students' low motivation to work in high school by ignoring their grades. One study found that most employers *do not ever request high school transcripts.*[33]

Ironically, as Rosenbaum points out, grades provide very inexpensive signals of youths' work habits and their skills in reading, writing, and math—the very qualities that employers say they need.

- **High schools don't teach the character skills employers want.**

In survey after survey, employers rate "character skills" such as attendance, deportment, dependability, initiative, and ability to work with others—what our report calls "performance character"—as highly important. If employers find that newly hired workers lack these qualities, they do not train them—they fire them.

However, high schools typically do not focus on the character skills that employers value so highly. "Many employers report that some new workers are absent or late to work several days in the first week on the job, do poor-quality work, and talk back to supervisors. Students have learned that they can get away with these behaviors in high school, so they are surprised when employers fire them."[34]

- **Many high school educators advocate "college for all"—without helping low-achieving students realize the importance of high school grades and without helping them make back-up plans.**

If employers find that newly hired workers lack character skills, they fire them.

According to the National Educational Longitudinal Study, nearly all seniors (95%) now say they plan to attend college. But only half of college entrants actually complete a degree. Rosenbaum analyzed student outcome data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, which followed more than 14,000 high school students beginning in 1988. These were his major findings:

1. **Many low-achieving high school seniors believe they can earn a college degree.**
2. **Students who believe they can earn a college degree in spite of low achievement exert little effort in high school.**
3. **High school grades are the best single predictor, for both blacks and whites, of whether students finish college, but students do not anticipate this relationship.**
4. **Students whose high school achievement was low get less economic payoff (as measured by job pay) from a college degree.**

Rosenbaum derives two important policy recommendations from these data:

1. **Schools and society should stress to high school students the importance of high school achievement as a**

All sober inquirers after truth, ancient and modern, have declared that our happiness as well as our dignity consists in virtue.

—John Adams

predictor of college success.

2. **Students must prepare back-up career options if their college plans do not succeed.**

These problems in high school students' achievement motivation and workforce preparation are not inevitable. Other countries have solved them—in ways that involve strengthening linkages between high schools and other institutions.

The Japanese Solution

Like the U.S. today, Japan in the 1920s had a serious shortage of skilled workers, and unskilled workers had high unemployment rates. Japan tried a series of policies over the next several decades to try to create a better-trained workforce, but each failed. Today, however, Japanese youth excel in academic achievement and productivity.

What worked for Japan? It implemented a system in which high schools became directly involved in transitioning their graduates into the labor force. Japanese high schools have developed long-standing relationships with the same employers. The employers expect the schools to nominate seniors of dependable quality—those with better grades—for their jobs, and the schools do. Employers hire over 81% of applicants when they are first nominated, and of those rejected, 84% are hired by the second firm to which they are nominated.

In international test comparisons, at a time when American scores have declined and rank poorly, Japanese scores are at or near the top. Moreover, Japan's advantage is largest for students in the *bottom half of the class*. Japan's system provides strong incentives for its work-bound students. It tells them what they must do to get better jobs and how well they are doing. Every year students can look at their grades, and if their grades are too low, they can either revise their job aspirations or increase their efforts.

Of Japan's high school graduates not attending college, 99.5% get full-time jobs right after graduation—compared with half of U.S. work-bound students.

In both the United States and Japan, about 40% of high school graduates directly enter the labor force. In Japan, 99.5% of these graduates start working immediately after graduation—compared with only about 50% of American work-bound graduates (most of whom continue the low-paying part-time jobs they had in high school).

Futures for Kids

In the U.S., many schools and employers have also taken steps to create stronger linkages that facilitate the school-to-work transition. One leader in this effort is Geoff Cramer, executive director of North Carolina's Futures for Kids (F4K, www.f4k.org).[35] "As a country," he says, "we are approaching an acute labor shortage across the board—at the same time when there are so many high school kids who lack direction. If we don't do something to correct this, we'll be as dependent on foreign intellectual capital as we are now on foreign oil."

"We're approaching an acute labor shortage—at the same time when so many high school kids lack direction."

Recently, Cramer helped found Futures for Kids to provide just that—positive futures for kids headed nowhere. In his state of North Carolina, nearly 40% of students do not graduate from high school. The state faces critical labor shortages. A study found that high school counselors spend 85% of their time with the top 10% and bottom 10% of the student body and need a "scalable tool" to reach the rest of the student population.

F4K has created a highly interactive computer technology that connects students, parents, school counselors, and teachers with employers, job opportunities, internships, job shadowing and apprenticeship opportunities, vocational and technical schools, and colleges. F4K offers 16 "career clusters" that students, parents, counselors, and others can access and that immediately show them all the opportunities and resources related to a particular career in their region and state. Based on a computerized interest/skill inventory, a student can get a quick read-out on his or her "20 top careers"—and then view a short, set-to-music video that shows them the challenges, rewards, and required training involved in any given line of work. For example, one boy liked to tinker with engines, figured being a car mechanic was his only option, wasn't sure about finishing high school—then used F4K to check out the video on "line repair technician," a career he found exciting and is now pursuing.

Thus far, F4K has attracted the participation of more than 25 North Carolina high schools and more than 200 employers statewide. More than 13,000 students, ranging from the top 5% aiming for college and post-graduate opportunities, to gang members in alternative schools, have taken part.

A Second Performance Challenge:

A changing economy demands that high schools teach students to use computers in new ways.

High schools not only have to help all students gain a sense of direction and prepare for productive employment; they also have to respond to the changing employment opportunities in the new economy. In their book *The New Division of Labor: How Computers Are Changing the Next Job Market,* MIT economist Frank Levy and Harvard economist Richard Murnane note that more than half of all American workers now use a computer at work—a percentage that is growing rapidly. They ask: Are our high schools preparing students to thrive in a society filled with computers?

> *Today's digital divide occurs at a higher level—between those who can use a computer to do valuable work and those who cannot.*

Levy and Murnane argue that the old list of skills that just five years ago defined "being fluent with information technology"—using a word processor to create text, using the Internet to find information, using a computer to communicate with others—is now obsolete. While a "digital divide" existed 15 years ago between students with these skills and those who lacked them, the increasing availability of computers in schools, homes, and libraries has largely eliminated that divide. "Today's digital divide," they write, "occurs at a higher level—between those who can use a computer to do valuable work and those who cannot."[36]

What constitutes "valuable work" is being redefined by a changing economy. Growing computerization and outsourcing are eliminating jobs such as bookkeeping, issuing airline boarding passes, and repetitive manufacturing work that involve "rules-based tasks," which are the easiest to computerize or send off-shore.

In order to prepare more young people for the growing number of technical, managerial, and professional jobs, Levy and Murnane recommend that schools increase students' (a) ability to engage in higher-order, *expert thinking* (sustained reasoning, managing complexity, testing solutions, evaluating information, collaborating); and (b) ability to *use computers as tools that facilitate expert thinking and complex communication*. In order to develop the ability to do these tasks, they reason, schools must integrate them into the teaching of all subjects—science, social studies, math, writing, etc.

We turn now to two critical challenges in the moral domain.

Critical Moral Challenges Facing High Schools

One Moral Challenge:

Cheating is on the rise, in schools and society.

A major moral challenge faced by high schools and our whole society is the erosion of integrity. In the Center for Academic Integrity's survey of more than 18,000 students at 61 U.S. high schools, 76% of the over 6,000 participating public school students admitted to cheating on exams. Rutgers professor Don McCabe, founder of the Center and widely regarded as the nation's leading authority on academic dishonesty, says the data show a steady increase in cheating over the past several decades.[37] One series of studies found that the number of students who admitted using a cheat sheet on a test doubled from 34% in 1969 to 68% in 1989.

Along with widespread academic dishonesty has come the attitude that cheating is the way the world works. McCabe reports that students' attitude is, "People cheat. Get over

it." In one of the high schools we visited in our study—a school that had won two national awards and had just finished revising its honor code—a junior girl told us:

Recently I watched a news special about the cheating epidemic that has broken out across the country. When students were interviewed and asked about cheating, they replied, "It's no big deal" or "If it's okay for the President to lie under oath, why isn't it okay for us to cheat?" The next day, I brought up this news program in my history class and was astounded at the response of my classmates. Everyone who spoke felt that cheating and dishonesty give a person the edge they need to succeed in life and, as such, they're a necessary evil.

At another school, a boy on our Student Leaders Panel said: "Many students now go so far as to say that if you're not cheating and others are, you're cheating yourself."

"Many students go so far as to say, 'If you're not cheating and others are, you're cheating yourself.'"

Just how deeply this "cheating-is-how-the-world-works" thinking has penetrated our society is the focus of David Callahan's 2004 book, *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead*. Here, from Callahan's book, is a sampling of our cheating culture:

- **Resumé fraud by job-seekers at every level—from CEOs on down—has soared over the past decade. Estimates are that up to half of current resumés contain lies.**
- **Tax evasion has gotten worse in recent years, costing the U. S. Treasury at least $250 billion a year. Wealthy Americans are the biggest offenders, but they are now joined by many others, including two million Americans who have illegal offshore bank accounts they use to evade taxes.**
- **Computer technology has facilitated the large-scale theft of copyrighted material. The pirating of music via Napster is epidemic, and the theft of cable and satellite TV services by Americans approaches $6 billion a year.**
- **An unprecedented number of cases of plagiarism and fraud have rocked the publishing and journalism world in recent years. Perpetrators have included best-selling authors and star reporters for the nation's leading newspapers.**[38]

Trends like these, Callahan says, represent "a profound moral crisis that reflects deep economic and social problems in American society." And yet, he notes, the "values debate" has yet to address, in a probing way, the loss of integrity in our private and public lives and the important question, "Why so much cheating in America?"

Callahan challenges us to connect the dots between cheating and certain aspects of American culture. In its early history, he says, America provided a "natural home to the cheating impulse" because it embraced "the rawest form of industrial capitalism in the world. During the Gilded Age of the late 1800s, for example, the titans of U. S. capitalism cheated each other, cheated and destroyed their smaller competitors, and cheated consumers. Staggering inequalities of wealth separated America's industrial elite from average working Americans. Money dominated politics."

The economic upheavals of the '70s—inflation, oil shocks, rising foreign competition—"mobilized the business community to get leaner and meaner… By the end of the '70s, the stage was set for a new era of extreme capitalism."[39] The new high-stress economy has created the climate for greater cheating. Students often say they cheat to get the grades they need to get into top colleges, which they see as necessary for economic success. Economically hard-pressed middle-class Americans who perceive the well-off as rewriting the rules for their benefit decide to break some rules of their own; tax forms get fudged, expense accounts padded, insurance claims falsified.

What is the effect of all this cheating on teachers, students, and everyone else involved in the enterprise of schooling? The effect is clearly corrosive. Cheating is demoralizing to students who don't cheat. At a public high school, a girl said:

Too many cheaters are succeeding in life. It's discouraging to students who don't cheat to see students who do cheat win top honors. Valedictorians, businessmen, even government officials have succeeded by cheating. Top executive leaders have become rich by stealing other people's money. The examples being set for teenagers are not good.

An estimated half of current resumés contain lies.

Hope in the face of the seeming tidal wave of cheating comes from schools that have reduced academic dishonesty through honor codes and other measures (see **pages 37-38**). Individual teachers have also found ways to create a culture of integrity in the classroom (see **pages 143-144**). A boy on our Student Leaders' Panel emphasized that schools need to be vigilant about dishonesty and punish offenders:

Because honesty is a value slowly being lost in society, schools need to teach it, encourage it, lead by example, praise it, and apply greater punishments than they now do to those who cheat. Don't let anything slide by.

This student's wisdom is echoed by the conclusion of *The Cheating Culture:* "If the next generations of Americans are to help build a more ethical society and sustain it, they must come of age within institutions that are far less tolerant of cheating than today's high schools and universities."[40]

> *"If the next generations of Americans are to build a more ethical society, they must come of age within institutions that are far less tolerant of cheating."*

A Second Moral Challenge:

Teens are growing up in a media-driven popular culture whose values are largely antithetical to intellectual and moral excellence.

Throughout history, three great social institutions—family, school, and religion—have shaped the conscience and character of the next generation. The twentieth century saw the rise of a powerful fourth force as an influence on youth values: the electronic media. A challenge that schools are only beginning to come to grips with is that today's young people are growing up immersed from their earliest years in a media-saturated environment, one that is, in many respects, subversive of both intellectual and moral development. A number of students on our Student Leaders Panel spoke about what they saw as the media's negative impact on adolescents' confidence and identity development. One girl said:

The media culture has turned us into trend-followers and not trend-setters. The media bombard teenagers with images of how they should dress, how they should act, and how they should feel. In many cases, when teenagers deviate from these images, they find themselves questioning their identity and self-worth. It's very rare to find teens who are comfortable with who they are.

Another girl commented:

For girls, there is tremendous pressure to look "beautiful." From advertising we have this notion of beauty that is not beauty at all. Many teens are depressed because they don't like how they look. Drugs, drinking, eating disorders, self-cutting, and sexual promiscuity are some of the ways we deal with that.

The late Neil Postman, author of such books as *The Disappearance of Childhood* and *Amusing Ourselves to Death,* observed that because of television, 5-year-olds now know things that only adults used to know. Sadly, TV has done this with the permission of parents. Historically, parents had exercised supervisory authority over what their kids were exposed to, but now, in at least half of homes, parents place no regulations on the television children watch.[41] According to *Kids and the Media at the New Millennium,* a Kaiser Family Foundation study, two-thirds of American children between 8 and 13 have their own TVs in their bedrooms. So do one-third of all children ages 2 to 7.

Counting all forms of electronic media, youth between 8 and 18 consume, *on average,* 6 hours and 43 minutes of electronic media a day—or 45 hours a week.

> *The average young person between 8 and 18 consumes nearly seven hours of electronic media a day.*

"There are dozens of well-designed studies," says one leading researcher, "that show that TV, movies, and other media affect what viewers believe and how they behave."[42] Overall, according to a 2003 *Born to Be Wired* report, television viewing among 13 to 24-year-olds drops to an average of 14 hours a week while Internet surfing rises to 17 hours a week.[43] (Pornography and hate sites featured on the Internet obviously present their own moral challenges.)

> This is no time for principals and teachers to stand timidly aside, sounding either an uncertain trumpet or no trumpet at all. The makers of music videos and porn films, the editors of teen magazines, and the rock and rap idols are sounding no uncertain trumpet in advancing their agendas . . . Those of us who believe that life has meaning and purpose—that honesty, simplicity, respect, and concern for others are eternal and life-enhancing values—cannot in good conscience remain silent.
>
> —F. Washington Jarvis

But some teens continue to be heavy TV watchers. A 2002 study reported in *Science* magazine found that teenage boys and girls who watch more than three hours of television a day are *four times more likely as adults to fight or assault another person,* compared to teens who watch less than an hour a day. This difference held regardless of whether the teens came from stable middle-class homes or low-income families with a history of childhood neglect.[44]

Dozens of studies show that TV, movies, and other media influence what viewers believe and how they behave.

Desensitization is another problem. By the mid-teens, the average American youth has witnessed literally hundreds of thousands of violent acts on TV. Repeated exposure to a stimulus changes how we respond to it. For example, a number of studies have exposed college males to films portraying violence against women, often in a sexual context. After repeated viewing of such films, subjects say they enjoy the material more and express less sympathy for alleged victims of rape.[45]

> **Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.**
> —Benjamin Franklin

American Educator reported an incident originally featured on a 1999 PBS *Frontline* show, "The Lost Children of Rockdale County," where there was an outbreak of 200 cases of syphilis among teens in an affluent Atlanta suburb. Investigating health officials found that these adolescents, some as young as 13, had been gathering together after school to watch the Playboy cable TV channel, making a game of imitating what they saw. "They tried almost every permutation of sexual activity imaginable—vaginal, oral, anal, girl on girl, several boys with a single girl, or several girls with a boy. During some drunken parties, one boy or girl might be 'passed around' in a game."[46]

These teens may have been extreme, but their parents, when interviewed, turned out to be typical suburban soccer moms and dads who coached their children's teams, went on vacations together, and so on. However, something seemed to be missing: an effort by parents to pass on strong beliefs and values. Instead, parents spoke in ways that seemed bland and non-directive. One mother commented, "They have to make decisions, whether to take drugs, to have sex. I can give them my opinion, but they have to decide for themselves." A girl involved in the scandal said of her mother: "I really don't consider her a mom all that much. She takes care of me, but I consider her more of a friend."[47]

The fact that some parents have exchanged the role of teacher and authority figure for the role of "friend" represents, in our judgment, still another example of the media's profound impact. If kids can watch anything they want, and spend far more time interacting with media than they do with their parents, the media have, for all practical purposes, replaced parents as a child's primary moral teacher. Parents become bystanders.

In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics reports that the average American young person now sees 40,000 commercials a year—about three-quarters of a million by high school graduation. TV has been called "the command center of a consumerist culture." A September 13, 2004 *Newsweek* cover story reports that many parents feel they are raising "wanting machines."[48] In 1997, teens spent roughly $122 billion on themselves; by 2003, that figure had risen to $175 billion. A member of our Student Leaders Panel identified "credit and debt" as one of the top character challenges facing youth.

Heavy media use may also damage democracy by reducing civic participation. Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, in *Bowling Alone,* reports that although watching TV news and reading newspapers are associated with higher voting rates, the opposite is true of the total amount of TV a person watches. Putnam finds that the "single most consistent predictor" of lack of civic engagement (voting, signing petitions, participating in community organizations, etc.) is "dependence on television for entertainment."[49]

In *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives,* Todd Gitlin, professor of culture at New York University, argues that media have profoundly altered the way most people experience life. "The onrush of the media torrent—the speed of its images on the screen, and its talk over the air"—create "a culture of speed."[50]

The media torrent doesn't develop sustained thought or the ability to express thought.

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." A media culture, to the extent that it is a culture of speed, does not foster the examined life. Moreover, the torrent of images does not allow deep, sustained thought or develop one's ability to express thought. When college professors complain that most of today's students do not

The American High School: Recommended Resources

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think as complexly or write as cogently as those of an earlier era, they are lamenting the condition of a generation raised on flickering images.

What does all this mean for high schools? Schools can do at least two things. First, they can encourage families not to be simply carried along passively by the culture, but to take a stand for what they believe. The school can communicate that many parents have found it helpful to sit down with their kids—starting in the early years—and say:

> Use of media is a privilege, not a right. That privilege has to be exercised in a way that is consistent with our deepest values as a family. So for any particular TV show, movie, video game, CD, or site on the Internet, here's the question: Is it consistent with what we value and believe as a family?

Second, schools can teach media literacy to their students—all their students. Given the enormous presence and impact of media in our lives, how can we not consider it a matter of the highest priority to equip *all* young people to be discerning users of media and to look at popular culture through a critical lens? Ted Sizer, author of the book *Horace's Compromise* that started much of the high school reform movement and a member of our Experts Panel, observed:

> The issue of the cultural impact of the media is one I don't think many of us have faced. I think that at some point, media literacy will need to become part of English classes. It took a while for English classes to accept the reality of film. There is now this intrusive additional force, which can, of course, be used for good as well as ill. But at present, its impact is largely unaddressed.

Media literacy will need to become part of English classes, just as film has.

Again, these are only some of the important challenges faced by high schools. Anyone with a serious interest in the education of adolescents would do well to take advantage of the many reports and books available on high school reform. The box at the left gives sixteen significant works over the past two decades that describe the state of our high schools and ways to make them better.

Character is Destiny

We return to Heraclitus's assertion: "Character is destiny." All of the challenges faced by our schools can be viewed as character challenges. The performance challenges demand a greater commitment from adults and youth to excel-

lence—to doing our best work; the moral challenges demand a greater commitment to ethics—to doing the right thing.

Concern for character, as we noted at the beginning of the chapter, has made a dramatic comeback in our schools. In a recent opinion poll by Public Agenda, American adults ranked "not learning about values" as the most important problem facing today's youth. The past decade has seen a spate of character education books and materials; the founding of the *Journal of Research in Character Education*; federal and state funding of character education; the emergence of national character education organizations; and an explosion of grassroots character education initiatives.

The purpose of character education, as we have also noted, is two-fold. One aim is to reduce the negative behaviors that hurt our children and hurt society. Character educators hold that the troubling behaviors we observe in youth—and many of the adults who set the example for youth—have a common core: namely, the absence of good character. Developing good character, unlike piecemeal reforms, strikes beneath the symptoms to the root of the problems and therefore offers the best hope for improvement in all areas. Recent research on youth development finds, in fact, that well-designed character-building interventions have been effective in reducing a range of negative youth behaviors.[51]

But the second purpose of educating for character is, ultimately, even more important: to prepare young people for a flourishing and fulfilling life. In recent years, the positive psychology movement has emphasized the importance of "asset building"—identifying and developing those human strengths that enable us to become all we are capable of being.

It is this broader purpose of character education that most deeply informs our report. We believe that high schools should—indeed, *can*—provide an education that lasts a lifetime. We can help our young acquire the strengths of character—we offer eight—that will enable them to build a positive and productive future for themselves and a better world for us all. The current Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools[52]—building on the report *The Civic Mission of Schools*[53]—is both a reminder of schools' historic mission in this area and an example of character education's positive mission to develop the responsible citizens demanded by a democratic society.

Character education helps students develop the assets that contribute to a flourishing life.

We turn now to a deeper consideration of how character should be defined. How we define character will shape how we educate for character. How we go about educating for character will, in turn, affect the depth of the impact we have on the character and lives of students, the character of schools, and ultimately, the character of our whole society.

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CHAPTER 2

Performance Character and Moral Character: The Integration of Excellence and Ethics

You must discover what you are made for, and you must work indefatigably to achieve excellence in your field of endeavor. If you are called to be a streetsweeper, you should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. You should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven will pause to say, here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

My 9th-grade history teacher had the most profound impact on my performance character. Mr. H. instilled in me a desire to learn for learning's sake. In his class I didn't concentrate on my grade or test scores, but rather on the pursuit of knowledge because his enthusiasm for it was so infectious. Because I wanted to master the material being taught and not just regurgitate it on a test, I studied harder to learn its nuances, the causes and effects of historical events, and their significance. I remember working late hours on papers I already knew I would get a good grade on in order to improve them even further and demonstrate a true understanding of the topic.

—A High School Boy

High schools need more "power" to meet the formidable academic and behavioral challenges they face. Where can they get it? Booker T. Washington said, "Character is power." What is the power of "character," and how can that power—used effectively by schools to create *a culture of character*—help us develop diligent students, hard workers, and responsible citizens?

Character and Excellence

What do the following quotations tell us about the power of character?

Excellence is not an act, but a habit. We are what we repeatedly do.

—Aristotle

The secret joy in work is excellence.

—Pearl Buck

The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today's work superbly well.

—William Osler

I challenge you to find one single solitary individual who has achieved his or her personal greatness without lots of hard work.

—John Wooden

There is no such thing as failure. There is only giving up too soon.

—Jonas Salk

These quotes tell us that the experience of excellence is a central part of human fulfillment, and that character—working hard, persevering—is essential for realizing excellence. Excellence matters, and character matters in our pursuit of excellence. It follows that educating for character ought to be about developing ethics *and* excellence.

If the national character education movement has had a motto, it's been Theodore Roosevelt's famous observation: "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." Will Rogers reflected this sentiment when he quipped, "A poor man will steal from a railroad car. Give a man a college education, and he'll steal the railroad."

Character includes the quest for excellence as well as ethics.

However—and we think this point has been lost—the reverse of Roosevelt's maxim is also true: To educate a person in morals and not in mind is to educate, if not a menace, at least a detriment to society. Who wants an honest but incompetent doctor, lawyer, or mechanic? We think Samuel and John Phillips, founders of Phillips Academy in 1778, got it right when they included *both* mind and morals in their definition of character:

Goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous. Both united form the noblest character.

An Ethic of Excellence

Given that character, rightly understood, includes the quest for excellence as well as ethics, the literature on excellence becomes essential for guiding a character-centered approach to school reform.[1]

One important resource in the recent educational literature on excellence is Ron Berger's *An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship With Students.*[2] Berger was a public school teacher in a small, rural community in western Massachusetts for 25 years and has worked with Harvard's Project Zero and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He argues that "an ethic of excellence" must be at the very center of the educational enterprise. When it is, students of all ages do amazing things.

Across the country, Berger points out, there are schools where students are remarkably good at something. For example, he cites tiny Cuba City High School (Cuba City, Wisconsin), with a graduating class of 75, which has a record in athletics that's hard to believe: In the past 30 years, it has won 14 state championships in a wide range of boys' and girls' sports. There are other public schools that dominate state competitions in orchestra, chess, wrestling, visual arts, debate, and essay contests, and have done so for years, sometimes generations.

Every year, these schools take whatever students they happen to get and make them stars. And, as Berger notes, this phenomenon isn't limited to special areas. "Central Park East High School in Harlem and the Fenway School in Boston work with urban students, almost all of whom are low-income and non-white, and for whom the predicted graduation statistics are dismal. Both of these schools graduate 95% of their seniors and send about 90% on to college."[3]

When students enter a culture that demands and supports excellence, they do their best work in order to fit in.

In our research on high schools, we encountered the same phenomenon: a forensics team that worked feverishly to hone their research and speaking skills and year after year won national or state championships; choirs whose diligent pursuit of excellence led to consistent top honors at state and national competitions; an academic program serving urban youth, whose reading and writing requirements would be daunting to most college students, and so on.

What is the secret of success for these schools and programs?

Berger's answer and ours: *Excellence is born from a culture.* The way to develop excellence and ethics in the character of individual students is to create a school culture that embodies those qualities.

The character of a school's culture—the norms that define how everyone is expected to work and behave—has a huge impact. All students, especially teenagers, want to "fit in," and when they enter a culture that demands and supports excellence, *they do their best work in order to fit into it.*

Schools must create a peer culture where it's cool to care about excellence.

Individual students may have different potential, but in general, as Berger argues, their attitudes and achievements are determined by the culture around them. Schools, therefore, must do everything possible to create a school culture "where the peer culture celebrates investment in school," *where it's cool to care about excellence.* Then schools must reach out to families and the community to ask them for help in supporting this norm.[4]

Learning is not attained by chance. It must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.

—Abigail Adams

Character's Two Essential Parts: Performance Character and Moral Character

To unlock the power of character is to define it to include the quest for excellence as well as the quest for ethics. This concept of character has the potential to transform the culture of a school in a way that improves both learning and behavior. Character defined to include both excellence and ethics has two parts: (1) performance character and (2) moral character.

Performance character is a mastery orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as effort, diligence, perseverance, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, ingenuity, and self-discipline—needed to realize one's potential for excellence in academics, co-curricular activities, the workplace, or any other area of endeavor.[5]

Performance character is not the same as *performance*. Performance is the *outcome* (the grade, the honor or award, the achievement), whereas performance character consists of the character strengths, such as self-discipline and best effort, that enable us to pursue our personal best—whether the outcome is realized or not. We can display performance character and still fail, just as we can succeed without displaying performance character (as, for example, when gifted students get A's without challenging themselves to work to potential, or when a team plays below par in an easy victory over inferior competition). In the long run, performance character does maximize performance because it brings to bear the strengths and strategies by which we challenge ourselves to get the most from our natural talent.

Performance character is needed to realize our potential for excellence.

Moreover, performance character has what research on achievement motivation calls a *task orientation,* in which I seek to surpass my own past performance (leading, the research shows, to greater satisfaction and fidelity to character values) rather than an *ego orientation,* in which I must surpass someone else (often leading to greater performance anxiety and a greater tendency to cheat).[6] A boy on our Student Leaders Panel expressed well the task orientation that characterizes performance character:

I'm a very competitive person. I want to do it better than I did it the last time. In sports, even if we win, I'll pick apart something we did and plan how we could do it better. Same thing on a test. I'm not a perfectionist; I'm just competitive—with myself.

Moral character is a relational orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as integrity, justice, caring, and respect—needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior. Respect includes self-respect; we have obligations to ourselves—to respect our own rights, worth, and dignity, for example—as well as to others.

Moral character enables us to treat others and ourselves with respect and care—and ensures that we use ethical means to achieve our performance goals.

Moral character enables us to treat others—and ourselves—with respect and care and to act with integrity in our ethical lives. Moral character also has the important function of moderating our performance goals to honor the interests of others—to ensure that we do not violate moral values such as fairness, honesty, and caring in the pursuit of high performance. Moral character ensures that we use ethical means to achieve our performance goals. Without strong moral character, performance character can easily run amuck—as when a student cheats to get good grades or a team plays dirty to win a game.

Here are six important points about performance character and moral character:

1. It is possible to have performance character without moral character, and vice versa.

All of us know high achievers who accomplish what they do through diligence, self-discipline, and other aspects of performance character but who lack honesty, kindness, civility, or some other important aspect of moral character. Likewise, it's possible to be strong in the moral virtues but less well-developed in performance virtues such as organization, initiative, hard work, and perseverance.

> It is not the brains that matter most but that which guides them—character.
>
> —Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The Case for Competition: 5 Ways It Can Aid the Development of Performance Character and Moral Character

At first glance, especially when there's plenty of evidence that students cheat to get ahead academically, athletes use steroids to break records, and companies bend and break the rules to beat their competitors, the very nature of competition might seem to be antithetical to the development of performance character and moral character.

Because of this all-too-common cut-throat competition, many see competition as a necessarily war-like relationship: I win only when you lose, all means are justified, and only one thing ultimately matters—winning. In this view of competition, all individuals—even classmates and teammates—are adversaries vying for limited external rewards (e.g., grades, playing time, promotions, championships, etc.).

However, this notion of competition as inherently adversarial is really a corruption of competition's root meaning. In Latin, "com-petere" means "to strive with." In this original meaning, we compete *with* each other, not *against* one another.[7] We achieve our individual best through the challenge and support of others: I realize my personal best (which doesn't necessarily mean I win) when your best effort pushes me to excel beyond what I would have achieved in isolation. In this way, competition is part of a community that supports and challenges.

At every level of performance competition, new levels of excellence are achieved when participants find good competitors. Clearly, in any competition we are striving *against* our personal limitations and *against* the marks set by other competitors. However, the goal should not be simply to win, but to pursue excellence. If schools want to foster, across all areas of school life, a culture of positive competition that promotes the pursuit of excellence and avoids the dangers of destructive competition, they must establish supportive institutional structures (and eliminate negative ones) and work to cultivate in students a positive perspective on competition.

What follows are 5 ways for young people to understand competition as having great potential to support their development of performance character and moral character:

1) Competition gives me unique opportunities to develop my performance character and moral character.

2) Being a good competitor requires that I develop the self-knowledge and skills for managing the powerful emotions and potential pitfalls of competition (e.g., stress, frustration, resentment of others, anger at perceived unfairness).

3) Competition is a partnership, a form of cooperation between competitors where I show respect and caring toward other persons by agreeing to play fairly and give my personal best so as to bring out the best in others.

4) Seeking out good competition is a chance for me to realize a level of excellence I would not achieve in isolation; winning and losing are less important than whether I give my best effort and learn or master something that contributes to my pursuit of excellence.

5) The outcomes of any given competition can serve as a benchmark in my quest for excellence; engaging in post-competition reflection allows me to analyze what worked well, what improvements are necessary, and what next steps should be taken.

See Chapter 5 (pages 113-114) for a co-curricular program that exemplifies these components of character-building competition.

2. A person of character embodies both performance character and moral character. Both carry obligation.

Performance character, like moral character, has an ethical dimension; it is a moral failure, for example, when we do shoddy work. All of us have a responsibility to develop our talents, realize our potential for excellence, and give our best effort as we perform the tasks of life (performance character). We have this obligation for two reasons: (1) respect for ourselves requires us not to waste our talents but to use them to develop as persons and to perform to the best of our ability in whatever we undertake; and (2) caring about others requires us to do our work well, since in life the quality of our work affects other people's lives. When we do our work well, someone typically benefits; when we do it poorly, someone suffers.

The 3 A's of Performance Character and Moral Character

In a similar way, we have a responsibility to be our best ethical self (moral character)—both out of self-respect and because our ethical conduct affects the lives of those around us. If we treat others with respect and care, we contribute to their welfare and happiness; if we do the opposite, we demean them and subtract from the quality of their lives.

A person of character embodies both performance character and moral character.

3. Whereas moral virtues are intrinsically good, performance virtues can be used for bad ends.

A terrorist might use performance virtues such as ingenuity and commitment to carry out the bombing of innocents; a CEO might use performance virtues to pursue self-interest at the expense of employees, stockholders, and customers. By contrast, moral virtues such as justice, honesty, and caring are *intrinsically* good—good in and of themselves. They can't be pressed into the service of evil goals.

4. Both performance character and moral character have three psychological components: awareness, attitude, and action.

The field of character education has long recognized three psychological dimensions of character: *cognitive* ("the head"), *emotional* ("the heart"), and *behavioral* ("the hand"). In a similar way, performance character and moral character can be viewed as each having three psychological components, which we refer to as the 3 A's: *awareness, attitude,* and *action* (see figure above).

Performance character and moral character have three components: awareness, attitude, and action.

To have performance character is to know what excellence requires (awareness), to care about excellence (attitude), and to strive for excellence (action). Similarly, to have moral character is to know what ethical behavior

Performance Character and Moral Character in Action: Profiles of Three Teens

Roxanne's Story: A Profile in Compassion

When Roxanne Black was 15, she was diagnosed with lupus—a serious, chronic inflammatory disease. She soon realized there were many people like her, suffering from unusual illnesses and feeling alone. She formed the Friends' Health Connection (www.friendshealthconnection.org), which she has since built into a national support network for thousands of people with serious illnesses, injuries, or disabilities. When Roxanne was in college, she suffered kidney failure, and after receiving a kidney transplant from her sister, launched a campaign to encourage people to sign organ donor cards. Friends' Health Connection has gone into dozens of hospitals, helping thousands of people connect with supportive new friends immediately after being diagnosed.

Ernesto's Story: A Profile in Integrity and Courage

On Friday nights in the small Idaho town of Marsing, hundreds of people from the town and farms would come to see the Marsing Huskies play football. But when the high school players made a mistake, the fans often turned ugly. If the player was Latino, like the quarterback Ernesto Villareal, they shouted "Stupid Mexican!" Ernesto had a good chance for a college football scholarship, but he led his Latino teammates in taking a stand: They wouldn't play unless the insults stopped. Their coach said they'd just be making things worse, and the principal refused to do anything. Ernesto then spoke before the School Board. The student body president, inspired by Ernesto's courage, wrote a letter asking adults to stop the insults and asking officials to throw people out of the stadium if they didn't stop. When the letter was read at the next game, people in the stadium stood and applauded, and the insults ended.

Craig's Story: A Profile in Justice

At 12, Craig Kielburger was shocked when he read about the murder of a Pakistani boy after he escaped from slavery as a child laborer. The Pakistani boy had been sold by his parents for $12 to a carpet manufacturer and worked at a loom for 14 hours a day for no pay. Outraged, Craig started a youth organization called Free the Children (www.freethechildren.org), dedicated to ending the exploitation of children. He went on a fact-finding trip through five Asian countries, attracting international media coverage. "If our country and other countries made it clear that child labor is illegal and unacceptable," he said, "it wouldn't exist." He presented his findings to UN's International Labor Organization and urged the World Council of Churches to take up the problem. Free the Children has since involved hundreds of thousands of young people from 35 countries in supporting children's rights, schools, clean-water projects, health clinics, and economic cooperatives in 21 non-industrial nations.

requires, to care about ethical behavior, and to strive to act in ethical ways.

Finally, to have character is to care not only about my own character, but also about the character of others—to feel and exercise a measure of responsibility for helping them become the best person they can be. (On **pages 53-56**, we elaborate on this principle of collective responsibility.)

To illustrate the 3 A's of performance character and moral character, the box above tells the stories of three teenagers recognized by the Giraffe Heroes Project (**www.giraffe.org**). These young people exemplified different virtues. Roxanne Black embodied empathy and compassion; Ernesto Villareal, integrity and courage; Craig Kielburger, an impassioned sense of justice. But what their stories have in common is that they each illustrate the 3 A's of performance character and moral character. With respect to moral character, all three teenagers perceived a moral problem or a need (ethical awareness); all three were moved by the problem and felt personally responsible for responding (an ethical attitude of caring); and all translated their judgment and feeling into effective steps to meet the need or solve the problem (ethical action). Performance character was also a key part of each teenager's story. Each employed a number of performance virtues—such as taking initiative, networking, planning and organizing, persevering in the face of resistance, and sustaining or expanding their efforts over time—in order to achieve their ethical goals.

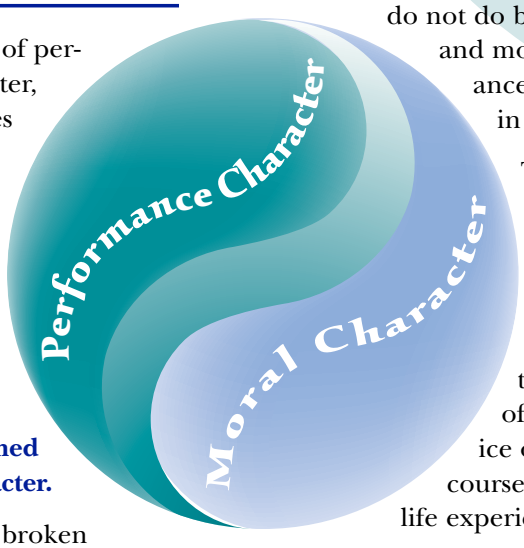
5. In a person of character, performance character and moral character support each other in an integrated, interdependent way.

The stories of Roxanne, Ernesto, and Craig also serve to

show, in two ways, the necessary functional integration of performance character and moral character. First, the strong performance character of these young people helped them achieve their moral goals. Second, their moral character supplied the motivational energy that drove their high-level performance and ensured that the means they used to accomplish their goals were of an ethical nature. One can imagine less moral people using less ethical means—e.g., assassinating the character of their opponents—to fight prejudice or injustice.

Performance character and moral character are interdependent.

Reflecting the integrated functioning of performance character and moral character, the figure at right depicts the two sides of character not as separate spheres but as a three-dimensional ball—whose center represents the essential interplay of the moral and performance virtues. Excellence and ethics harmonize to make possible an act—or a life—of character.



6. Performance character and moral character can be operationally defined in terms of eight strengths of character.

The two big parts of character can be broken down into eight specific strengths of character, or developmental outcomes, described in the box on the next page. These constitute the target educational goals of a Smart & Good High School. They offer a vision of human flourishing over a lifetime. These eight strengths are, we believe, the assets a person needs for success—for a productive, ethical, and fulfilling life—in school and beyond.

We draw these eight strengths of character, or developmental outcomes, from cross-cultural wisdom, classical conceptions of the good life, social science theory and research, positive psychology's emphasis on assets, the input of our two panels, and our own grounded theory research that helped us articulate these outcomes as we visited schools, reviewed the theoretical and empirical literature, and reflected on our findings.

Some of the eight strengths—such as "lifelong learner and critical thinker" and "diligent and capable performer"—are more strongly representative of performance character. Other strengths, such as "socially and emotionally skilled person," "ethical thinker," and "respectful and responsible moral agent," are more strongly representative of moral character. "Self-disciplined person" and "contributing community member" can be seen as drawing strongly from both sides of character. "Spiritual person" builds on both performance and moral character but in an important sense transcends them. The sense of purpose and worldview that lie at the core of one's spirituality animate all the other strengths of character and give direction to one's life.

It is only taken together that these eight strengths make for a complete human being and a flourishing life. As we have already pointed out, performance character must always be regulated by moral character to ensure that we do not do bad things in the pursuit of our goals, and moral character always needs performance character to enable us to be effective in carrying out our good intentions.

The same goes for the eight strengths of character; they must inform and support each other. Critical thinking must be informed by ethical thinking; diligent performance must be regulated by respect and responsibility, and so on. And all of the strengths of character must come together in service of some larger life purpose, which, of course, will evolve over time as a function of life experiences and growing maturity.

In Chapter 5 we describe promising practices, drawn from our research, for developing each of these eight strengths of character.

Our sense of purpose and world view animate all the other strengths of character.

Support for the Concept of Performance Character and Moral Character: Five Sources

Support for our overall two-part concept of character, as involving performance character and moral character, comes from five sources: (1) research on motivation and talent development; (2) the wisdom of the ages; (3) lives of character; (4) the practices of great character educators; and (5) the voices of high school teachers and students.

1. Research on motivation and talent development. Studies of

8 Strengths of Character (Developmental Outcomes)

1. Lifelong learner and critical thinker

- Strives to acquire the knowledge that characterizes an educated person
- Approaches learning as a lifelong process
- Demonstrates the skills of critical analysis
- Takes seriously the perspectives of others
- Seeks expert opinion and credible evidence
- Makes connections and integrates knowledge
- Generates alternative solutions
- Demonstrates willingness to admit error and modify thinking.

2. Diligent and capable performer

- Strives for excellence; gives best effort
- Demonstrates initiative and self-discipline
- Knows standards of quality and creates high-quality products; takes pride in work
- Sets personal goals and assesses progress
- Perseveres in the face of difficulty.

3. Socially and emotionally skilled person

- Possesses a healthy self-confidence and a positive attitude
- Demonstrates basic courtesy in social situations
- Develops positive interpersonal relationships that include sensitivity to the feelings of others and the capacity for "care-frontation"
- Communicates effectively
- Works well with others
- Resolves conflicts fairly
- Has emotional intelligence, including self-knowledge and the ability to manage emotions.

4. Ethical thinker

- Possesses moral discernment—including good judgment, moral reasoning, and ethical wisdom
- Has a well-formed conscience—including a sense of obligation to do the right thing
- Has a strong moral identity that is defined by one's moral commitments
- Possesses the moral competence, or "know-how," needed to translate moral discernment, conscience, and identity into effective moral behavior.

5. Respectful and responsible moral agent, committed to consistent moral action

- Respects the rights and dignity of all persons
- Understands that respect includes the right of conscience to disagree respectfully with others' beliefs or behaviors
- Possesses a strong sense of personal efficacy and responsibility to do what's right
- Takes responsibility for mistakes
- Accepts responsibility for setting a good example and being a positive influence
- Develops and exercises capacity for moral leadership.

6. Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle

- Demonstrates self-control across a wide range of situations
- Pursues physical, emotional, and mental health
- Makes responsible personal choices that contribute to continuous self-development, a healthy lifestyle, and a positive future.

7. Contributing community member and democratic citizen

- Contributes to family, classroom, school, and community
- Demonstrates civic character and the skills needed for participation in democratic processes
- Appreciates the nation's democratic heritage
- Demonstrates awareness of interdependence and a sense of responsibility toward humanity and the environment that sustains all life.

8. Spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose

- Seeks a life of noble purpose
- Formulates life goals and ways to pursue them
- Considers existential questions (e.g., "What is happiness?", "What is the meaning of life?", "What is the purpose of *my* life?")
- Cultivates an appreciation of transcendent values such as truth, beauty, and goodness
- Pursues authentic happiness
- Possesses a rich inner life
- Pursues deep, meaningful connections—to others, nature, a higher power, and so on.

The Wisdom of the Ages on the Power of Character

On Performance Character

The importance of effort:
A teacher opens the door, but you must enter yourself.
—Chinese Proverb

The importance of hard work:
Nothing worth having ever comes except as the result of hard work.
—Booker T. Washington

The importance of diligence:
The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today's work superbly well.
—William Osler

The importance of perseverance:
The triumph cannot be had without the struggle.
—Wilma Rudolph

The importance of confidence:
You must do the thing you think you cannot do.
—Eleanor Roosevelt

The importance of courage:
Courage is the first of human qualities, because it is the quality which guarantees all the others.
—Winston Churchill

The importance of attitude:
Everything can be taken from us except one thing—the freedom to choose our attitude in any set of circumstances.
—Viktor Frankl

The importance of self-discipline:
Discipline yourself, and others won't have to.
—John Wooden

On Moral Character

The importance of conscience:
Do not cut your conscience to fit the year's fashions.
—Catherine Cookson

The importance of justice:
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
—The Golden Rule

The importance of respect:
Civilization is an attitude of equal respect for all people.
—Jane Addams

The importance of love:
It is not how much we do, but how much love we put into the doing.
—Mother Teresa

The importance of citizenship:
The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.
—Edmund Burke

The importance of truth:
Truth is the only safe ground to stand on.
—Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The importance of self-control:
Be patient in one moment of anger, and you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.
—Proverb

The importance of humility:
Anyone who makes a mistake and does not admit it is making another mistake.
—Confucius

talent development show that performance character, including self-discipline and good work habits, is needed to develop innate ability. In their book *Talented Teenagers,* a 5-year longitudinal study of 200 talented adolescents, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Kevin Rathunde, and Samuel Whalen note that underachievement on the part of talented youth is common in fields as varied as athletics, art, science, mathematics, and music. Their research question: Why do some young people become committed to the development of their talent, while others drop out?

Through their study they found that teens who more strongly persisted in developing their talent: (1) had a stronger "achievement and endurance orientation"; (2) were more likely to develop habits conducive to talent development (such as focusing on goals whether doing talent-related work or general schoolwork, being able to spend time alone, and, when they did spend time with friends, collaborating on hobbies and studying instead of simply "hanging out"); (3) had more conservative sexual attitudes than their peers; (4) were more likely to have harmonious and supportive families; (5) had more productive school experiences, including teachers who stimulated them, cared about their interests, and modeled

enjoyment of their own fields of work; and (6) were more likely to experience "flow," the experience of optimal engagement as they exercised and developed their talents.[8] (See *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,* for Csikszentmihalyi's elaboration of the concept of flow[9].)

Teens who develop their talents do so through performance character.

In short, the combination of strong performance character, supportive and challenging adults, and the capacity to take pleasure in developing their gifts maximized the likelihood that talented teens fulfilled their potential.

2. The wisdom of the ages. Washington State University historian Richard Hooker notes that the most articulated value in Greek culture is *arête,* a word frequently translated as "virtue," which Hooker claims is actually better translated as "being the best you can be" or "reaching your highest human potential."[10] This notion of virtue indicates support for a view of character rooted in excellence and ethics. The wisdom of the ages confirms the necessity and power of both performance character and moral character, as the box on page 24 shows.

3. Lives of character. If we examine lives of character, we invariably find both strong performance character and strong moral character at work. In their book, *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment,* psychologists Anne Colby and William Damon profile 23 men and women of exemplary character, including religious leaders of different faiths, businessmen, physicians, teachers, heads of nonprofit organizations, and leaders of social movements.[11] Their contributions spanned civil rights, the fight against poverty, medical care, education, philanthropy, the environment, peace, and religious freedom.

Reading these portraits of character, one sees again and again, the interplay of moral character and performance character: high ethical goals combined with diligence and determination in the pursuit of those goals. Colby's and Damon's book could have been titled, *Some Do Care—And Those Who Care Most Effectively Are Very Good At What They Do.* None of the noble accomplishments of these exemplars would have been possible without the mutually supportive contributions of performance character and moral character. And so it is, we suggest, in any life of character.

4. The practices of great character educators. If we examine how great teachers or great coaches go about their craft, we find that they foster in their students both performance character and moral character—a commitment to both excellence and ethics. As a case in point, consider the legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden. In the twelve seasons from 1964 to 1975, Wooden's men's UCLA basketball teams won ten NCAA Division I championships, including seven national championships in a row. No other coach—in basketball or any other sport—has matched such a record of excellence. And yet Wooden never talked to his players about winning; he talked about character. The character blueprint for UCLA's supremacy was Wooden's famous "Pyramid of Success" (**figure**, page 26), consisting of 25 values which he explicitly taught to his teams and which they, under his direction, consistently practiced (**www.coachjohnwooden.com/index.html**).

Note that these values included moral values, such as friendship, loyalty, cooperation, honesty, and reliability, as well as performance values, such as industriousness, enthusiasm, skill, team spirit, and competitive greatness. These values in action, not good recruiting or good fortune, were the distinguishing mark of UCLA basketball teams and the secret of their remarkable success.

In his memoir, Wooden wrote:

> The goal in life is the same as in basketball: Make the effort to do the best you are capable of doing—in marriage, at your job, in the community, for your country. Make the effort to contribute in whatever way you can. You may do it materially or with time, ideas, or work. Making the effort to contribute is what counts. The *effort* is what counts in everything.[12]

How did John Wooden instill this attitude in his basketball players? Former NBA star Bill Walton explains:

> Coach Wooden taught us how to focus on one primary objective: Be the best you can in *whatever* endeavor you undertake. Don't worry about the score. Don't worry about image. Don't worry about the opponent. It sounds easy, but it's actually very difficult. For us, it all started with our practices at UCLA. They were nonstop action, absolutely electric and incredibly demanding, with Coach Wooden pacing up and down the sidelines barking out instructions, positive reinforcements, and appropriate maxims: *"Be quick, but don't hurry." "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail." "Discipline yourself and others won't need to."*
>
> Games actually seemed like they happened in a slower gear because of the pace at which we practiced. We'd run a play perfectly in scrimmage and Coach would say, "OK, fine. Now re-set. Do it again, faster." We'd do it again. Faster. And again. Faster. And again.

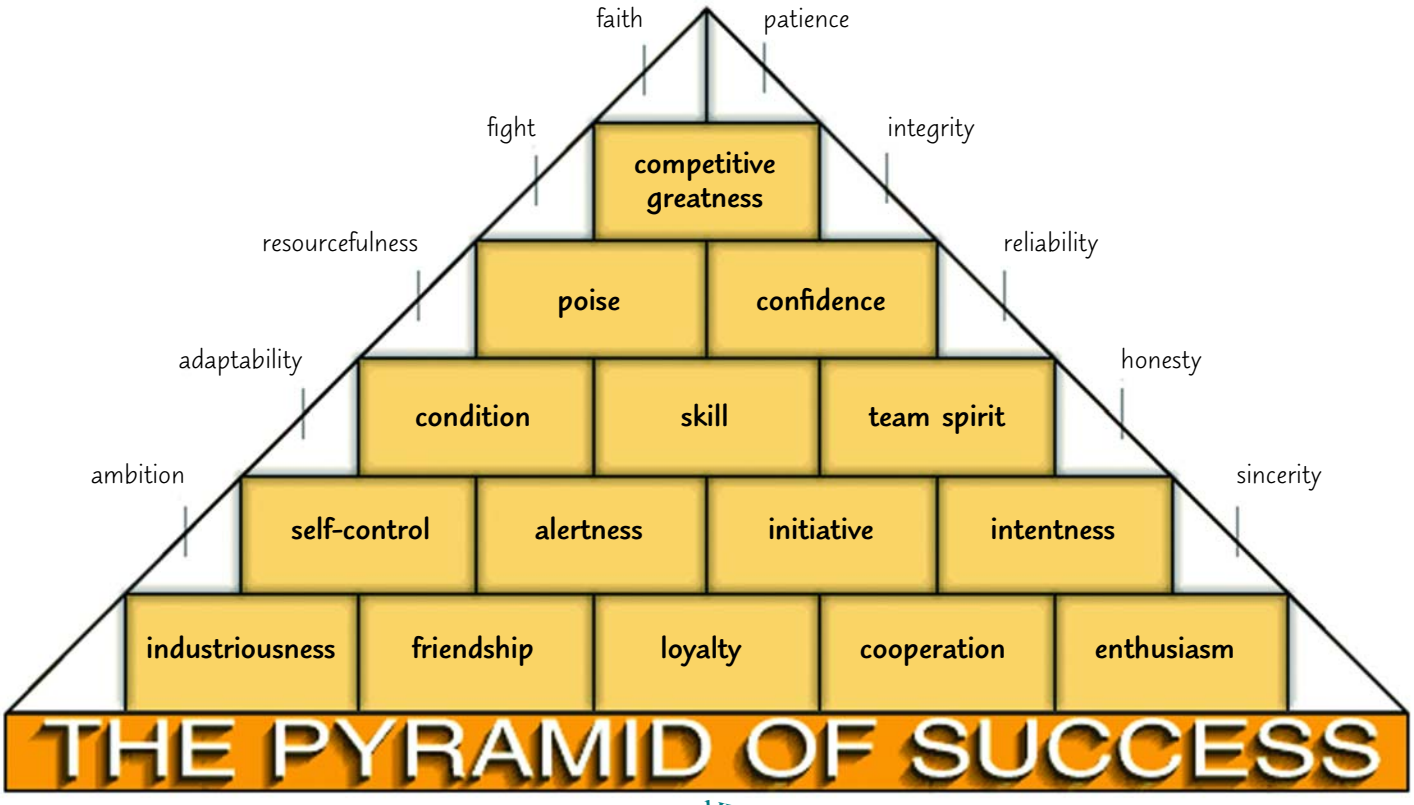
In his book, Wooden says, "Don't measure yourself by what you've accomplished, but rather by what you should have accomplished with your abilities." He then describes two UCLA basketball players who "were as successful as any players I ever coached, including those who went on to play professional basketball."

When they first tried out for the team, Wooden didn't think they could make the grade. "However," he says, "what I couldn't see was what these men had on the inside." By giving everything they had to give, both players, Conrad Burke and Doug McIntosh, eventually became starters for UCLA. "You may not have heard of them," Wooden concludes, "but each epitomizes what I define as success in an individual. They have come close to making the most of their God-given talent."

> *"Don't measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should have accomplished with your abilities."*

We think the qualities John Wooden epitomized are the distinguishing mark of all great teachers and coaches. They expect their students to give their best effort and to treat others with respect, fairness, and caring. They have high standards for learning and high standards for behavior. In short, they expect and develop both performance character and moral character—excellence and ethics.

5. The voices of high school teachers and students. In our research, we found that many high school practitioners



do not self-identify as "character educators," at least not initially. This, we noticed, was because they tended to equate "character education" with "discussing ethics." For example, one science teacher said, "I teach chemistry; I don't teach character. Occasionally, I might touch on an ethical issue, but I really don't have a lot of time for that."

"Performance character" gives high school educators a new language for describing their daily work.

However, when these same teachers began to speak about what students need to succeed in their classroom, they described character outcomes—specifically, performance character outcomes. They want students who will be able to demonstrate:

- **diligence—commitment to doing a job or assignment well**
- **perseverance in the face of difficulty**
- **dependability, including the ability to do their part on a project**
- **responsibility for having the required supplies or materials**
- **orderliness in their work**
- **the ability to set goals and monitor progress toward the realization of those goals.**

> **Technical skills and intellectual brilliance, by themselves, do not lead to a world worth living in.**
>
> —Mose Durst

For example, the chemistry teacher we interviewed emphasized many facets of academic responsibility with her students:

I tell my students, "You'll do better in this class if you keep an organized notebook. But it's your responsibility to do that; I'm not going to check it. You'll also do better on tests and in the course as a whole if you do the homework. But that's your responsibility as well." And I tell them that if they miss a class, a responsible student calls his or her lab partner to get the assignment.

When you get to this point in the discussion, a light bulb goes on and practitioners say, "If *this* is what you mean by character education, then, yes, I'm a character educator. In fact, I spend much of my time and energy trying to get these outcomes, because without these qualities of character, it is unlikely that students will be able to learn and develop in the academic disciplines." Bingo.

"Performance character" thus gives high school educators a new character language for describing the academic endeavor of teaching and learning that is the focus of their daily work. Of course, good teachers, as they help their students develop performance character, also pay attention to moral character: how students treat the teacher, treat each other, care for classroom materials and equipment, honor expectations of honesty on tests and other work, and so on. "I run a classroom based on respect," the above-quoted chemistry teacher said. "That includes standing for the pledge." But our point here is that defining character to give a prominent place to performance character as well as moral character profoundly alters how secondary-level educators see character education. Character development as the pursuit of excellence in learning, not just as the fostering of ethical behavior, is, for high school teachers, a "fit."

In a similar way, giving performance character its due offers high school students, especially in today's competitive environment, a new reason to pay attention to character. In one Chicago area high-achieving, middle to upper-class high school, a senior reported that fellow students had taken to saying, "If character counts, then show me what it will do for my GPA." Now, we obviously want students to believe that character is important even if it doesn't impact their GPA; we are obliged to be moral people even if doing the right thing is not rewarded—indeed, even if, in some situations, it costs us something. That said, however, shouldn't educators be able to show students that character can contribute to their academic performance?

Performance character helps all students achieve the excellence of which they are capable.

The performance character-moral character distinction enables us to do that because it establishes a role for character in the realization of human excellence. Regardless of natural talent, persons who are diligent and disciplined, maintain a positive attitude, and persevere in the face of difficulty should, over time, see a positive impact on their performance indicators (and, to be sure, GPA is only one indicator and arguably less important than other

measures of the quality of a student's work). Performance character will not level the playing field; it will not guarantee that all students achieve at the same level of excellence. It will, however, act to maximize individual potential—helping all students achieve the excellence of which they are capable.

What Interferes with Performance Character and Moral Character?

If we wish, as educators, to maximize the development of students' performance character and moral character, we need to be aware of what contributes to that process and also what interferes with it. We should ask adolescents themselves what helps and hinders the development of these two sides of character.

We should ask students, What supports the development of performance character and moral character? What hinders it?

When we asked the members of our Student Leaders Panel to identify character challenges facing adolescents today, a number spoke of conditions of school life and societal values that work, in their judgment, to undermine performance character, moral character, or both. One student responded:

We live in a society where if you are not the star of the football team, an A student, or the president of the student body, you consider yourself a failure. This pressure results in a competitiveness that can lead to cheating or the use of steroids to gain an advantage. Many teens feel they need to do these things in order to be "successful" and thus accepted by their family, friends, and society.

How do schools currently address the mounting stresses that so many adolescents speak of? Where are there opportunities, such as advisory groups, where students can share strategies for dealing with performance pressures in a way that maintains one's ethical integrity, a sense of perspective, and inner peace?

Another student said:

I find that even the best and most motivated students lose the will to learn and stay engaged when they are faced with too many things to do and too little time. With schoolwork, students are faced with the problem of wanting to do all of their work well, but struggle to find the time to just complete their work, however marginally. Then you begin to "bluff." I love to learn, yet I find myself cutting corners and bluffing when I am faced with too much work and too little time.

The dangerous thing about bluffing is that it creates a set-up of completing work without enjoying any of the learning involved. This is detrimental to both performance character and moral character, because when you stop wanting to learn, you stop growing as both a student and a person.

"When you're faced with too much work and too little time, you begin to 'bluff.'"

We received many such thoughtful answers when we asked the members of our Student Leaders Panel questions about what has influenced their performance character and moral character and what are the most important character challenges facing young people. It seems to us that it would be beneficial for schools to ask similar questions, and then provide forums for students to share their reflections and their suggestions for action steps to correct the conditions that undermine performance character and moral character. (Asked to do so, for example, a group of teens could quickly list the factors that lead students to cheat—and what might be done to offset those factors.)

Promoting the Development of Performance Character and Moral Character

The rest of this report describes the school conditions and pedagogical practices that we believe, on the basis of our research, hold promise for developing performance character and moral character. Here we wish to lay out four general strategies we think have broad utility for fostering these two crucial parts of character:

1. A Community That Supports and Challenges

Develop a learning community whose members not only pursue their own potential for excellence and ethics but also help to bring out the best in every other person.

2. Self-Study

Engage students in monitoring themselves to better understand their strengths and areas for growth in their performance character and moral character; based on their self-assessment, have them set goals to chart a course for improvement.

3. Other-Study

Have students study persons of performance excellence and moral excellence and seek to emulate the character pathways used by such individuals.

4. Public Performance

Use public performances—exhibitions, competitions, speeches, concerts, shows, "real-world" work, and the like—to increase students' motivation to do their best work and be their best ethical self.

The box below gives classroom and schoolwide practices for implementing each of these four strategies.

How can a whole school be organized to optimize the development of both performance character and moral character—the integration of excellence and ethics? In the next chapter we turn to that challenge.

Developing Performance Character and Moral Character: 4 Keys*

I. A Community that Supports and Challenges

(1) *Create a classroom environment that is simultaneously supportive and demanding.* Make the classroom safe for intellectual diversity, including the expression of unpopular or politically incorrect opinions. Use instructional practices such as well-designed cooperative learning that hold all class members accountable for high levels of engagement. In discussions of controversial material, require students to do the hard work of researching conflicting sides of any given issue so that multiple perspectives are fairly represented. Don't have students merely "clarify" their values; challenge them to develop more informed and principled ways of thinking.

(2) *As a community of educators—teachers, coaches, counselors, principals—take a strong stand for integrity in all phases of school life.* In every academic course and co-curricular activity, discuss with students how any form of cheating detracts from their education, integrity and self-respect, and the reputation of the school. Give students a leadership role in creating a school culture, including an honor code, where integrity is the norm.

(3) *Create an orientation program for new students.* Have current students welcome incoming students; discuss school traditions and norms regarding academic work, co-curricular activities, and how people treat each other; help new students understand and commit to the school's "way."

(4) *Create advisory groups* whose members support and challenge each other to set and pursue goals related to performance character (how can we help each other do our best work?), moral character (how can we help each other develop positive relationships in all areas of our lives?), and the 8 strengths of character (page 23).

II. Self-Study

(1) *Provide students with regular opportunities to self-assess and establish personal goals.* At strategic points throughout a course, have students reflect on particular character strengths required for success in that course (e.g., attention to detail, positive attitude, cooperation, perseverance, and courage), rate themselves on these strengths, and set goals for improvement.

(2) *Help students use self-monitoring tools to gauge progress toward their goals.* Have students keep a record of steps taken to improve in a particular academic subject or strength of character. Help them analyze their progress and revise their plans as needed.

(3) *Have all students, ideally in their freshman year, create a personal mission statement.* Have them define the person they hope to be and their emerging life goals. Have them consider performance character, such as goals they want to achieve, and moral character, including how they will make ethical decisions and treat others. Encourage them to continue to refine their mission statement throughout their high school years and beyond.

cont.

** Many of these strategies are illustrated in subsequent chapters with examples from our research.*

cont.

(4) *Find time to have students regularly grapple with existential questions.* This can be done before class, at the end of class, at the beginning of the week, or at the end of the week through journal writing, essays, advisories, and other venues. Sample questions: "What is happiness?", "What is the meaning of life?", "What gives my life a sense of purpose?", "How am I developing my unique potential?"

III. Other Study

(1) *In history and literature classes, discuss moral and performance character as shown by historical and literary figures.* Consider, "What made them great (or flawed)?" "Was there a disparity between their performance character and moral character?" In math and science classes, highlight the performance character and moral character issues embedded in the content and reflected in the mathematicians and scientists. Study and discuss inventors and other entrepreneurs, considering aspects of their performance and moral character. For example, "What character traits helped them achieve what they did?" "What character flaws may have limited their contributions?"

(2) *Invite people of exemplary work ethic from a variety of work settings (carpenters, factory technicians, lawyers, business people) to discuss their work.* Ask, "What do you find satisfying?", "How do you approach difficult tasks?", and "What ethical issues do you face in the workplace?"

(3) *Provide students with opportunities to shadow and interview persons at work.* Have students write up their findings and discuss them in small groups, analyzing the performance character and moral character qualities required for success in the areas of work observed. Have them reflect on the alignment of their own character strengths with a given area of work (e.g., "What character strengths do I now possess that would help me succeed in this job?" "What character strengths do I need to develop?").

(4) *Invite graduates to come back to the school.* Ask graduates to speak in classes and/or an assembly about their experiences and the role that performance character and moral character have played in their lives. Help students become aware of the school's rich social and intellectual capital.

IV. Public Performance

(1) *Provide regular opportunities for students to make their schoolwork public—to peers, the whole school, and the wider community.* In classroom settings, cultivate the skills and dispositions necessary for giving and receiving constructive critique. Coach students in how to present their work to classmates so that they describe the intended outcome (e.g., "Here's what I was trying to do in this essay"), the process (e.g., "Here's how I went about trying to achieve my desired outcome"), and the performance character qualities employed, strengthened, or in need of development (e.g., "I had good organization but found that I really need to work on maintaining a positive attitude when I run into a problem").

(2) *Provide many and varied opportunities for students to engage in community service and service-learning.* Have students discuss and then work on developing not only the moral character qualities (e.g., empathy, compassion, justice, and altruism) involved in service to others, but also the performance character qualities (e.g., organization, diligence, ingenuity, and perseverance) required to do service well. Whenever possible, integrate academic investigation of the topic so that students understand their service within a larger social-political context. For example, if students are working in a homeless shelter, study the political and economic dimensions of affordable housing.

(3) *Use public competitions to develop the knowledge, motivation, and skills of performance character and moral character.* Teach students to view competitions (e.g., choral, art, athletic) as opportunities to be challenged—by fellow competitors and by the task itself—as they pursue their personal best. Regularly reflect with students regarding the risks of competition (e.g., cheating to win, lack of respect for fellow competitors, lowered self-esteem if one loses); discuss the strengths of character (e.g., humility, perseverance, diligence, and focusing on best effort rather than just the outcome) required for being a good competitor.

(4) *Provide regular opportunities for simulated work or real work experiences.* Enable students to try their hand at different career opportunities and learn from experts in various fields. Have students present an "exhibition" (original research or creative work) before a panel that includes community experts; perform a "mock trial" in front of trial lawyers; fix a community member's car in the auto-tech shop; and so on.

Endnotes

[1] See, for example, B. Bloom, *Developing talent in young people.* (New York: Ballatine Books, 1985). Also, H. Gardner, M. Csikszentmihalyi, & W. Damon, *Good work: When excellence and ethics meet.* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Also, M. Csikszentmihalyi, K. Ratunde, & S. Whalen, *Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[2] R. Berger, *An ethic of excellence.* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

[3] Berger, 5.

[4] Berger, 35.

[5] The concept of performance character presented in this report extends thinking originally emerging from the study of sport and character by Matt Davidson and Kelli Moran-Miller: "Performance and moral character: A blueprint for developing character in competitive contexts." SUNY Cortland: unpublished manuscript, **MDavidson@ExcellenceandEthics.com**.

[6] See, for example, J.G. Nicholls, "Conceptions of ability and achievement motivation: A theory and its implications for education," in S.G. Paris, G.M. Olson, & H.W. Stevenson (Eds.), *Learning and motivation in the classroom.* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1983). Also, D. Molden & C. Dweck, "Meaning and motivation," in C. Sansone & J. M. Harackiewicz (Eds.), *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance.* (New York: Academic Press, 2000).

[7] Our thinking on competition builds on David Shields's conference paper "Opponents or enemies: Rethinking the nature of competition." University of Notre Dame (May 12, 2001).

[8] Csikszentmihalyi, et al, *Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[9] M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990).

[10] From Richard Hooker's World Civilizations Glossary, at **http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/WORLD.HTM**

[11] A. Colby & W. Damon, *Some do care.* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[12] J. Wooden, *Wooden: A Lifetime of observations and reflections on and off the court.* (Lincolnwood, IL: Contemporary Books, 1997).

CHAPTER 3

The Ethical Learning Community: Staff, Students, Parents, and the Wider Community Working Together to Integrate Excellence and Ethics

My teachers and peers have pushed me to do the best that I can. They have instilled in me a great work ethic in all areas of my life. My teachers don't let me give up when a question is hard—they teach me different ways to figure out a problem. My "discovery group" has helped my performance character by giving me a chance to take a deep look into myself and see the things that are holding me back. I think all high schools should push students to push each other to be their best.

—A High School Boy

Everything about my school, from the peer counseling program to the religious studies courses, influences the moral character of its students. We are taught from the very beginning that plagiarism and all forms of cheating are wrong, that any kind of cruelty toward other students is not to be tolerated, and that taking initiative and responsibility in all situations is required. We often have assemblies that discuss how to promote peace in society and issues that prevent peace from being achieved. Graduation requirements include 100 hours of community service, but our school encourages us to do more. There is an unspoken expectation throughout the campus to do what is right and stand up for what is just.

—A High School Girl

Excellence and ethics do not develop in a vacuum. They develop within an ethical learning community (ELC).

An ethical learning community is committed to the integration of excellence and ethics in all phases of school life. In an ethical learning community, both performance character issues (e.g., the extent to which teachers challenge and support all students in achieving their full potential) and moral character issues (e.g., academic dishonesty, peer cruelty) have a claim on the conscience of all members. Nothing that detracts from the culture of excellence and ethics is swept under the rug.

An ethical learning community is committed to the integration of excellence and ethics.

Four groups comprise the ethical learning community: (1) faculty and staff, (2) students, (3) parents, and (4) the wider community. Each of these four stakeholder groups has a vital contribution to make to helping the school become the best that it can be.

What are the operating principles by which an ethical learning community is created, sustained, and continuously improved? Based on our study of the research literature and our site visits to diverse high schools, we believe there are six principles:

1. ***Develop shared purpose and identity.*** Make excellence and ethics the cornerstone of the school's mission, identity, and sense of community.
2. ***Align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research.*** Ask, How does a given practice contribute to the integration of excellence and ethics—performance character and moral character? What is the evidence of its effectiveness?
3. ***Have a voice; take a stand.*** Create a democratic community that maximizes participation in the quest for excellence and ethics; challenge staff, students, and parents to use their voices with integrity and courage.
4. ***Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.*** See yourself as a work in progress; pursue your personal best.
5. ***Practice collective responsibility.*** Care enough to expect the best from others; commit to the norm of "care-frontation" in relationships.[1]
6. ***Grapple with the tough issues—the elephants in the living room.*** Address the often neglected issues—in school and outside school—that affect excellence and ethics.

Let's look at each of these six principles and how they contribute to an Ethical Learning Community that promotes both excellence and ethics in all phases of school life. The box on page 33 summarizes promising practices for each of these six principles.

Whatever you are, be a good one.

—Abraham Lincoln

Promising Practices for the 6 Principles of an Ethical Learning Community (ELC)

PRINCIPLE 1: Develop shared purpose and identity.

Promising Practices

1. Build a unified school culture around excellence and ethics by promoting high expectations for learning and behavior.
2. Create a touchstone and/or motto that expresses the school's commitment to excellence and ethics.
3. Develop an honor code.
4. Develop school traditions that express and strengthen the commitment to excellence and ethics.
5. Make a character compact with parents.

PRINCIPLE 2: Align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research.

Promising Practices

1. Engage staff in aligning practices.
2. Encourage parents to align their parenting practices with relevant research.

PRINCIPLE 3: Have a voice; take a stand.

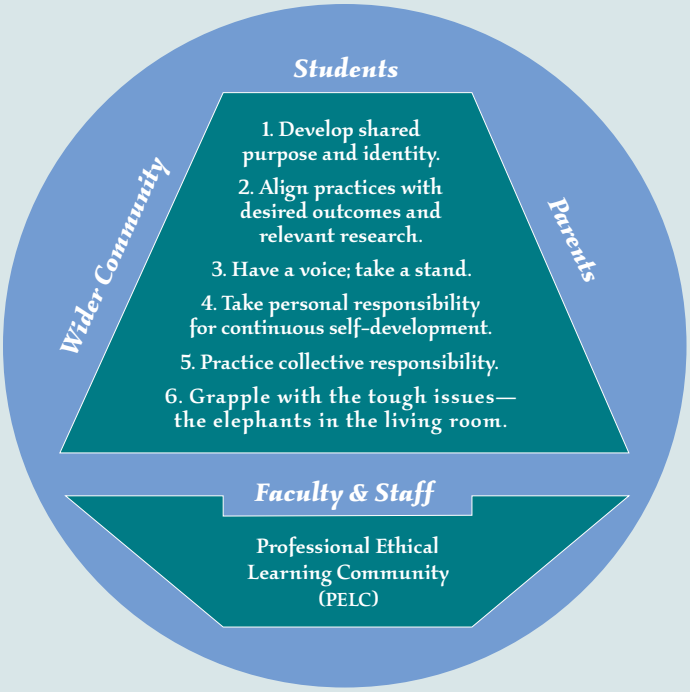
Promising Practices

1. Develop student voice in the classroom.
2. Develop student voice in the school.
3. Develop faculty and staff voice.
4. Develop parent voice.
5. Develop community voice.

PRINCIPLE 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practices

1. Promote the value of striving for excellence and ethics as central to a fulfilling life—in school and beyond.
2. Promote ongoing self-reflection on the quest for excellence and ethics.
3. Challenge students to move outside their comfort zone.



4. Create a culture of excellence in classrooms and a school-wide system that monitors and supports achievement.
5. Foster personal responsibility for excellence and ethics among faculty and staff, parents, & the wider community.

PRINCIPLE 5: Practice collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

Promising Practices

1. Model "care-frontation" as adults.
2. Create a school norm of collective responsibility and structures that institutionalize it.

PRINCIPLE 6: Grapple with the tough issues—the elephants in the living room.

Promising Practices

1. Identify the elephants.
2. Create study groups to grapple with high-priority issues.
3. Help families confront their issues.

ELC Principle 1:
Develop shared purpose and identity.

Make excellence and ethics the cornerstone of your mission, identity, and sense of community.

5 Promising Practices for Developing Shared Purpose

1. Build a unified school culture around excellence and ethics by promoting high expectations for learning and behavior.
2. Create a touchstone and/or motto that expresses the school's commitment to excellence and ethics.
3. Develop an honor code.
4. Develop school traditions that express and strengthen the school's shared purpose and identity.
5. Make a character compact with parents.

A school is defined primarily by its sense of purpose. William Damon has argued that purpose is the pathway to identity[2]—true for an organization just as it is for a person. Moreover, a noble purpose is the path to fulfillment; as Helen Keller pointed out, "Happiness is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." Therefore the first step in becoming an ethical learning community is to develop a shared sense of purpose around the goals of excellence and ethics—performance character and moral character.

Community is more powerful when it is based on shared purpose.

Much has been written about the importance of developing a strong sense of community in a school. Creating such a community, one that fosters personal relationships among students and between students and staff, has been a major rationale for breaking up large high schools into "small learning communities." The research (see box at right) on small learning communities and on "family and school connectedness" reminds us that positive relationships are vital for teens—both for protecting them against risk behaviors and for promoting their academic achievement. But we would argue that community is much more powerful when it is based not simply on social bonds but on a shared sense of worthy purpose, such as the commitment to excellence and ethics.

ELC 1: Develop Shared Purpose.

Promising Practice 1:

Build a unified school culture around excellence and ethics by promoting high expectations for learning and behavior.

In his monograph "Building a New Structure for School Leadership," Richard Elmore argues that a great many schools suffer from "loose coupling."[5] When there is loose coupling among faculty, for example, people do their own thing. Shadow a high school student for a day and you might find teachers who have highly variable expectations regarding performance character and moral character in their students. One teacher, for example, might stress the importance of integrity; another might never mention it; another might explicitly and publicly violate it. (For example, one teacher boasted to his students that

The Power of Connectedness

1. Personalization of the learning environment through small learning communities (SLC's). Research has found that students in small learning communities (e.g., "academies" or "houses" within the larger school) (1) tend to achieve at higher levels, both on standardized tests and other measures, with poor and minority students showing the greatest achievement benefits; (2) experience a greater sense of attachment to their school and are less likely to feel anonymous; (3) are less likely to engage in negative social behaviors, from classroom disruption to violent assault; (4) are more likely to attend school and graduate; and (5) are more likely to participate in, and find satisfaction in, co-curricular activities. Teachers in SLC's are more likely to feel they can make a difference in students' lives.[3]

2. Family and school connectedness. The 1997 Add-Health study interviewed 90,118 adolescents in a stratified, random sample of 80 high schools and their feeder middle schools. Researchers looked at various health risk behaviors including delinquency, violence, sexual intercourse, and substance abuse. Most important in keeping teens from involvement in these risk behaviors was *family connectedness,* a feeling of closeness to parents. Next in importance was *school connectedness,* a feeling of closeness to people at school.[4]

> The potential for greatness lives within each of us.
>
> —Wilma Rudolph

he was going to call in sick in order to have a long ski weekend.) This kind of inconsistency among adults makes for a weak "official culture" in the school. When the official culture is weak, students create an "unofficial culture."[6] With respect to cheating, for example, the unofficial culture in many high schools has become, "Everybody cheats; you need to cheat in order to be competitive."

The first step in creating a shared sense of purpose and identity based on excellence and ethics is for the school to build a unified school culture through "tight coupling"—the schoolwide promotion of high expectations for learning and behavior. Students testify to the power of consistent teacher expectations in creating a culture of excellence. A girl at a high school that has won several national awards told us:

In our school, in every class, we are required to learn on a level that is above normal expectations for most schools. Our teachers say, "You have to think about your thinking." We use mastery learning—which means that B work is the *minimal* standard you must meet—and it takes hours of planning, research, and sometimes more than one revision to meet that. When you do, it feels great.

Students testify to the power of consistent teacher expectations.

Similarly, consistency of behavioral expectations shapes the school's moral culture. Currently, the pervasive use of foul language mars the moral culture of many high schools. In a 1999 Zogby Poll of New York State public school teachers, a majority ranked students' use of profanity as a serious disciplinary problem.

Typically, expectations regarding appropriate language can be found in the school's discipline code, but they aren't enforced consistently—because staff haven't made a commitment to respond to inappropriate language in the same way. In one school that had had a problem with foul language, staff agreed that whenever they heard a student using unacceptable language, they would simply approach the student, say, "In this school, we don't talk like that," and then walk away. After this new approach was implemented, the level of student profanity dropped noticeably.

ELC 1: Develop Shared Purpose.

Promising Practice 2:

Create a touchstone and/or motto that expresses the school's commitment to excellence and ethics.

Studies from the business and non-profit world show the power of a touchstone to promote shared purpose and identity. In *Good to Great,* Jim Collins reports that companies making the leap from good to great performance had formed a corporate culture typically expressed in a touchstone—a creed or "way" (e.g., "The Toyota Way," "The IBM Way"). This "way" expresses the core values of the organization, helps its members feel connected to each other through these values, and is the glue that holds the organization together and keeps it focused, even during turbulent times.

In *Educating for Character in the Denver Public Schools,* educators Charles Elbot, David Fulton, and Barbara Evans observe that many schools that have created deep, sustained character education initiatives have done so with the aid of a schoolwide touchstone. To ensure ownership by the whole school community, all stakeholders—staff, students, parents, and members of the wider community—have a chance to provide input on a series of drafts of the touchstone statement, which may take several months to finalize.

Below, for example, is the touchstone of Colorado's Place School[7]; note its incorporation of both performance character values, such as "excellence" and "giving our best," and moral character values such as "being respectful, honest, kind, and fair."

The Place Way

At Place School, we pursue excellence in scholarship and character.

We celebrate and honor each other by being respectful, honest, kind, and fair.

We show our cultural appreciation for each other in all that we do.

We give our best in and outside the classroom and take responsibility for our actions.

This is who we are, even when no one is watching.

The touchstone can also be used to develop students' critical thinking and ethical judgment. What does it mean, in any situation, to "give my best" or "to honor others"?

The Roosevelt Way

We visited one large high school, with approximately 3,000 students (56% African-American, 30% Caucasian, 10% Asian, 4% Hispanic), which used a touchstone, the "Roosevelt Way," in a very deliberate manner to foster a culture of excellence and ethics. (The touchstone was part of a schoolwide character education effort that used the Community of Caring program, **www.communityofcaring.org**.) A character education page in the school yearbook states that the "Roosevelt Way" includes the core values of "respect, responsibility, integrity, honesty, and kindness," but other than that, it is not written down. A student leader told us, "I think it would be less effective if it were written down because I believe it is something personal to every student."

The Roosevelt Way: "Doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do."

A counselor at the school explained: "There is a way that students here are expected to act, and a way that they are expected not to act." The vice-principal defined the Roosevelt Way as "doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do."

Freshmen get a talk on the Roosevelt Way at their orientation. School administrators are often on the PA asking students to demonstrate the Roosevelt Way with respect to a particular area of school life. There are references to it in the student handbook, student newspaper, and communications to parents. Freshman English teachers have students write about what the Roosevelt Way means to them. In all sports—the school excels in athletics as well as academics—coaches expect their teams to adhere to the Roosevelt Way. When we visited, the school had just lost the game for the state football championship to its archrival, and despite the victors' trash-talk gloating, Roosevelt players and coaches wrote them a letter of congratulations. The athletic director told us, "We teach our kids that it's easy to win with class, harder to lose with class. You have to learn to do both."

Seniors and juniors, especially student leaders, are asked to help the younger students in the school learn the Roosevelt Way. This helps to get it into the peer culture. When we spoke with a faculty focus group, one teacher said, "In class, students will sometimes police each other. I had a boy this week who spoke disrespectfully to me. Before I had a chance to respond, another boy in the next row leaned over and said quietly, 'That's not the Roosevelt Way.' It immediately defused the situation."

The Power of a Touchstone to Build the Peer Culture

We look at the freshmen as the babies of the school. It's up to us to teach them how to act and keep them on the right track. If they're doing something wrong—using bad language in the halls, for example—we just tell them, "That's not the Roosevelt Way." I can remember when I was a freshman, I was going to skip class, and a senior took me aside and said, "That's not the Roosevelt Way."

—A Senior Girl

One student leader estimated that "only a minority of students, maybe 7-10%, have ever 'called out' another student for not following the Roosevelt Way. Fear of rejection and image concerns would keep most students from doing that." A veteran teacher commented, "Some students follow it consciously, others unconsciously. Some follow it unconsciously at first, then later, more consciously. But I believe the great majority are defined by it, whether they know it or not."

"Students are defined by the touchstone, whether they know it or not."

Each year there is a schoolwide essay contest on the Roosevelt Way. Students' entries reflect the school's emphasis on both performance character and moral character. A boy wrote:

To a lot of students, the Roosevelt Way may seem like just a vague concept that the administrators use to keep us in line. But I think we all know the Roosevelt Way under different names. Those names are integrity and hard work. Our drive to succeed is what sets our school apart from others. We learn habits of diligence and integrity that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives. That is the true Roosevelt Way.

Faculty made it a point to tell us, "We're not a perfect school—we have our bad days." The day we were there, two students got suspended for fighting. But through its consistent, daily use of a touchstone, this large, multiracial school displays a high level of intentionality in its

effort to prevent problems and create a strong sense of "who we are" around core values of excellence and ethics.

A school motto. Some schools use a motto to complement—or even serve as—the school touchstone. Sometimes the motto is one line (e.g., "We take the high road") taken from a longer touchstone statement. At its summer retreat, one high school staff discussed, "What kind of character do we want our students to exemplify as a result of their experience here?" That led them to choose "Purpose, Pride, and Performance" as the school motto, which now figures prominently in the school's newsletter, student and faculty handbooks, and lists of expectations for students and for teachers. In classes, teachers refer to the 3 P's. Students are asked to self-assess, using the 3 P's as the standard; several times a year they fill out surveys recording how they spend their time each day and asking themselves: "How does my use of time contribute to purpose, pride, and performance?"

Students in one school use the motto to self-assess.

ELC 1: Develop Shared Purpose.

Promising Practice 3: *Develop an honor code.*

An honor code takes "shared purpose" an important step further by expressing the school's core values—integrity, for example—in a formal pledge that students are asked to commit to and live by. At the college level, traditional honor codes ask students to sign a pledge, often allow them to take unproctored exams, and give them a significant role in the judicial process that addresses allegations of student cheating. Many colleges and some high schools have begun to adopt less demanding "modified honor codes" (see the box at right and the website **www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html** for descriptions). Both traditional and modified codes have been found to be effective in reducing student cheating.

We visited one private high school at which an administration-appointed Honor Code Committee of eight students and three faculty were spending a full year revising a long-existing Code of Honor that previous students had no role in developing—and which, in the words of one student, "we pretend to care about." At the end of the process of developing a new code, we asked the student leader who chaired the committee what she would do differently if she had it to do over. She answered:

Have the Committee members be elected rather than appointed by administration. Have faculty forums along the way to get more faculty input and investment. Find more ways to communicate with the whole student body on an ongoing basis so the process is seen as student-driven.

Honor codes must be combined with other steps to create a culture of integrity.

A growing number of public high schools are reportedly introducing some form of honor code to address issues of academic dishonesty.[11] (For a variety of approaches schools have used, See David Gould's *A Handbook for Developing and Sustaining Honor Codes,* published by the Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education: **www.csee.org**.)

Honor codes are a positive step but by themselves clearly aren't enough to create a culture of integrity; even when

Research on Honor Codes

Colleges. In a 1995 study of more than 4,000 students on 31 campuses, McCabe and Trevino found that 54% of students on campuses with *traditional honor codes* admitted to one or more incidents of serious cheating compared to 71% on campuses with no code.[8] *Modified honor codes* do not mandate unproctored exams or require students to monitor and report on the behavior of their peers, but do encourage significant student involvement in promoting academic integrity. Students work with faculty to reduce student cheating, by serving on judicial panels and making presentations to their peers about the importance of integrity. McCabe and Trevino report that modified honor codes reduce cheating, although not as much as traditional codes.[9]

High Schools. In a study of private high schools, where honor codes are typically found, McCabe compared survey responses of 3,813 students at 19 schools that did not have a code with the responses of 1,864 students at 11 high schools that did have a code. In schools with no code, 52% admitted to one of more incidents of serious test cheating in the past year, compared to 43% in schools with an honor code. Moreover, the percent of students who admitted to *repeated* instances of serious cheating was lower at high schools with an honor code.[10]

a code is in place, roughly half of the student body still cheats. That finding shows the need to combine honor codes with other promising practices (such as an emphasis on academic honesty by every classroom teacher; see page 144) that create an ethical learning community whose members practice integrity as part of the school's commitment to excellence and ethics.

ELC 1: Develop Shared Purpose.

Promising Practice 4:

Develop school traditions that express and strengthen the commitment to excellence and ethics.

A school's traditions, rituals, and routines are powerful carriers of the school's culture and identity. In the classic, *The Headmaster,* John McPhee describes the philosophy and practices of the famous Deerfield Academy headmaster, Frank Boyden, whose tenure spanned nearly seventy years. Boyden had a simple philosophy and simple rules of discipline, but a core of key school traditions. He believed strongly in whole-school meetings, saying, "You must have your boys together as a unit at least once a day, just as you have your family together."[12]

We observed some high schools that began every day with a whole-school convocation through which the school regularly renewed its sense of community and purpose. In some schools, this lasted no more than 10 minutes: Staff and students shared good news, announced special events of that day and other things of interest or concern to the school community, put out requests for help with this or that need, and so on.

Traditions and routines are powerful carriers of a school's culture.

In an inner-city boys' school that sends 90% of its graduates to college and whose motto is "Whatever hurts my brother, hurts me," the convocation that opened each day lasted a full 30 minutes and included a roll call of student group leaders to check attendance, a spiritual meditation by one of the staff, an inspirational character-centered speech by the headmaster, and foot-stomping singing led by "The Rev" (a beloved, piano-playing African-American minister). This daily convocation was seen by school lead-

Welcoming Freshmen: One School's Tradition

Our seniors have designed our welcoming day for freshmen, and they host it. Juniors and sophomores are invited and some come, but mainly it's a senior thing.

Freshmen at our school used to be hazed—diapers thrown at them as they entered on the first day of the school year, and so on. Five years ago, when we asked seniors to plan a different kind of welcome for freshmen, there was some initial resistance: "I had to go through hazing," and so on. But we watched a video on the Columbine shootings and discussed, "What caused this to happen?" "What are the lessons to be learned?" They were moved. Now, we buy a foam board for every freshman and paint their name on the top. We give every senior, junior, and sophomore the names of three freshmen and ask them to write each of them a letter. We ask them to consider, What would you have liked an upperclassman to write to you when you first got here?

Every freshman also gets a letter from a faculty member. The letters are then pinned to the student's foam board, and these are placed all around Madonna Hall. In the center of the hall are tables set for breakfast, with a name card for each freshman.

When the freshmen enter the hall single file, they come into a visual and auditory explosion of welcome. The place is filled with students and faculty standing around the perimeter, there's a band playing loudly, and everyone is cheering.

I think to myself, what must it be like to be a 14-year-old walking into a room with all these people greeting you in this way? They can't wait to sit down and get out of the spotlight, but they love it. The whole room then breaks into a special song we've chosen to sing to them.

We serve them breakfast. There are a couple of short speeches, the football team does a dance, and the cheerleaders and dance team do their routines.

Then we do a roll call: Each freshman is called up. We all get to see who they are, and a senior hands them their poster and letters. We end by taking a huge group picture of all of them with their posters and singing the alma mater together. This day sets the tone for the entire year.

—A PRINCIPAL

ers as a signature practice that helped to create the strong solidarity, work ethic, and spirit of hope pervading this successful urban school.

Another urban school we visited told of one of its defining traditions: A start-of-the-year welcoming ritual for freshmen, hosted by seniors. In the box on page 38, the principal describes this signature practice, one he believes has had a transformative impact on the climate of the whole school.

ELC 1: Develop Shared Purpose.

Promising Practice 5:

Make a character compact with parents.

A school's sense of purpose must be shared by families. If it is not, its impact on students is significantly weakened. These days, many teachers and school leaders feel that creating an ethical learning community is an increasingly difficult task because parents do not support the school in its efforts. A freshman English teacher recounted the following experience:

This semester I had a girl turn in a paper on Hamlet that she purchased from a web site, www.schoolsucks.com. I determined this by using another site, www.turnitin.com that finds all the papers on the schoolsucks site containing a particular phrase—in this case, "Shakespeare's comic purpose." The next day I called this girl over to a computer, downloaded her paper from the site, told her she would receive a zero for the assignment, and made an appointment to meet with her the next day. But the following morning her mother called the head to complain that I had unfairly humiliated her daughter, who, the mother claimed, had interpreted the assignment as *research* and therefore

A Character Compact with Parents

Dear Parents,

Lincoln High School, as you know, takes pride in its commitment to fostering both intellectual and moral excellence in our students. A central part of our commitment to character is our Honor Code (copy enclosed). When students sign the Code, they pledge not to lie, cheat, or steal, or to tolerate such behavior in their presence. They give their solemn word to practice and stand up for integrity as a core ethical virtue.

Each year we review with our students why we consider the Honor Code to be so important and the various forms of academic dishonesty covered by it. These include: (1) copying answers on a test, (2) using crib notes on a test, (3) giving another person the answers to a test, (4) copying someone else's homework, (5) plagiarism of language (failing to cite a source when directly quoting), and (6) plagiarism of ideas (failing to cite a source when using another person's ideas). We make it clear that Internet sources must be cited in the same way as other sources. We ask all faculty to send home a list of their writing assignments for the semester, so you know clearly what it expected of your child.

The penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty is a zero on that test or assignment, along with a report of the incident to my office. The penalty for a second offense is more serious and may vary according to the circumstances, ranging up to suspension or expulsion.

Please discuss the Honor Code and its academic honesty requirements with your son or daughter to make sure they understand it. Please encourage their faithful adherence to it. Help them see it as a way of creating a school of character and a personal character of which they can be proud.

If a student is charged with an offense against the Honor Code, we will follow the procedures outlined in the School Handbook (please review these). If a student is guilty of the charge, it will be crucial to help the student take responsibility for his or her actions. Our experience is that students' willingness to do this—and to grow stronger in their character from the experience—is greatly influenced by the disposition of their parents.

If you are willing to work with the school and your child to make our Honor Code succeed, kindly indicate that by signing and returning the form below. If you have any questions you would like to discuss with me, please call to set up a time when we can talk. Thank you.

Maureen Wellman, Principal

- - - Parents: Please sign & return. - - -

I have read the Honor Code and discussed it with my child. I support the school's efforts to promote academic integrity and to hold students accountable to that standard.

Signed:

_____

used the Internet to find an appropriate paper.

What's missing here—and arguably in most schools—is an *explicit compact* between parents and the school to work together to support shared expectations regarding excellence and ethics. When that kind of home-school compact is not in place, some administrators faced with an irate parent may be tempted to placate the parent rather than support a teacher who has confronted a student. And when teachers go out on a limb to confront dishonest or irresponsible student behavior and don't get support from administration, they are less likely to confront such behavior in the future. The character of the school culture suffers.

What's missing in many schools is an explicit compact with parents.

Schools must, therefore, take proactive steps to forge a character compact with parents. See the **box** on page 39 for a sample letter to parents, sent by a principal at the start of the school year, which seeks to make a compact with parents around the issue of academic integrity.

Making an explicit compact with parents creates a common language—a language of character. It goes a long way toward preventing student infractions of school rules and provides a framework for dealing with the infractions that do occur. If a parent, despite the school-home compact, persists in defending a child who has broken school rules, one high school principal says she finds it helpful to ask one or both of the following questions: "How would you like the school to handle this?" and "What lesson would you like your child to learn from this experience?" These questions force parents to be more reflective: How *do* they want the school to handle it? Do they really want the school to have separate rules for their child? Do they want their child to walk away thinking, "My actions have no consequences"?

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

—Thomas Jefferson

ELC Principle 2:
Align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research.

Ask, How does a given practice contribute to performance character and moral character?

2 Promising Alignment Practices

1. Engage staff in aligning practices.
2. Encourage parents to align their parenting practices with relevant research.

ELC 2: Align practices.

Promising Practice 1:
Engage staff in aligning practices.

School leaders, faculty, and other staff have the primary leadership responsibility for aligning school practices with desired outcomes and relevant research. We therefore describe practices for engaging staff in aligning practices when we discuss the Professional Ethical Learning Community (**Chapter 4**).

ELC 2: Align practices.

Promising Practice 2:
Encourage parents to align their parenting practices with relevant research.

Whenever possible, educators should try to be guided by what research shows about effective practice. Logically, the same should go for parents. How can research help them be the best parents they can be? How can it guide their decisions about particular questions, such as how to handle the issue of adolescent use of alcohol?

For example, is it a good idea for parents to permit their teenagers to engage in "moderate" underage drinking at home (at parties, for example), so that they "learn to drink responsibly"? As reported in the *Washington Post,* one mother whose son was starting high school didn't trust some parents' "kids will be kids" attitude toward allowing underage drinking. She did some research and came upon this remarkable finding in a National Institutes of Health study: *40% of people who are drinking by age 15 become alcoholics at some point in their lives.*[13]

Galvanized by this finding, she and a small group of other high school parents produced a 28-page booklet, *A Parent's Guide for the Prevention of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use,* that has since sold nearly a million copies.[14] It opens with this strong, research-based admonition:

When teens are allowed to drink at home, they are more likely to use alcohol and other drugs outside the home AND are at risk to develop serious behavioral and health problems related to substance abuse.[15]

Does research offer parents any guidance concerning their teenagers' friendship and dating patterns? For example, is it a good idea for young adolescents to have an older boyfriend or girlfriend? Studies show it's risky. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health on the sexual behavior of young adolescents indicate that among 12 to 14-year-olds, only 13% of *same-age* relationships involve sexual intercourse. But if the partner is two years older, 26% of the relationships involve sex, and if the partner is three or more years older, fully a third of the relationships involve sex.[16]

> **It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.**
>
> —Sir Edmund Hillary

The likelihood that a girl will use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs, or get drunk, also increases when her boyfriend is two or more years older. According to Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse,[17] girls whose boyfriends are two or more years older, as compared to girls with boyfriends less than two years older (including those without boyfriends) are:

- **6 times likelier to get drunk**
- **6 times likelier to have tried marijuana**
- **more than 4 times as likely to smoke cigarettes.**

The teens least likely to engage in risky behavior have parents who monitor their activities in age-appropriate ways.

What about spending a lot of time with a boyfriend or girlfriend? The research indicates that steady dating significantly increases the likelihood of sexual intercourse.[18]

What if your child's friends view pornography (the Columbia University study found that 45% of teens say they have friends who regularly view and download pornography from the Internet)? Teens who say that half or more of their friends download pornography from the Internet, are three times more likely to smoke, drink, and use illegal drugs than teens who have no such friends.

Researchers call these correlated behaviors—such as viewing pornography, having sex, smoking, and drinking—"the cluster effect." Any given risk behavior tends to combine with other risk behaviors.

The more teens have dinner with their parents, the less likely teens are to smoke, drink or do drugs.

The research therefore clearly points to the importance of parental vigilance about the friends their kids are keeping and how they spend their time. Bolstering that guideline is the conclusion of *Building a Better Teenager,* a 2002 *Child Trends* report based on hundreds of studies: ***The most academically motivated and socially responsible teens—and the ones least likely to engage in risky behavior—are those who enjoy warm and involved relationships with their parents and whose parents monitor their activities in age-appropriate ways.***[19]

Still another research finding that schools would do well to share with families: The more often children have dinner with their parents, the less likely youth are to smoke, drink, or use illegal drugs.[20]

ELC Principle 3:
Have a voice; take a stand.

Create a democratic community that maximizes participation of all ELC groups in the quest for excellence and ethics.

5 Promising Practices for Creating a Democratic Community

1. Develop student voice in the classroom.
2. Develop student voice in the school.
3. Develop faculty and staff voice.
4. Develop parent voice.
5. Develop community voice.

An oft-noted irony is that American education has the goal of preparing students for citizenship in a democracy but attempts to do that within autocratic schools. This is piercingly conveyed in Peggy Silva's and Robert A. Mackin's book, *Standards of Mind and Heart*:

> Next to prisons, high schools are the least democratic institutions in American society. They are cursed by a tradition of hypocrisy—teaching and espousing democratic doctrine within the classroom, but doing it in a highly controlled authoritarian manner that makes the actual practice of democratic principles largely nonexistent anywhere in the school.[21]

> *"Next to prisons, high schools are the least democratic institutions in American society."*

Principle 3 holds that the ethical learning community, to realize its full potential, must be a democratic community. This principle has two key parts: (a) all members of the ELC—staff, students, parents, and the wider community—must *have a voice,* and (b) members of the ELC must *use their voice*—with integrity and courage—to contribute to excellence and ethics in the school. A girl on our Student Leaders Panel spoke to the importance of students having a voice:

> There needs to be mutual respect rooted in the school system. For students, it is very important that their voice be heard. It gives them a chance to tell the school what they think. There would be a major difference in a school's moral character if the students were just given the chance to express themselves. This would show students that administrators and teachers respected them, and then students would be more likely to show respect in return.

> *"There would be a major difference in a school's moral character if students were given the chance to express themselves."*

A boy on our student panel spoke to the importance of students' taking responsibility for using their voice:

> Teens have to realize that they must stand up for what they believe in. Qualities like responsibility and trustworthiness are important, but developing character also means being an individual, discarding apathy, and upholding your convictions with honesty, confidence, and courage. Apathy is perhaps the greatest problem facing teens, and it is the greatest supporter of injustice. Apathy turns a blind eye to injustice; it plagues society.

When teens do not have *and* exercise a voice in matters that affect them, individuation—the developmental process whereby they form their own identity—may be retarded or driven in nonproductive or self-injurious directions. These can take the form of high-risk experimentation with sex, drugs, and alcohol; defiance of adult authority and values; or simply developing a peer culture that casually or cynically ignores adult rules and expectations.

However, when adolescents and other stakeholders in the ELC do have a voice and use it to contribute, (1) they will have a stronger commitment to the school's mission of excellence and ethics; (2) problems are more likely to be solved; and (3) both youth and adults will be developing the participatory skills they need to be active citizens in a democratic community.

What is a "democratic" community? Democracy, as John Dewey emphasized in *Democracy and Education,* is much more than a political process. It is a *way of life*—one that maximizes opportunities for meaningful participation. Democracy, Dewey believed, is "faith in the power of pooled intelligence." A democratic community is one that makes full use of the intellectual capital of its members. This doesn't mean putting everything up for a vote. It means asking: What are the opportunities for increasing input and participation in decision-making—in ways that make the school work better and that lead to growth in students and other members of the ELC?

ELC 3: Have a voice; take a stand.

Promising Practice 1: *Develop student voice in the classroom.*

Helping teens find and develop their voice must begin within the small community of the classroom. If students are not comfortable and competent speaking in their classrooms, they are not likely to do so in larger or less familiar groups.

Democracy means maximizing opportunities for meaningful participation.

Most teachers want more students to respond to questions, participate in classroom discussions, etc., but may not be using adequate strategies—or implementing their strategies well enough—to bring that about. For novice teachers or teachers in challenging settings, giving students more voice may at first seem unrealistic, even risky. However, thoughtfully structured, incrementally expanded strategies can be used to increase student voice, responsibility, and productive engagement. What follows are two such strategies.

- **Maximize all students' responsibility for participating in academic discussions.**

Even in schools that prided themselves on their academic program, we observed classes where only a small percentage of students spoke. In our experience, this pattern prevails when teachers call on students who raise their hands and thereby allow students (usually the most confident and articulate ones) to determine who speaks. In more fully engaged classrooms, teachers maximized student participation and accountability by *not* having students raise hands but instead calling on students in an unpredictable pattern.

In one urban boys' school, for example, an English teacher involved nearly every student in a probing discussion of *Hamlet* by his intensity, passion, and crisp, thought-provoking questions—such as asking individual students to describe how they would direct a particular scene in the play to best convey what was happening at that point. Teaching of this sort honors—and develops—the voice of all class members.

- **Hold class meetings that seek and act upon student feedback.**

The Character Benefits of Giving Students Greater Voice

1. Increased student engagement. Eccles and colleagues report a decline in student engagement and motivation from the elementary to the secondary school years.[22] These researchers explain this trend with a "stage environment fit" theory: Students' behavior, motivation, and emotional health are influenced by the "fit" between their developmental stage and the characteristics of the social-educational environment. Since adolescents have a developmental need for increasing opportunities for autonomy (e.g., voice), schools must meet that need—or a drop-off in motivation will occur.

2. Character outcomes of giving students a voice in the school. Adolescents have a range of moral reasoning levels available; which level they use depends at least partly on their environment. Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg found that students in democratic schools were more likely to see their school as being governed by high-stage moral norms (e.g., "care about others") and were more likely to use their *highest* available moral reasoning when presented with everyday moral dilemmas. By contrast, students who did *not* experience their schools as democratic communities were more likely to use lower moral reasoning (e.g., "look out for yourself") than the stage of which they were capable.[23] Grady studied graduates of a democratic "just community" school ten years after graduation and found lasting positive outcomes. These students were more likely than a comparison group of students to: (1) have an interest in politics and national affairs; (2) have voted in local elections; (3) show concern about local government decisions; and (4) have worked with others to solve community problems.[24]

3. Character outcomes of giving students a voice in the classroom. Ralph Mosher's *Moral Education: A First Generation of Research and Development* summarizes classroom studies showing greater gains in moral reasoning, social perspective-taking, and conflict resolution skills in classes where students had regular opportunities, through class meetings, to discuss and solve real-life problems.[25] McNeeley and colleagues cite studies of urban high schools that achieved up to a 40% reduction in discipline referrals when teachers encouraged self-management and allowed students to help make decisions.[26]

The class meeting, held on a needs basis or at a regularly scheduled time (e.g., the last 10-15 minutes of the final class of the week), is a vehicle for recruiting students as partners in sharing responsibility for making the class the best it can be. Teachers of all developmental levels have used the class meeting to tackle a wide range of classroom issues such as tardiness, tests, homework problems, classroom behavior, and how to approach an upcoming curriculum unit or cooperative learning project. The spirit of a class meeting is to address any challenge in the collective moral voice: "How can we, working together, solve this problem?"

Teachers who use class meetings say they gain more control.

Teachers who have never involved their students in this kind of collaborative decision-making may wonder, "Will I be giving up my authority in the classroom?" and "Just how do I do this?"

Teachers who have had success with class meetings say they feel they actually gain *more* control, because students buy into a classroom where they feel their viewpoint is sought and valued. Some teachers trying a class meeting for the first time have found it helpful to start by soliciting students' input via a Suggestion Box ("What would make our class better?") or Feedback Form ("What in the class has been valuable for you so far? What can *I* do as the teacher to make it more valuable? What can *you* do as a student?"). The teacher can then share students' suggestions as a springboard for discussion or simply summarize the input and present how the teacher intends to respond to it.

One first-year 9th-grade science teacher, new at test construction, held his initial class meeting when many students, despite studying hard, did poorly on his first exam and felt the test was unfair. He solicited their ideas on how to create an exam that would be a more fair assessment and how he and the class could work together to help them prepare more effectively for future tests.

A student teacher in a 10th-grade English class held her first class meeting to share her frustration with students' being chronically unprepared to discuss the assigned reading, find out why they weren't doing the reading, and decide together what they could do about this problem. Most students said they intended to do the reading but ended up not having enough time. In the class meeting, they worked out better time management strategies, and their preparation for class subsequently improved. This student teacher commented, "Conducting a class meeting was the single most important teaching technique I learned during student teaching."

ELC 3: Have a voice; take a stand.

Promising Practice 2:
Develop student voice in the school.

When students have plenty of practice formulating and expressing their perspectives in the classroom, they are better prepared to use their voice in venues beyond the classroom. To maximize student voice in whole-school affairs, the school should create a variety of "voice opportunities," ranging from surveys to broadly participatory student government.

- **Use surveys to seek students' input on school improvement.**

A growing number of school districts now use a formal survey, such as Indiana University's High School Survey of Student Engagement[27], to solicit student input on how to improve their school. In some districts, high schools must now report to the school board how they will address issues raised by the student responses.[28]

The *Students as Allies* project has taken what we think is an important additional step: giving students a voice in creating the school improvement survey and then designing action steps based on the survey data.[29] In the greater St. Louis area, for example, each of six high schools taking part in the *Students as Allies* project sponsored an 8-member team, consisting of three members of the school's professional staff and five students representing the diverse social groups of the school. After the surveys were administered, a university consultant met with the six teams to help them analyze and present their data, including "good news worth celebrating" (66% or more positive responses on a given item) and "real concerns to be addressed" (66% or more negative responses).

At one school, most students disagreed with the statement, "Faculty and staff value what I have to say."

At one high school a majority of the student body *disagreed* with the survey statements, "My school disciplines fairly," "Students in my school care about learning," and "Faculty and staff value what I have to say." Action steps that emerged from discussing these data included:

(1) scheduling a weekend retreat inviting 40 students, 15 teachers, and 15 community members to develop plans for improving student-teacher relationships and the academic climate; (2) including students in the future hiring of high school faculty and staff; and (3) strongly encouraging all teachers to use a course evaluation instrument to get feedback on their teaching and relationships with students. All these are meaningful steps toward increasing student voice.

Other high schools now give an *Exit Survey* to all graduating seniors, asking them to rate how well the school met their needs in areas such as scheduling, making connections with others, having opportunities to participate, and planning for life after high school.[30]

> Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind.
>
> —Dr. Seuss

- **Structure small-group discussions of whole-school issues.**

One school superintendent described how his high school has for the past two years engaged the entire student body in small-group, student-led discussions of whole-school issues selected by students. The first schoolwide dialogue focused on the question, "What can we do to improve the school?" An all-volunteer group of 110 students was trained as discussion leaders, facilitated the small-group dialogues, and then compiled the list of issues of greatest concern to students. The superintendent commented:

> One issue selected by students was the lack of integration of students from other countries into our school culture. Approximately 15% of our students now come from other countries such as Brazil, Portugal, Mexico, and Guatemala. Some students made a video based on interviews revealing students' feelings of isolation in the school. One of the results of discussing this issue was a program called Friends, in which students volunteer to buddy with students from other countries.[31]

- **Create a democratic schoolwide governance system that gives students a voice in decisions affecting the whole school.**

As students learn to use their voice in small groups such as academic classes, advisories, and problem-solving discussions, they develop the skills, confidence, and motivation to participate in a vitally important schoolwide process: democratic school government that shares responsibility for making the school the best ethical learning community it can be.

Currently, in most high schools, student government doesn't govern anything. It is typically an isolated group with no constituency. Members don't represent anyone but themselves; they don't, in any systematic way, seek input from or report back to other students. This kind of disconnected student government has little or no power to influence the norms of the peer culture and solve problems—such as academic dishonesty, social cliques, peer cruelty, bad sportsmanship, abuse of alcohol, and sexual activity—that typically have significant roots in the peer culture.

Other high schools, however, have designed their student government to have real voice and real responsibility for the life of the school. Two ways to do that are representative democracy and direct democracy. Both of these approaches have the potential to solve real school problems and influence student behavior by influencing the peer culture.

1. Representative democracy. In this model, elected representatives of each homeroom, family group, or selected class period (1) carry input from their group to a schoolwide meeting of all elected representatives; (2) in collaboration with adult school leaders, formulate action proposals that synthesize the different groups' ideas; (3) bring those proposals back to their constituencies for further feedback; (4) carry that feedback into the next school governance meeting; (5) refine the action proposals; and (6) continue this process until an action plan is adopted and implemented. Mosher, Kenney, and Garrod, in their book *Preparing for Citizenship: Teaching Youth to Live Democratically,* present a detailed, warts-and-all case study of the representative democratic governance model as implemented in a large high school in the Boston area.[32]

Representative democracy and direct democracy are two ways to positively influence the peer culture.

We visited one comprehensive high school of about 2,000 students where the principal, no longer satisfied with meeting just with class officers to get input on school issues, instituted a representative democratic governance structure to create broader student participation in school improvement—and during its first year challenged student representatives to use the new system to develop a

wide-ranging honor code. See the box below for the details of this school's governance process and the results of its honor code effort.

2. Direct democracy. The rationale for direct democracy is to maximize students' civic engagement and ethical growth by maximizing their active participation in school governance. Direct democracy schools are called "just community schools" when they base their approach on the moral development theory of Lawrence Kohlberg.[33] Reflecting that theoretical perspective, the leader of one such school commented, "Developmental theory tells us that the experience of cognitive dissonance helps to bring about advances in moral reasoning. We therefore want all of our students, not just some of them, to experience the dissonance that comes from democratic debate." A just community school delineates those areas (e.g., honor code; creation of a safe, caring, and productive learning environment) in which the just community—students, faculty, and administration—is granted authority to make decisions together, each person having one vote, and also defines those areas (e.g., curriculum requirements, drug policy) that are outside its jurisdiction.

> *"We want all of our students to experience the dissonance that comes from democratic debate."*

Clark Power and colleagues report research showing that students in just community schools rate their schools higher than do students in traditional schools and develop collective normative values that include the feeling of obligation to act out of concern for the welfare of the

"The Leadership Team": A Representative School Democracy

Called The Leadership Team, the new student government consisted of 9 groups of 10 students—two elected representatives from each of the school's second-period classes. Leadership Team representatives met, on average, twice a month; reported back to their second-period classes the next day ("Initially, some of the teachers resisted giving up time for the follow-up discussions," the principal told us); spent the first year developing an Honor Code that covered not only lying, cheating, and stealing, but also bringing drugs or weapons to school and all forms of bullying. At a May assembly, representatives of the Leadership Team presented the new Honor Code to the whole student body and discussed its rationale: "Any violation of the Code jeopardizes one's self-respect and harms the entire community."

Honor Code

1. I will be honest and forthcoming in all my actions.
2. I will treat others the way I want to be treated.
3. I will extend courtesy, kindness, and respect to others.
4. I will respect our school building and each individual's personal property and will treat them with care.
5. I will strive for a sense of cooperation and pride in all our school programs.
6. I will have the courage to report incidents of bullying in any form, and report the possession of drugs or weapons on the school campus.
7. I will uphold this Honor Code and will exhibit these behaviors when I represent our school off campus.

Student leaders invited all students to "take a stand for yourself and our school by signing the Honor Code as you leave today." One month into the following fall semester, Leadership Team representatives presented a new challenge to their respective classes:

> This year we are seeing many more incidents of drugs being reported and wallets and purses being turned in to Lost and Found with their contents intact. But we still have incidents of disrespect and theft. We need your input to continue to improve our school. Therefore the questions for this semester are: *What can we do to promote Honor Code behaviors schoolwide? How can we recognize these behaviors in students? Do any parts of the Honor Code need to be rewritten?*

The principal said, "I believe it's critically important that the Leadership Team feel it got something done and be seen by their peers as having brought about positive change. So at every opportunity, I'll get on our closed-circuit TV and say, 'Your Leadership Team is responsible for the following school improvements . . . .' For example, they suggested we install security cameras in the parking lots after some students and faculty had their cars broken into—by off-campus offenders, we believe. We put the cameras in the next week."

group.[34] The report, *What Works in Character Education,* cites the just community as one of the high school character development programs validated by research.[35]

In high schools, student governments established on the direct democracy/just community model have taken one of three forms:

1. School-Within-a-School Model. About 100 students and a small number of teachers form a semi-autonomous school within the larger school and meet weekly to discuss and make decisions about issues related to discipline and social and academic life within their learning community.

2. Whole-School "Town Hall" Model. The entire school—all students and staff—meet, usually weekly, to discuss and make decisions about whole-school issues. (The school needs a meeting space large enough to accommodate everyone.)

3. Cluster Model. A school's several clusters or academies meet separately to make decisions about cluster matters and make proposals about schoolwide matters for subsequent consideration by the entire school.

For a case study of direct democracy based on the whole-school Town Hall model, see **Chapter 5, Outcome 7,** pages 186-188: Contributing Community Member and Democratic Citizen.

ELC 3: Have a voice: take a stand.

Promising Practice 3: *Develop faculty and staff voice.*

A basic rule for an effective ELC is, "If you want faculty and staff to do something with students—such as give them greater voice and responsibility—then make sure administration is treating faculty and staff in the same way."

> *Research finds that students in democratic schools develop greater concern for the welfare of the group.*

In **Chapter 4**, on Developing the Professional Ethical Learning Community, we describe how ELC principles can be implemented with faculty and other school staff. Here we simply want to emphasize the need for consistency—and to call attention to the fact that in many schools, faculty and staff do not feel adequately consulted regarding decisions that affect their lives and the school. Many faculties, for example, have little or no voice in planning their own professional development activities or in influencing whole-school reform initiatives.

ELC 3: Have a voice: take a stand.

Promising Practice 4: *Develop parent voice.*

Increasing parents' voice and stake in the ELC can be carried out in ways that parallel those processes (e.g., surveys, membership in decision-making groups) used to increase student and staff voice. In one comprehensive high school we visited, the principal holds a monthly open forum for parents called the *Parents Advisory Board* (see box below). Between 50 and 100 parents attend any given meeting.

ELC 3: Have a voice: take a stand.

Promising Practice 5: *Develop community voice.*

One way to cultivate the wider community's concern for excellence and ethics in its schools is to create community task forces that examine particular areas of school life. One large high school (4,300 students) we visited said that an important part of its philosophy of continuous improvement was going to

The Parents Advisory Board: One Principal's Experience

I send out a letter and schedule of the meetings to all families, encouraging them to attend whatever they're interested in. I present the issues I want their input on, and then ask them what they want to discuss. Sometimes we jump-start the discussion with a guest speaker on an issue parents are interested in, such as someone from the police department who's an expert on drugs or gangs. In response to parents' requests at these meetings, we've added a prep session before standardized testing, shortened the summer athletic program from 6 weeks to 3 because families felt their kids were overscheduled, and redesigned the parking area to better accommodate parents who have handicapped kids. The Parents Advisory Board also created a telephone network so that the school and parents can work together to ensure that student parties are alcohol-free.

the community every year to solicit its recommendations on how to strengthen one or another school program. A 22-year-member of the School Board told us:

This year one of our Community Task Forces is looking at the questions, "What's the purpose of our athletic programs?", "What are our expectations of parents?", "What are parents' expectations of coaches?", "How do athletics fit into the total picture of our mission?" We might have three or four Community Task Forces over the course of one year. The community starts to feel ownership; it's their school. A few years ago, when we had to have a referendum on the budget, people who had been involved in a Community Task Force came to us and asked, "How can we help?"

A community task force gives the community a voice in school improvement.

Thank God for my handicaps, for through them, I found myself, my work, and my God.

—Helen Keller

ELC Principle 4:
Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

See yourself as a work in progress; pursue your personal best.

Promoting Personal Responsibility for Continuous Self-Development: 5 Promising Practices

1. Promote the value of striving for excellence and ethics as central to a fulfilling life—in school and beyond.
2. Promote ongoing self-reflection on the quest for excellence and ethics.
3. Challenge students to move outside their comfort zone.
4. Create a culture of excellence in classrooms and a schoolwide system that monitors and supports achievement.
5. Foster personal responsibility for ethics and excellence among faculty and staff, parents, and the wider community.

Principle 4 says that excellence and ethics begin "at home"—with me. The emphasis here is on personal responsibility for continuing growth, for striving to be the best that I can be—both in my work (performance character) and my relationships (moral character). This expectation applies to all—adults as well as students. For educators, parents, and community members, Principle 4 means we don't ask kids to do anything we're not willing to do ourselves, because example is the most powerful teacher.

ELC 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 1:

Promote the value of striving for excellence and ethics as central to a fulfilling life—in school and beyond.

Perhaps the most basic challenge of an ethical learning community is to communicate a vision: the ideal of striving to be the best that we can be; the belief that every

person has gifts; and the conviction that developing our gifts and using them to make a positive difference in the world is the only way to be truly happy.

◆ **Communicate the school's vision to incoming students.**

One school, in its "Statement to the Prospective Student," makes it absolutely clear that to be a student there is to commit wholeheartedly to the quest for excellence:

> *"If you are content with yourself, this school may not be for you."*

If you are happy and content with yourself, then this school may not be for you. You must want to change and grow. As a student at this school, you should accept the following premise as your basic responsibility: that you make and keep a total commitment to pursue excellence.

> Our task in life is to become what we potentially are.
>
> —Erich Fromm

◆ **Invite graduates back to speak.**

Some schools invite graduates to come back and speak to students about what is needed to be successful, ethical, and happy in life—and how the school's emphasis on striving for excellence and doing the right thing prepared them for that.

ELC 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 2:

Promote ongoing self-reflection on the quest for excellence and ethics.

If the ELC wants to promote personal responsibility for pursuing excellence and ethics, it must foster ongoing personal reflection as essential for self-assessment, goal-setting, and continuing growth. Toward that end, some schools have students do journaling or write essays that require regular self-examination (see box below).

Reflecting on Excellence

1. Review your academic subjects. What can you do to improve in each? What keeps you from doing better?
2. Evaluate your intellectual character. To what extent do you possess curiosity, purposefulness, self-discovery, openness, thoroughness, and perseverance? How can you develop each of these to a higher level?[36]

ELC 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 3:

Challenge students to move outside their comfort zone.

Striving for excellence means being willing to move outside our comfort zone, beyond the limits we may initially set for ourselves. One mother said to us:

In many areas of school life, this school pushes kids beyond their perceived limitations in ways that are important for their growth. My son was a good basketball player, but his coach pushed him to be a leader on the court—to demand more from his teammates. He got benched when he didn't do that. There were some 9-to-5ers on the team—kids who were talented but didn't practice. Other kids got in a funk after missing shots. He wasn't comfortable saying anything to them—it was a courage issue—he just wanted to lead by the example of his play. But the coach wanted him to go beyond being the good kid and the good player and add *voice* to that. When he finally did, it was like I had a different son. He started to confront me at home on some things that needed to be confronted.

ELC 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 4:

Create a culture of excellence in classrooms, and a schoolwide system that monitors and supports achievement.

The ideal of striving to be the best we can be comes to life in school culture when it is translated into classroom practices used across the school. That starts with the teacher's belief that every student is not only capable of learning, but with enough time, effort, and support, capable of producing high-quality work. Many might consider that unrealistic. But in his book, *An Ethic of Excellence,* master teacher and master carpenter Ron Berger makes the case that all students, whatever their abilities or backgrounds, have the potential to do excellent work:

I want a classroom full of craftsmen. I want students whose work is strong and accurate and beautiful. In my classroom I have students who come from homes full of books, and students whose families own almost no books at all. I have students whose lives are generally easy, and students with

physical disabilities and health or family problems that make life a struggle. I want them all to be craftsmen. Some may take a little longer; some may need to use extra strategies and resources. In the end, they need to be proud of their work, and their work needs to be worthy of pride.[37]

Schools that aren't working need a lot more than new tests and mandates.

Schools that aren't working, Berger argues, need a lot more than new tests and new mandates: "You can mandate tests and standards and curricula all you want, but it means nothing if you can't inspire kids to care." What most inspires students to care is the experience of excellence.

"Work of excellence is transformational," Berger writes. "Once a student sees that he or she is capable of excellence, that student is never quite the same. There is a new self-image, a new notion of possibility. After students have had a taste of excellence, they're never satisfied with less."

What are the pedagogical practices that enable all students to achieve the excellence of which they are capable? For 25 years, teachers in Berger's small elementary school in rural western Massachusetts and teachers in outstanding schools across the country, have used five pedagogical practices to create a classroom culture of excellence (see box below).

"What most inspires students to care is the experience of excellence."

As an example of classroom work that involved all five of these pedagogical practices, Berger describes a project in which his 6th-graders interviewed senior citizens and wrote their biographies.

No one needed to tell them the reason for doing a quality

Creating a Culture of Excellence: Five Pedagogical Practices

1. Assign work that matters. Students need assignments that challenge and inspire them. At the Raphael Hernandez School in Boston, middle-schoolers took on a study of vacant lots in their Roxbury neighborhood.

Students researched the history of the sites and interviewed neighborhood members regarding what uses they would prefer for the lots. They collaborated with officials from city hall and faculty and students from the Harvard School of Landscape Design. Eventually, they drafted blueprints and scale models of possible buildings, gardens, or playgrounds that could be built on the sites. Their proposals were formally presented to the mayor of Boston and his staff, and one of the sites was later converted into community gardens. Projects such as this not only help students achieve excellence by real-world standards but also make a tangible contribution to the welfare of the community.

2. Study examples of excellence. Before they begin work on a project, the teacher and students examine models of excellence—high-quality work done by previous students as well as work done by professionals. What makes a particular science project, piece of writing, or architectural blueprint so good? What was the process of achieving such high quality? What mistakes and revisions were probably part of the process?

3. Build a culture of critique. Formal feedback sessions build a culture of critique that is essential for improving students' work. The rules for group critique: "Be kind; be specific; be helpful." Students presenting a piece of work first explain their ideas or goals and state what they are seeking help with. Classmates begin with positive comments and phrase suggestions as questions: "Have you considered . . .?" The teacher uses the critique session as the optimal opportunity for teaching necessary concepts and skills. Through this process, students have regular experiences of being able to improve the quality of a piece of work as a result of feedback from others.

4. Require multiple revisions. In most schools, students turn in first drafts—work that doesn't represent their best effort and that is typically discarded after it has been graded and returned. In life, when the quality of one's work really matters, one almost never submits a first draft. An ethic of excellence requires revision.

5. Provide opportunities for public presentation. Every final draft students complete is done for an outside audience—whether a class of kindergartners or the wider community. The teacher's role is not as the sole judge of their work but rather similar to that of a sports coach or play director—helping them get their work ready for the public eye.

job. These books were to be gifts to the seniors, gifts that might become precious heirlooms. They wanted critique and help from everyone. They read the final drafts of their opening paragraphs aloud to the whole class for suggestions. They labored, draft after draft, over the cover designs. They wanted their books to be perfect.

> *"In this school everyone cares about my work. I have to try much harder."*

A 6th-grade girl at Berger's school was asked by visitors from a foundation how this school differed from her previous one. She answered:

In this school everyone looks at my work. Everyone cares about it. In my old school, only my teacher knew anything about my work. I have to try much harder in this school because the work is more important.

Berger's school is elementary. In secondary level classes, practical constraints such as time and curriculum pressures would prevent all five of the pedagogical practices outlined above from being implemented all of the time.

However, if we seek to optimize learning at the high school level, the challenge arising from Berger's work is this: How likely are we to get our students to achieve the excellence of which they are capable *unless* they do work that matters, have models of excellence, experience positive peer pressure from classmates who critique their work, revise on the basis of peer and teacher feedback, and have the uniquely powerful motivation that comes from public presentation? How else to create a genuine culture of excellence, so that doing one's very best work is business as usual—the only way to "fit in" at this school?

High schools that require seniors to do an "exhibition" offer one example of a pedagogical strategy that both demands and supports excellence at the secondary level. An exhibition typically involves year-long original research or creative work culminating in a public presentation to a jury of teachers, peers, and at least one community expert. In one such school, we listened to a senior girl present, with articulate self-assurance and hard-won expertise, her year-long study of the therapeutic value of using animals in visits to depressed and non-communicative nursing home patients. As a result of her research and first-hand observation, she was planning to pursue this line of work as a career.

- **Develop schoolwide support systems that hold all students accountable for learning.**

At the same time that teachers work to create a culture of excellence in classrooms, there must be support systems in place that monitor and support student achievement. These assure at least a minimal level of academic performance for those students who, for whatever reason, show a performance drop. For example, one large high school we visited—the recipient of multiple awards—said its motto was "Success for every student." When it comes to students' academic learning, the principal said, the school believes there are three key questions:

1. **What should students know and be able to do?**
2. **How do you know if they've learned it?**
3. **What are your interventions when you find that a student hasn't met the learning standard?**

> *Every three weeks one high school sends an academic progress report to a student's parents, coaches, and club advisors.*

The principal explained:

Every three weeks, a student's academic progress report goes to the parent, coaches, and club advisors. Grades are sent out every six weeks. Students who are not achieving at an acceptable level have to go to special classes. Through these, we can monitor whether they're getting their homework done. Kids here can't fall through the cracks.

ELC 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 5:

Foster personal responsibility for excellence and ethics among faculty and staff, parents, and the wider community.

In Chapter 4, when we describe the professional ethical learning community, we will discuss the responsibility of all school staff to develop a personal plan for continuous professional growth. Here we want to focus on what schools can do to inspire parents and the wider community to become part of the quest for character.

- **Help parents become their best.**

Given the research on the importance of "family connectedness" as a factor protecting teens against high-risk behaviors, one of the most important things a school can do is to help parents develop communication skills for connecting

with their teens. Many parents complain that attempts at conversations with their adolescents rarely elicit more than monosyllabic responses ("How's school going?" "Good.") To help parents in this area, one high school did a workshop for parents on "conversation starters" (see box below) that parents could use with their teenager to create a meaningful exchange of thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and sent the list home to all parents.

10 Ways to Start a Conversation with Your Teen

1. How was today on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is terrible and 10 is terrific)? Why?
2. What was the best part and worst part of your day?
3. What was something you accomplished today (this week) that you feel good about?
4. What's something good that's happened since the last time we talked?
5. What's something that's on your mind these days?
6. What was an interesting or enjoyable conversation you had today?
7. What's something you're looking forward to?
8. What's a goal you're working on?
9. What's a problem you're trying to solve?
10. Do back and forth questions. Take turns answering any of the above questions; keep the question bouncing back and forth.

We visited one small high school whose philosophy included these two core beliefs: (1) Adolescents' ability to realize their "unique potential" depends on the maturity of their character, and (2) parents are the single strongest influence on their child's character. This school therefore required families to commit to a significant program of parenting seminars that demanded a hard look in the mirror and a willingness to change unhealthy and unproductive behaviors. The school pointed out that counterproductive family dynamics (e.g., anger, put-downs, avoiding talking about problems) can foster deep emotional dispositions in children that profoundly influence—now and in the future—how they deal with themselves, others, and life itself.

In a statement addressed to its parents, this school reminded them of the tremendous potential of parents to positively influence their child's life:

> Given the power of family in human growth, parents hold the key that unlocks their children's greatness. In a University of Chicago study of 120 exceptional individuals in the fields of science, mathematics, art, music, and athletics, the one common thread researchers discovered in their greatness was "a long and intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education, and training."[38] Parents always initiated this powerful growth process.

A study of 120 exceptional individuals found that their parents provided intensive encouragement and education.

But this school also warned of common mistakes parents make during the teen years:

> American parents have difficulty letting go of their children because they want what is best for them and thus often become overly concerned about their children's progress. This lulls their children into taking less responsibility than they should. Parents unwittingly become more concerned about their children's futures than their children are. This leads to a pattern where the more irresponsibly the child acts, the more responsibility the parent accepts.

One mother at this school told us how this teaching about responsibility, elaborated in the school's family seminars, changed her relationship with her daughter.

> I had to ask myself, "Why did I feel I had to fix everything for my daughter?" I had had a lot of struggles as a kid. But as a mother, there was a big part of me that wanted to protect her from the tough times. I now see that as a mistake. Life is not easy. She needs to experience that and figure some things out for herself.

Most of us would be likely to agree that guiding a child through the teen years is a formidable task. Compare the formal training and ongoing professional development that a teacher of high school students receives with the little preparation parents get to do their crucially important job. High schools that don't take steps to help parents do their best are making their own job harder and reducing the likelihood that students will become all they are capable of being.

◆ **Create communities of character.**

Schools are not islands; they exist in communities. In

Seedbeds of Virtue, Rutgers University sociologist David Popenoe points out that as youth move into the outside world, the character lessons taught by parents and teachers must be sustained by others.[39] Francis Ianni's 10-year study of 10 different communities across America found that a community's degree of consensus about values was a key predictor of adolescent development, far stronger than variables such as affluence or ethnicity. Ianni writes:

> The adolescent is in search of structure, a set of believable and attainable standards from the community to guide the movement from child to adult status. If the values expressed by different community sectors are at odds, the teenager cannot be expected to accept their good will or trust their judgment.[40]

A study of 10 communities found that a community's degree of value consensus was a stronger predictor of adolescent development than affluence and ethnicity.

In many communities, Popenoe notes, value dissensus is now the norm. An emerging counter-trend, however, is that in at least some towns and cities, as a way to re-create a more values-cohesive environment, schools and other groups have taken steps to develop "communities of character." This typically involves all the groups that educate, care for, and influence the young—including families, businesses, youth organizations, sports leagues, local government, local media, and faith communities—in working together to model and promote good character. (See the book *Character Matters* for examples of what communities large and small have done to promote character.[41])

◆ **Collaborate to create career opportunities.**

A second way for communities to foster excellence and ethics in youth is to work with schools to design courses and programs that prepare workers who are needed in the local community. In one urban school we visited, for example, the Health Academy is now a popular career track with students. It was created when a local hospital told the school that although it served mostly people of color, its staff included very few persons of color. Today, a significant number of Health Academy graduates fill a variety of jobs at area hospitals.

ELC Principle 5:
Practice collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

Care enough to expect the best from others; practice care-frontation in relationships.

2 Promising Practices for Collective Responsibility

1. Model "care-frontation" as adults.
2. Create a school norm of collective responsibility and structures that institutionalize it.

The focus of Principle 4 was on personal responsibility: "Be the best you can be." Principle 5 complements that; it says, "Your education isn't just about you. It is, in part, about doing your best work and becoming your best ethical self—but that's only half the story. The other half is about helping other people do and become *their* best." And while some might describe this process as "confrontation," we came to understand this as "care-frontation"—meaning we care enough to bring out the best in each other.[42]

Collective responsibility is countercultural but essential for optimal human development.

In a deep sense, this principle is countercultural. Americans tend to be individualistic and competitive in a self-centered way; succeeding in school is one of the many ways we try to get ahead of the other guy. Countercultural though it may be, collective responsibility—being our brother's and sister's keeper, working collaboratively to help each other succeed and do the right thing—is, in our judgment, an essential part of an ethical learning commu-

> **When we seek to discover the best in others, we bring out the best in ourselves.**
>
> —William Arthur Ward

nity, and necessary for optimal human development.

Schools have already accepted the principle of collective responsibility at the adult level. Teaching was once an isolated profession; teachers went into the classroom, closed the door, and did as they saw fit. In the past two decades, however, teaching has become a thoroughly collaborative enterprise. The "professional learning community," where teachers help each other do their best work, has become, if not yet the norm, the gold standard to which all good schools aspire.

In some schools, students said both teachers and peers "pushed them" to be their best.

So it should be with students, parents, and everyone in the ethical learning community. In some of the schools we visited, students talked about how not only their teachers but also their peers "pushed them" to be their best. In other schools, students never talked that way. In those schools where students held each other accountable to high standards of performance character and moral character, the school had made a deliberate effort to promote and institutionalize an ethic of collective responsibility.

The psychologist John Gibbs, in his book *Moral Development and Reality,* reviews research showing the power of "positive peer culture" to influence youth behavior in healthy directions, especially when coupled with direct instruction in perspective-taking and communication skills. This is true even with youth who have histories of antisocial behavior.[43]

In our view, creating a positive peer culture through an ethic of collective responsibility is an excellent developmental match for adolescents, for at least three reasons:

First, as one boy on our Student Leaders Panel said, "Most teenagers' main goal is to fit in and be liked." The task of adults is to help shape a positive peer culture that teens can fit into.

Adolescents themselves know that peer pressure can be positive as well as negative. As another boy on our Student Leaders Panel said:

A negative group mentality can create a very strong temptation with regard to drugs, smoking, alcohol, sex, and even academic performance. But in a highly motivated and supportive group, a positive collective mentality can be an amazing motivator to push individuals' limits and help them achieve new goals.

A girl in an inner-city school spoke about what happens when there is not a positive peer culture that speaks with a moral voice:

The reason for most of the wrong things that adolescents do is that their friends are afraid to confront them and tell them what they should not do. Most adolescents do not speak up about what they really believe.

Second, a positive peer culture, committed to supporting the "quest for one's best," helps to offset the influence of the media culture. Collective responsibility, cultivated wisely, provides students with a strong support system that can help them establish some distance from media messages and develop an identity, based on solid values, that they can feel good about.

Finally, an ethic of collective responsibility helps to counter the distorting and destructive aspects of competitive individualism. Unbalanced by collective responsibility, the intense competition so prevalent in today's culture creates a high-stress environment that fosters unethical behavior. An ethic of collective responsibility, while increasing positive peer pressure to perform at one's highest level, simultaneously provides the system of mutual support needed to reduce stress and the temptation to succeed at any price.

Research shows the power of a positive peer culture, even with youth who have histories of antisocial behavior.

ELC 5: Practice collective responsibility.

Promising Practice 1: *Model care-frontation as adults.*

Students will be able to push each other to be their best when caring adults have pushed *them* to be *their* best. A girl in a public urban school told us:

The teachers who have most influenced my moral character have helped me realize some bad habits I have and helped me change them. Mr. K., my advisor, has helped me realize how my anger issues can be a distraction in my learning, and together we've come up with ways to avoid taking out my anger on other people. Mr. W., who is like a father to me, is always checking up on me and giving me little lectures and pep talks on being a young lady. He probably thinks it goes in one ear and out the other, but the things

he's said about being kind and caring toward other people really do stick in my mind.

A girl at another school observed that faculty need training and peer support for confronting students.

I think if faculty went through confrontation training workshops and met to talk about students every week, there would be a huge change in schools. Faculty wouldn't be scared to push students to deal with the truth, to challenge them and support them. A deep bond would be created between student and teacher.

ELC 5: Practice collective responsibility.

Promising Practice 2:
Create a school norm of collective responsibility and structures that institutionalize it.

Since much in human nature and our cultural individualism inhibits us from practicing collective responsibility, an ELC that wants students and others to act on this principle of responsibility must take deliberate steps to make it normative—by creating structures that ensure its regular practice.

The school must create structures that ensure the regular practice of collective responsibility.

◆ ***A classroom culture of critique.*** A "culture of critique" (see page 50), where students give positive peer feedback and suggestions for improvement on each other's work, is one example of a collective responsibility structure.

◆ ***Brother's keeper.*** We visited an urban public charter school serving minority and low-income students that created a variety of structures to make collective responsibility normative with respect to both performance character and moral character. "Brother's keeper," for example, is one of the school's five guiding principles (being your brother's keeper was, in fact, how the school defined "leadership") and "intentional intrusion" is its primary way of putting into practice the brother's keeper ethic. The school's guidebook states:

Our school may appear to be a confrontational community. In fact we are much more like a deeply united family. When we operate at our best, we have no hidden agendas, we all know exactly how we think and feel about each other, and our criticisms of each other are far outweighed by the very real respect and love we have for each other. We simply don't "look the other way" when someone is giving less than his or her best.[44]

"Discovery group has allowed my peers to challenge me to live up to my standards of excellence."

◆ ***Discovery group.*** "Discovery group" is another structure this urban school uses to ensure the regular practice of collective responsibility. A boy said, "Discovery group gives me a chance to reflect on my attitude and the things that are holding me back. People ask you questions. It takes courage. You have to be willing to explore what's deep inside of you."

A girl told us, "Discovery group journaling has challenged me to open up to my peers. It has also allowed my peers to challenge me to develop my character and live up to my personal standards of excellence." The journaling that students share in discovery group is written in response to items such as those below.

"Discovery Group" Journaling Questions

1. Step back and try to define your hopes and dreams for your life at this point. What changes in yourself will you need to make in order to fulfill your hopes and dreams?
2. What do you believe about a purpose in life? Do you believe you have a unique destiny?
3. What changes do you need to make in yourself and your attitudes in order to better allow others to help you realize your best and your unique potential?
4. Evaluate your learning attitudes in terms of truth. When do you tend to resist or avoid the truth? When do you tend to deal with the truth only if you have to? When are you willing to follow the truth wherever it leads?

◆ ***Concern meeting.*** The "concern meeting" is still another structure used by this school to promote collective responsibility. We observed one such meeting in which an 11th-grade girl, whose grades had taken a recent downturn and who had spoken disrespectfully to two teachers, met with the academic dean, one of her teachers, and four peers (two boys, two girls). The dean chaired the meeting. At one point she asked, "How will you be able to

graduate from high school and go to college with the kind of path you are setting for yourself?"

Some schools use a "concern meeting" to promote collective responsibility.

The girl blamed a teacher for not being fair. The boy sitting next to her said softly, "I think you're pointing the finger at other people. I've done that myself. But the sooner you address this as your problem, the sooner you'll solve it." Later in the meeting, another boy said, "I've been where you are. Last year I got myself into a similar predicament because of my attitude. But I've known you for a long time. I know your work ethic. I know you're much better than this." For us as observers, it was impressive to see African-American males, from tough inner-city neighborhoods where urban culture tends to promote a different version of masculinity, reaching out to this young woman with such gentle and sensitive compassion.

By the end of the concern meeting, the girl's defensiveness was gone. There were some tears. With the dean's encouragement, she set some goals for her coursework and community service requirement and a time for checking in to report on how her plan was working. At the close of the meeting, without prompting, the four other kids gave her hugs.

Following our observation of this concern meeting, we had a focus group with eight students. One girl said:

I've had several concern meetings. Once I cheated. Another time I had an off-track attitude. When they called the meeting, I acted nonchalant. I was mad they were confronting me. One of them said, "You do have an attitude. You give teachers lip. They're just trying to teach you." But afterwards I had time to think: "If all these people are saying this about me, maybe it's true." I had to write a letter to my concern group about what I learned from the whole situation. In this school, if you don't change, you're going to get constantly confronted. This school is *concerned*.

Another girl said, "At first, when people confront you, you go into defensive mode. It feels weird. The hardest thing is to listen. You have to learn to listen." Another said, "If you can get your attitude on track, you'll be able to grasp your academics. I'm not saying it's going to be easy, but if you can get your attitude turned around, the other stuff will come."

ELC Principle 6:
Grapple with the tough issues—the elephants in the living room.

Address the big issues—in school and outside of school—affecting excellence and ethics.

3 Promising Practices for Grappling with the Elephants

1. Identify the elephants.
2. Create study groups to grapple with high-priority issues.
3. Help families confront their issues.

Principle 5 applied collective responsibility to the interpersonal level: In our relationships, how can we call forth the best in each other? Principle 6 asks, What institutional practices or issues are we turning a blind eye to—ones that we ought to be confronting if we want to become, collectively, the best that we can be?

What institutional practices are we turning a blind eye to?

ELC 6: Grapple with the tough issues.

Promising Practice 1: *Identify the elephants.*

Sometimes the big issue is truly an "elephant in the living room" in that everyone knows it's there; they just aren't talking about it. Issues like poverty, race, cliques, and hazing are common elephants in our living rooms. Sometimes an elephant is unaddressed because it's politically incorrect or otherwise awkward to notice it; such elephants are "officially invisible," and bringing them up can carry a cost. Most elephants in the living room have an ethical dimension, and many of them have a significant influence on the quality of teaching and learning.

- **Do a "What Are the Elephants in Our Living Room?" survey.**

Faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members can all be invited to complete a survey that looks like this:

What Are the Elephants in Our Living Room?

1. Trouble spots. What *undesirable student or adult behaviors* is the school neglecting to deal with adequately (e.g., students' lack of academic responsibility, faculty not challenging all students to do their best, hazing and other forms of peer cruelty, cheating, inappropriate sexual behavior, racist attitudes)?

2. Mixed messages. What *institutional practices* are at odds with the school's commitment to excellence and ethics (e.g., adults being poor role models, inequalities of opportunity, inconsistent enforcement of the dress code and other discipline policies, below-the-radar sexual harassment despite official rules against it, favoritism in treatment of students or staff, recognizing performance excellence but not moral excellence)?

We surveyed the students on our Student Leaders Panel, asking them what character issues teens and high schools face and what they would do differently if they were principal. A girl in one high school (whose enrollment was evenly divided between blacks and whites) identified racist attitudes as one of the elephants her school had not yet confronted:

Although segregation was outlawed long ago, racism is still present here. If I just walk to class with a male African-American friend of mine, there are stares not only from whites, but from blacks, too. There is self-segregation in our assemblies. Programs should be enacted in our schools so that every day students would learn something about others' backgrounds.

"Although segregation was outlawed long ago, racism is still present here."

A boy at a small private school pointed to the prevalence of cliques in his school as being contrary to its official emphasis on character:

If I were head of my school, I would do more to try to create a social environment without cliques. Cliques have no place in a school of character. They are inherently detrimental to student relations; they segregate students and promote a sense of superiority and elitism. I would increase the number of group projects—such as a ropes course and service activities—that would expose students to the wider school community and expand their circle of friends.

- **Conduct a special survey to get data on a particular elephant.**

Suppose a particular issue such as hazing emerges on a survey as a serious concern. A next step is to gather data that would shed further light on the nature and extent of that problem.

Hazing is widespread in colleges and growing in high schools.

Nationwide, existing research finds hazing to be widespread at the college level and growing at the high school level. A recent study by Alfred University defined hazing as "any activity expected of someone joining a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers." Hazing occurs in sports, marching bands, military settings, religious cults, and many other groups and clubs (see **www.StopHazing.org**).

Alfred's higher education study found that of the 325,000+ athletes at more than 1,000 NCAA schools that participated in intercollegiate sports during 1998-1999, more than a quarter-million experienced some form of hazing. One in five was subjected to illegal hazing (being kidnapped, beaten, tied up and abandoned, forced to commit crimes); half were required to participate in alcohol-related hazing. Fully half of all high school students who belong to groups (teams, clubs, etc.) report that they have experienced some form of hazing.

Any school should want to know: How widespread is hazing here? How many students have experienced it, how often, and in what ways? How did students try to deal with it? If they reported it, what happened? If they did not, what kept them from doing so? A school is wise to determine these things proactively, before a major hazing incident occurs.

Whether the issue is hazing, cheating, drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, or any other problem, a school will be better positioned to take action once it knows the size and nature of the elephants in its living room.

Without a struggle, there can be no progress.

—Frederick Douglass

ELC 6: Grapple with the elephants.

Promising Practice 2:
Create study groups to grapple with high-priority issues.

A problem of major importance to the ethical learning community will benefit from thoughtful discussion by all groups in the community. Study circles are one way to bring that about.

> Sometimes we don't mind other peoples' business enough.
> —Flannery O'Connor

We visited one high school in a community that was focusing on the persisting achievement gap between poor kids and better-off kids. The principal said, "We serve six of the county's 12 [low-income] projects, more than any other high school." Even before No Child Left Behind applied federal pressure to close the achievement gap, this community was determined to be proactive. It decided the first step was to get people to *understand* the achievement gap—and one way to do that was to have them read Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty.*

> *"We're making more of an effort to reach out to every student."*

The city's Human Resources Committee organized study circles of 8-12 people to read and discuss Payne's book. Two trained mentors, many of them teachers, led each study circle. There was a special outreach to get minority parents involved. One teacher-mentor told us:

We've got these discussions going on all over the city—in churches, the high school, community recreation centers, all locations. Plus we're providing food, childcare, and transportation. Our charge to all the study circles has been, "Develop ideas to close the achievement gap." Our attitude isn't, "We hope to close it," but "We *will* close it."

After the community-based study circles got underway, the schools set up their own study circles for all faculty. The principal commented:

It's helped our staff understand the hidden effects of poverty. A lot of our kids are living with one parent or being raised by a guardian or a grandparent. The adults in the home often do not expect that the child will learn and achieve. There may be family dynamics that affect the child—power struggles that spill over into the classroom as defiance of authority. Parents may not be teaching the child the behavior and language we want in the school environment. For example, we're asking our staff not to look at a student's profanity as a character flaw, not to take it personally, but to have the attitude, "I shouldn't expect a child to do what I haven't taught him." Once you understand these things, there's a different emotional response, and you can respond in a diversity of ways.

A high school teacher spoke of the change these discussions had brought about in her. "We're accountable for every kid who walks through these doors. Before, I didn't always make the effort to connect with every student. Now I put more energy into that." A counselor said:

We're making more of an effort to reach out to every student. I'll ask them: "What are your goals? What do you want to achieve in life? Well, then you've got to do this and this and this . . ."

For information on how to set up study circles, see Everyday Democracy, www.everyday-democracy.org.

ELC 6: Grapple with the elephants.

Promising Practice 3:
Help families confront their issues.

In *The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have,* Laura and Malcolm Gauld lay out 10 principles, based on more than three decades of working with families, that define the responsibilities of parents of adolescents. The first and most important of these principles, in their judgment, is "truth over harmony."

> *The first principle in parenting teens is "truth over harmony."*

Because the family's first job is to prepare children for life, a family must be willing to confront problems rather than avoiding conflict for the sake of harmony. "Putting the weight of our foot on the path of honesty is a lifelong challenge and journey," the authors write. "We learn great lessons when we exercise the courage to trust the truth." Dealing with the truth enables us to grow.

A mother comments:

Before we went to the family seminars my husband lost his temper a lot. And I used to do everything in my power to make sure that he wouldn't lose his temper, so I was always backing away. I can remember my son, really in anger, saying to me, "Mom, you are so afraid of Dad! All you ever

do is support him instead of saying what is really happening in our family."[45]

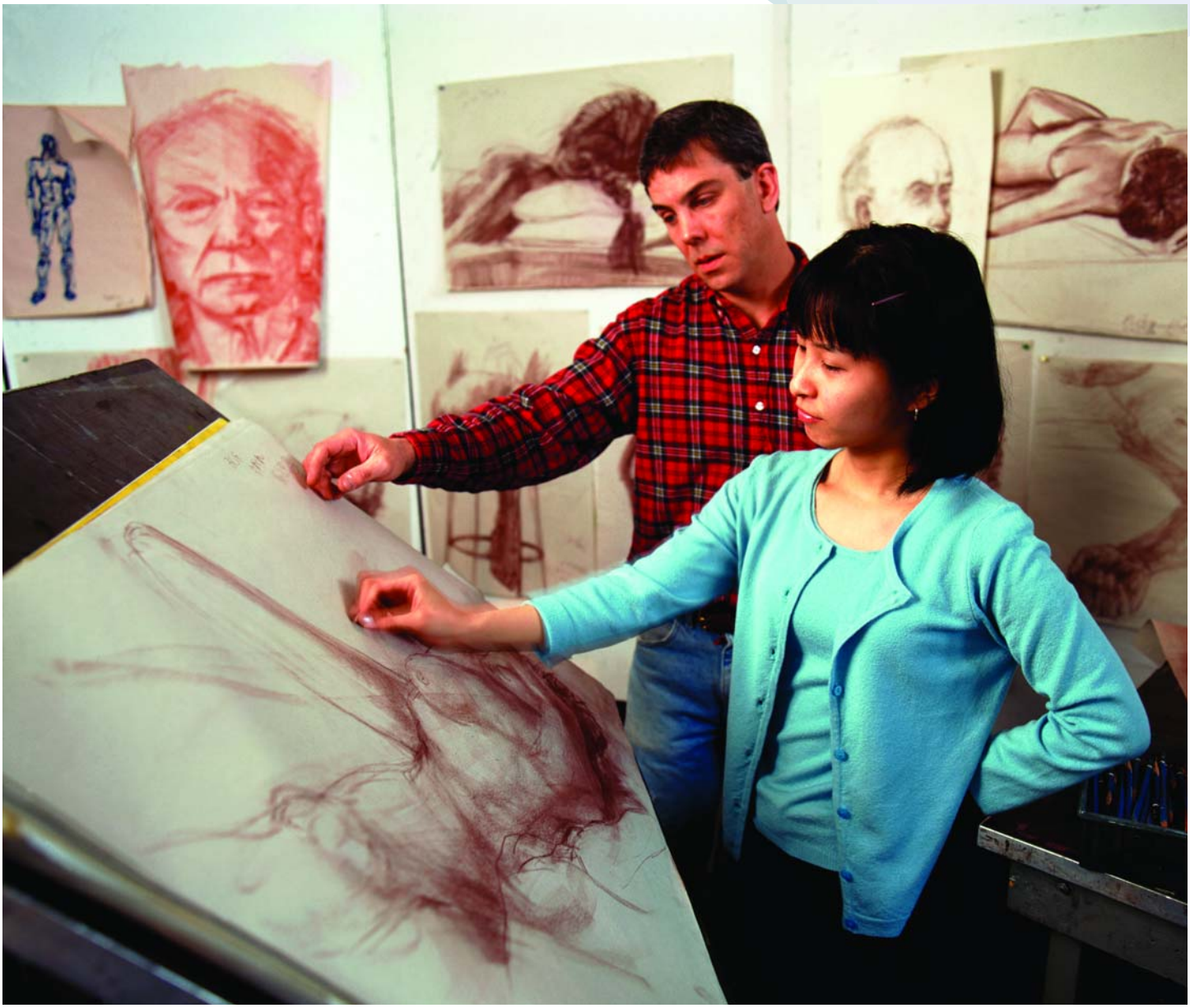
Dealing with the truth enables us to grow.

Laura Gauld, who has led many of the family seminars based on the "truth over harmony" principle, described the effects of these seminars on students:

I'm impressed by the number of our students who say they want to be a good father or a good mother, even more than being successful at a career. It's become a strong value for them. During their time here, they've seen their parents change and how they have been the beneficiaries of that.

These, then, are the six operating principles that guide the development of an ethical learning community: develop shared purpose and identity; align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research; have a voice and take a stand; take personal responsibility for continuous self-development; practice collective responsibility; and confront the elephants in your living room.

We turn now to how these same principles apply to faculty and staff in the development of a professional ethical learning community.



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As our character grows, our ego diminishes.

—LOUIS TARTAGLIA

CHAPTER 4

The Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC): Faculty and Staff Collaborating to Integrate Excellence and Ethics

Faculty need to meet and talk about what's going well in their classes, what's not, who's excelling, who needs help, and how students can help each other. If teachers start making an investment in how the school and classrooms run, then students would be more motivated because they are being shown what motivation, investment, and goal-setting look like. But it must start with faculty seeking to fulfill their vision.

—A High School Girl

A good school is not one that is merely "effective" in raising test scores. There is a concern [on the part of all staff] for rigorous academic education but also for the qualities of endurance, resilience, responsibility, resourcefulness, and social concern . . . Intellectual and moral virtue are seen as inseparable.[1]

—Gerald Grant

All of us—Board members, administrators, faculty, support staff, and students—are asked to be role models. When I walk through the school building, I always look for opportunities to pick up trash. I don't find any. That's because 5,000 people here pick up trash. Collective commitments are very important.

—A School Board Member

What makes it possible to create a Smart & Good High School dedicated to a mission of excellence and ethics? Where does the leadership come from to develop an ethical learning community in which faculty and staff, students, parents, and the wider community support and challenge each other to do their best work (performance character) and be their best ethical self (moral character)?

The essential leadership for this effort comes from the Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC). We define this professional community to include school leaders and all instructional and support staff—not only administrators, teachers, and counselors but also secretaries, coaches, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and all others whose work and example affect excellence and ethics in ways large and small. Every adult makes a difference; everyone contributes, positively or negatively, to the character of the school and the character of students.

Our vision of PELC builds on the seminal work of Richard Dufour and Robert Eaker in their book *Professional Learning Communities at Work*.[2] Dufour and Eaker have helped to transform education from a profession where teachers and other staff worked largely in isolation and were guided by intuition, to one of data-driven collaboration.

The Professional Ethical Learning Community includes all school staff.

Our concept of the PELC, however, expands Dufour's and Eaker's professional learning community to include an explicit and integrated focus on both excellence and ethics. The mission of a Smart & Good High School isn't to be just a "learning community"; it's to be an *ethical* learning community, one that is committed to the integration of excellence and ethics—performance character and moral character. Similarly, the collegial mission of faculty and staff is not simply to be a professional learning community; it's to be a professional and *ethical* learning community. All members of the PELC have two defining commitments: (1) to strive to be excellent in their work and ethical in their behavior; and (2) to help and challenge each other in their shared task of fostering excellence and ethics in students.

Academic excellence itself presupposes universal ethical values: honesty, compassion, empathy, integrity, commitment, and courage. Who wants students who cheat, fail to enter empathically into the inner word of a book's characters, perform their chemistry experiments perfunctorily without commitment, and slant their judgments to please their teachers? We must reveal to our students the intrinsically ethical nature of the pursuit of truth.

—Douglas Heath

The Interdependence of Excellence and Ethics

Previously we have discussed performance character (the pathway to excellence) and moral character (the pathway to ethical behavior) as distinct goals in the school's mission, touching briefly on how they are related. Here we wish to expand on the interdependence of excellence and ethics, since we believe an appreciation of their interdependence is necessary for a PELC to do its work effectively.

How Ethics Impacts Excellence

"First you reach 'em, then you teach 'em." "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." These and other such maxims tell us that a teacher-student relationship of respect and caring is the foundation for teaching and learning.

One researcher asked a group of African-American boys who were on the verge of failing, "If you could start over, what would you tell teachers to do that would make a difference?" After a silence, one boy finally said that if teachers "cared or at least *pretended to care* about him, his attitude toward school and studying would improve."[3] High school students we spoke with in our own site visits repeatedly commented that when they felt a personal connection with the teacher, they worked harder.

Similarly, nothing is more subversive of the school's mission than perceived unfairness or lack of respect and caring in how people are treated. When a teacher is uncivil, plays favorites, or puts students down, or when a school administrator is disrespectful to staff, students, or parents or reduces normal disciplinary consequences for a star athlete or the child of a school board member, the effect on moral climate—and on the motivation of students and staff to give their best effort—is corrosive.

The "macro" ethical issues are equally important. Schools exist in, and are affected by, the wider culture. Universal principles such as justice, caring, and respect create the requisite conditions for effective teaching and learning. The most effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a community or society where injustice exists unchallenged. Race, poverty, health and safety, economics—these classic systemic issues can create real or perceived inequities that subvert the mission of schools. Schools and students can, to some degree, overcome such inequities, but not without some cost to the educational process.

How Excellence Impacts Ethics

Just as ethics impacts excellence, excellence also impacts ethics. This was demonstrated in a study of student engagement by Kathryn Wentzel, who asked middle school students about the kinds of teacher behaviors they interpret as "caring."

Question 1: ***How do you know when a teacher cares about you?***

- ✔ **Teacher tries to make classes interesting.**
- ✔ **Teacher talks and listens to students.**
- ✔ **Teacher is honest, fair, and trusting.**
- ✔ **Teacher shows concern for students as individuals by asking whether they need help.**
- ✔ **Teacher makes sure students understand what is being taught.**
- ✔ **Teacher asks students if something is wrong.**

Question 2: ***How do you know when a teacher does* not *care about you?***

- ✔ **Teacher is boring or off-task.**
- ✔ **Teacher continues teaching when students aren't paying attention.**
- ✔ **Teacher ignores, interrupts, embarrasses, insults, or yells at students.**
- ✔ **Teacher shows little interest in students by forgetting students' names and not doing anything when they did something wrong.**
- ✔ **Teacher doesn't try to explain something when students don't understand.**[4]

What are students saying here? Two things: They feel cared about when teachers treat them with respect, don't ignore or embarrass them, and so on; but they also feel cared about *when teachers teach well*—in a way that enables them to learn.

Students feel cared about when teachers teach well.

In this sense, excellence is an expression of ethics; it is by helping students do their best work that we show how much we respect and care about them. *Not* to challenge and help students perform at their best level is to show them disrespect. Therefore, developing a professional

community among staff that models and promotes strong performance character (work ethic, diligence, perseverance) is one of the primary ways we enable students to feel genuinely loved. And that staff commitment to excellence, in turn, translates into increased levels of student engagement and achievement.

The Courage to Teach

In *The Courage to Teach,* Parker Palmer shows how the ethical and excellence dimensions of teaching are intertwined. He argues that there are at least three reasons that teaching well is so difficult: (1) the subjects we teach are complex, and we struggle to capture and convey their true complexity; (2) students are complex, and interacting with them wisely and well is very difficult; and (3) we teach who we are. Palmer writes:

> Every class comes down to this: my students and I, face to face, engaged in an ancient and exacting exchange called education. The techniques I have mastered do not disappear, but neither do they suffice. With my students, only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my selfhood, my sense of 'I' who teaches—without which I have no sense of the 'Thou' who learns.[5]

If, as Palmer argues, the self is central in teaching, then the teacher's character—the kind of human being the teacher is—takes on great importance. In his book, *Teaching as a Moral Craft,* Alan Tom makes a similar point: Teaching is a moral act.[6] Teaching expresses our dedication to our craft, or the lack of it; it affects students' learning and welfare, for good or for ill.

Teaching is a moral act.

In short, excellence in teaching is not simply a vocational norm to aspire to; it is an ethical norm to which we must adhere. To be less than one's best is a *moral breakdown,* violating what one school administrator referred to as the "silent handshake" between teachers and students. The silent handshake is an unspoken moral compact, a fundamental belief by students and their families that students will be not only physically and emotionally safe, but that teachers will be well-trained in their profession and prepared to teach their course material well, that they will send students away from the course of study well-prepared as judged by some commonly held standard of excellence.

The Students Are Watching

In their book *The Students are Watching,* Ted and Nancy Sizer remind us of what we all know but sometimes forget: Students constantly watch how adults behave.[7] They observe how committed we are to excellence and ethics. Adolescents observe especially keenly. In the mind of a teenager, few things are worse than hypocrisy: preaching one thing and practicing another.

In school, students are watching how adults prepare and execute their professional responsibilities; how adults handle moral issues in the life of the classroom and in the life of the school; how adults treat one another. They are watching to see if adults are engaged in their own journey of learning and development.

This may well be where schools that merely "educate" are separated from what Gerald Grant calls "schools that imprint."[8] Educators who imprint leave a lasting mark on the character of their students because they practice a "do as I say *and do*" philosophy. Love history, as I do; do your work well, as I do; demonstrate integrity in your relationships, as I do. Such educators live out the Quaker maxim: "Let your life speak."

We teach who we are.

In short, adults must pass the "Holden Caulfield test"[9]; they must show students that all adults are not phonies, espousing a set of standards they themselves are not willing to apply to their own lives. In the words of one teacher, "You cannot teach where you do not go." Students will care about and pursue their best self when that is the norm for every member of the school community, including adults.

We turn now to promising practices that illustrate the six principles of the ethical learning community as they play out in the PELC. PELC takes the six principles that defined the ELC—developing shared purpose, aligning practices with outcomes and research, maximizing the voice of ELC members, striving for continuous personal development, practicing collective responsibility, and grappling with the difficult issues—and applies them to the collegial functioning of faculty and staff.

The importance of building a positive staff culture around principles such as these cannot be overstated. Comments one leading character educator and consultant to schools: "Staff culture is crucial. In working with a school, it's every bit as important as classroom pedagogy."

Promising Practices for the 6 Principles of a Professional Ethical Learning Community (PELC)

PRINCIPLE 1: Develop shared purpose and identity.

Promising Practices

1. Develop a school mission that has excellence and ethics as the cornerstones.
2. Recruit and develop school leaders committed to the pursuit of excellence and ethics.
3. Hire all staff wisely; work to get the right people on the bus, in the right seats.
4. Cultivate collegiality.
5. Tell your school's "story," conveying its history, purpose, and identity.
6. Celebrate your school's purpose, people, and progress.

PRINCIPLE 2: Align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research.

Promising Practices

1. Align practices with desired outcomes (performance character, moral character, and the 8 strengths of character).
2. Examine existing research on desired outcomes (performance character, moral character, and the 8 strengths of character).
3. Examine existing research on educational practices that contribute to desired outcomes.
4. Engage in a continuous cycle of research-based action and reflection (Re-BAR) in order to assess effectiveness and plan next steps.

PRINCIPLE 3: Have a voice; take a stand.

Promising Practices

1. Create school structures that provide faculty and staff with regular opportunities for collaborative discussion and decision-making.
2. Be willing to stop business as usual and confront important issues and events in the life of the school, community, and world.

PRINCIPLE 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practices

1. As a school, provide the time, resources, and structures necessary to support the self-development of all staff.
2. Require all staff—school leaders, teachers, coaches, secretaries, custodians, and so on—to design and implement an annual self-development plan.
3. Share the journey of your own development with students and with each other.

PRINCIPLE 5: Practice collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

Promising Practices

1. Develop Critical Friends Groups in which staff work together to design and critique teaching and learning practices.
2. Promote peer mentoring.

PRINCIPLE 6: Grapple with the tough issues—the elephants in the living room.

Promising Practice

1. Grapple with educational policy issues impacting teaching and learning; create the conditions that maximize support for authentic school reform.

PELC Principle 1:
Develop shared purpose and identity.

The development of shared purpose and identity is the first and arguably most important PELC principle. Great schools "row as one"; they are quite clearly in the same boat, pulling in the same direction in unison. The best schools we visited were tightly aligned communities marked by a palpable sense of common purpose and shared identity among faculty and staff—a clear sense of "we." By contrast, struggling schools feel fractured; there is a sense that people work in the same school but not toward the same goals.

Great schools "row as one."

Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), Roger Shouse examined the tension in schools that sometimes exists between "social cohesion" (common beliefs, shared activities, caring relations) and "academic press" (the extent to which a school is driven by achievement goals). Shouse found that successful schools are able to resolve this tension: "The most effective schools are those where *a sense of community* emerges as a positive result of *a strong sense of academic purpose*"[10] (emphasis added). In such a school, the faculty's shared commitment to helping all students achieve binds them together and defines who they are.

Promising Practices for Developing Shared Purpose

1. Develop a school mission that has excellence and ethics as the cornerstones.
2. Recruit and develop school leaders committed to the pursuit of excellence and ethics.
3. Hire all staff wisely; work to get the right people on the bus, in the right seats.
4. Cultivate collegiality.
5. Tell your school's "story," conveying its history, purpose, and identity.
6. Celebrate your school's purpose, people, and progress.

PELC 1: Develop shared purpose.

Promising Practice 1:

Develop a school mission that has excellence and ethics as the cornerstones.

Shared purpose and identity are developed around a compelling educational mission; excellence and ethics are the essential ingredients of such a mission.

All schools have a mission, but a much smaller percentage of schools have a compelling one, capable of inspiring school leaders, faculty, staff, and students. Of the high schools we visited that appeared to have an inspiring mission, none was more impressive than two sister schools based on the same philosophy of character-centered education. One was a private rural boarding school, the other an inner-city public charter school. Their common statement of purpose reads:

> Each of us is gifted with a Unique Potential that defines a destiny. A commitment to character development enables us to achieve personal excellence and find fulfillment in life. We strive for a school where the members of our community will be judged not by their inherent talents or native abilities but by the content of their character.

The commitment to this character-centered mission by students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators permeated the culture of these two schools. It has effectively nurtured all types of students—young men and young women, students from wealth and from poverty, and students of diverse color and culture. It is a mission that also visibly inspires personal commitment and continuous development on the part of all members of the school community.

Every school must find a way to make its mission compelling to those who would attempt to fulfill it. If staff are not part of creating the school's founding mission, they must find ways to make the existing mission their own. In one school we visited, for example, staff work together to revise the mission statement every six years—and in the process strengthen their collective commitment to it.

A compelling mission, one that is truly owned by faculty, staff, and administrators, can reduce schools' dependence upon charismatic "super leaders." Such leaders are hard to find and harder to keep, as the average tenure of administrators continues to drop. In the long run, the best leadership is shared leadership. A strong professional ethical learning community is bigger—and more enduring—than any one individual.

PELC 1: Develop shared purpose.

Promising Practice 2:

Recruit and develop school leaders committed to the pursuit of excellence and ethics.

In developing the PELC, mission and vision are most important, but strong, committed leadership is a close second. (See the box at right for recommended resources.) The leaders of the best schools we visited were determined in their pursuit of excellence; they took pride in their accomplishments but were also sincerely humble. An administrator of a school that had received several awards for excellence and ethics said:

You have to succeed at success. If you do well and then get cocky and lazy, you fail at success. If you are successful and you keep pushing, you succeed at success.

Effective school leaders are wise about strategy.

It is very hard to imagine excellence and ethics as the cornerstones in a community where administrators espouse one set of standards for staff and another for themselves, where faculty and staff are not respected, and so on. The best school leaders are committed to excellence and ethics—personally as well as organizationally. They are also *members* of the PELC, not the sole architects. They become coaches who seek to develop the leadership talents of their faculty and staff and thereby cultivate new leaders poised to continue the vision.

Finally, effective school leaders are wise about strategy—how to chart a course that creates and sustains institutional change. One school leader, who had taken a school on the verge of closing to becoming a National School of Character, commented:

It's not enough to have a good vision. There is always a gap between what is and what ought to be. To lead and sustain educational change, you have to consider the factors that can support, or make difficult, school reform. Many well-intentioned school leaders are set up for a mugging because they do not plan for and cultivate these cultural forces. I have found it important to consider questions such as:

- How can we gain the support of our key stakeholders, including our alumni?
- Who might oppose or sabotage new directions?
- How should we communicate with our diverse stakeholders about new directions? Who should know what, when?

Leaders lead by serving.

—Thomas Sergiovanni

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PELC 1: Develop shared purpose.

Promising Practice 3:
Hire all staff wisely; work to get the right people on the bus, in the right seats.

This was a key recommendation from the *Good to Great* research reported by Jim Collins and his colleagues. It was a point confirmed by our own research. It is very difficult to overcome the wrong faculty and staff, in the wrong seats. Granted, schools must often work with the hand they have been dealt: The existing staff may be the result of low wages and benefits, another administrator's or school board's hirings, and so on. Nonetheless, even in the face of such constraints, seeking to build a high-quality faculty and staff must be an important long-term goal for every school.

"Change takes time—you have to keep plugging at it."

The superintendent of a large public school district told us, "Change takes time; it takes an extraordinary amount of time. You just have to be patient and keep plugging at it." He was patient, but he was also dogged in assembling a team of teachers and administrators who believed in his vision of academic excellence, service-learning, and preparation for democratic citizenship. His vision of a district committed to excellence and ethics was developed hire-by-hire. He said:

> Seventy-five percent of the high school staff have been hired in the last eight years. Every one of our ads explicitly talks about what we want to do. Every one of the final interviews that I have had with every candidate at the high school has included a discussion of service-learning, a discussion of character education, a discussion of the democratization of the high school and their interest in that area.

Another principal described the growing pains of getting the right people on board and headed in the right direction: "There aren't a lot of people left from that first year. There were people here that, in my opinion, were here for the wrong reason. There was definitely a parting of the ways in the first couple of years."

Effective administrators also described their quest to go after key personnel—a great coach, a gifted choir director, an inspiring teacher. The PELC is constructed person by person, built over time—like a team.

PELC 1: Develop shared purpose.

Promising Practice 4:
Cultivate collegiality.

In his book, *Moral Leadership*, Thomas Sergiovanni speaks to the importance of collegiality in the culture of a school:

> One has the right to expect help and support from other members, and the obligation to give the same; collegiality is reciprocal, in the same way that friendship is. The more this virtue becomes established in a school, the more natural connections among people become and the more they become self-managed and self-led, so that direct leadership from the principal becomes less necessary.[11]

Susan J. Rosenholtz cites evidence indicating that collegiality is an important element distinguishing "learning-enriched" schools from "learning-impoverished" schools.[12] A Stanford University study of effective schools found that teachers most involved in examining their practice and pedagogy were members of strong collegial communities.[13]

Collegiality distinguishes learning-enriched schools from learning-impoverished ones.

In many of the schools we visited we observed faculty, staff, and administrators who were openly and unabashedly supportive of one another; unafraid to challenge one another; willing to admit their own faults and to appreciate the strengths of their colleagues. One teacher described the institutional norm of collegiality at his high school:

> We believe that character is inspired through synergy that you get from other people. That requires us to be models of this in every sense—by confronting each other, by holding our colleagues to their best. We have faculty "discovery groups" where we share our personal experiences, talking about what's happening in our lives at a deep level: What

Schools require skilled, effective principals in order to outgrow their utter dependence on those principals.

—Tom Donahoe

are our challenges? What are our struggles? What is keeping us from doing our best?

Cultivating collegiality is a signature practice of the PELC.

PELC 1: Develop shared purpose.

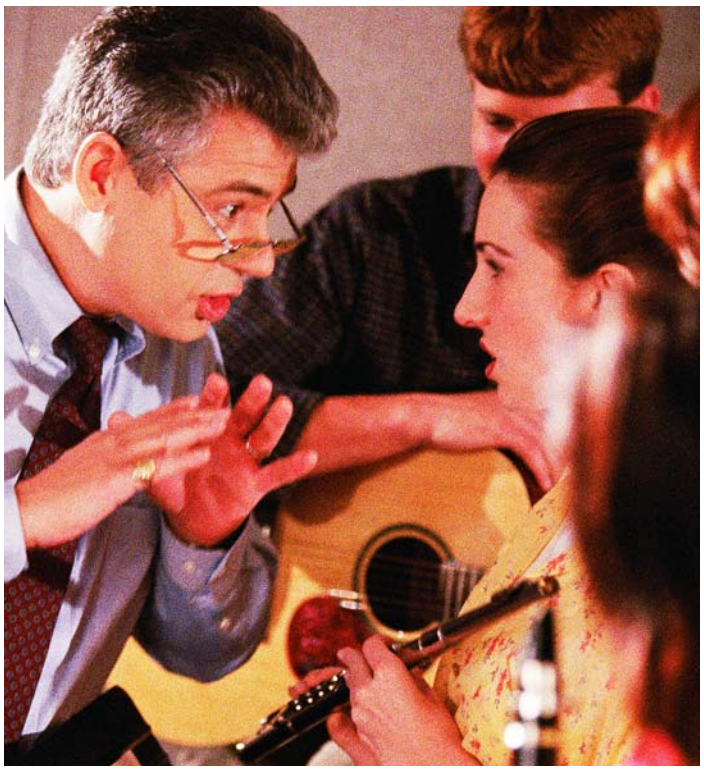
Promising Practice 5:

Tell your school's "story," conveying its history, purpose, and identity.

Peter Senge and colleagues argue that the purpose and identity of an organization are shaped and sustained through a process of continuously telling the stories that embody the organization's mission and shared values.[14] Cultures are defined by the stories they tell themselves. Building upon these ideas, DuFour and Eaker argue for deliberate and sustained attempts to "communicate, amplify, and validate" the defining narrative of a community. Consider: What is your school's story?

In our research, we found the stories schools told themselves—in meetings, retreats, written histories, and everyday conversations— to be very powerful shapers of culture and character. We heard stories of schools on the verge of closing that had revived themselves. We heard stories about changes in leadership, stories about critical incidents, stories of pain, struggle, and growth.

Faculty, staff, and administrators are the primary torchbearers for the important stories regarding the purpose and identity of the school. Over the years, such stories keep alive the soul of the institution.



PELC 1: Develop shared purpose.

Promising Practice 6:

Celebrate your school's purpose, people, and progress.

Celebrating the school's purpose, people, and progress is a critical part of cultivating shared purpose and identity. There was a definite sense of joy in the best schools we visited. There was laughter—self-effacing personal and institutional humor. There were rituals and ceremonies and celebrations that made the communities feel as much like a family as a workplace. There was a clear pattern of celebrating the purpose of the school, the people who make the school great, and the progress made in their quest for excellence and ethics.

One school district we visited had established Workplace Excellence Awards (see box below). A brochure on the program explains the criteria for the award: "living out the five core commitments of mutual trust and respect, investment in others, personal productivity, relationships with students, and customer service." To publicize the program, the district made a video about the award's first recipient, a female bus driver. In the video she says:

I'm passionate about my job; I love my work. I'm always talking to my kids about safe loading and unloading and responsible behavior. I can be a vital part of their day. We are professionals; we have to put that out there. We are the first adult staff member they see in the morning and the last representative of the school they see at night. A smile and a "How're you doing?" can go a long way.

Workplace Excellence Awards

1. Nomination forms go to every district employee.
2. All nominations are submitted to a Workplace Excellence Team made up of 20 representatives of all employee groups (teachers, administrators, clerical staff, custodians, etc.).
3. All persons who are nominated receive the award.
4. At a whole-school ceremony, each honoree receives a pin, a plaque, and a golden apple. Each year, a booklet is published that includes the text of the nomination of every recipient.

PELC Principle 2:
Align practices with desired outcomes and relevant research.

Our hedgehog premise ("Stay focused on the unifying goals of excellence and ethics") is that all things in the life of the school—curriculum, discipline, co-curricular activities, rituals, and traditions—are opportunities to develop performance character and moral character.

However, in order to fully utilize these opportunities, we must begin, as Stephen Covey points out, with the end in mind.[15] We must have before us at all times the twin goals of excellence and ethics, using those goals to guide us in a continuous process of action and reflection. This process includes aligning our major programs and practices with our mission, but it also includes aligning smaller, everyday matters (homework policies, classroom assignments, supervision of hallway behavior, how we respond to a student who puts down a peer) whose importance for character development can easily be underestimated.

We must begin with the end in mind.

For the past two decades, state learning standards, by spelling out what students need to know and be able to do in every subject area, have directed schools to shift from a focus on "inputs" to a focus on educational outcomes. In spite of this push, we often continue as educators to be "input junkies," debating, for example, on when students should study a particular work, this or that method of discipline, or the merits of direct versus cooperative instruction. These "inputs" are important, but only as they are linked to the outcomes we seek to realize.[16] In this report, by urging high school educators to align all of their practices with performance character and moral character, we are encouraging them to apply a principle of school reform —focusing on *outcomes*—whose validity has become widely accepted.

As the foundation of the ELC, the members of the PELC have primary responsibility for this process of aligning practices with desired outcomes. (They don't have *exclusive* responsibility; other groups in the ELC can also contribute to alignment. Recall our example in Chapter 3 (**page 40**) of the high school parents who launched a research-based campaign to discourage other parents from approving "moderate" teenage drinking.) Aligning practices with excellence and ethics begins by asking: In the life of our school, what are the opportunities to develop performance character? What are the opportunities to develop moral character?

Promising Practices for Aligning Practices with Desired Outcomes and Relevant Research

1. Align practices with desired outcomes (performance character, moral character, and the 8 strengths of character).
2. Examine existing research on desired outcomes.
3. Examine existing research on educational practices that contribute to desired outcomes.
4. Engage in a continuous cycle of research-based action and reflection (Re-BAR) in order to assess effectiveness and plan next steps.

PELC 2: Align practices.

Promising Practice 1:
Align practices with desired outcomes (performance character, moral character, and the 8 strengths of character).

The first step in an "alignment audit" is for the PELC to examine existing practices—in curriculum, advisories, discipline, student government, co-curricular activities, parent involvement, system decision-making, and the functioning of the PELC itself (e.g., the way faculty meetings are run)—and ask: How do these practices contribute to: (1) *excellence* (the development of performance character), (2) *ethics* (the development of moral character), and (3) *the eight strengths of character* that make up performance character and moral character?

That audit should also ask, How do our practices promote excellence, ethics, and the eight strengths of character *among all four key stakeholder groups*—faculty and staff, students, parents, and the wider community—that make up the ethical learning community?

Finally, are there "practice gaps"—desired outcomes for which we currently have no strong practices? For example, in our survey of students on our Student Leaders Panel, students typically rated their schools as contributing significantly to some of the eight strengths of character (e.g., diligent and capable performer, respectful and responsible moral agent) but much less significantly to

others (e. g., ethical thinker, self-disciplined person, spiritual person). A school should ask, If there are desired outcomes for which our present practices are absent or weak, what practices should we create, or how might we enlist the assistance of other stakeholder groups (e.g., students, parents, the wider community, expert consultants) in developing practices relevant to these outcomes?

Are there practice gaps?

PELC 2: Align practices.

Promising Practice 2:

Examine existing research on desired outcomes.

In order to know how to achieve a desired educational outcome, we should first seek to understand that outcome. Consider "best effort," an important aspect of the outcome "diligent and capable performer," one of our eight strengths of character. If we want to inspire students to give their best effort in school, we would do well to examine the abundant research on achievement motivation.[17] For example, studies summarized in the book *Engaging Students: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn,* tell us that students' motivation to achieve is greater when they feel a connection with a caring teacher and when they develop confidence in their ability to succeed through instruction that is both challenging and supportive.[18]

Or consider the outcome "ethical thinker," another of our eight strengths of character. If we want to develop students' capacity for ethical thinking, we would do well to examine the several decades of psychological and educational research on the development of moral reasoning and moral identity. The research on moral reasoning will help us understand, for example, the stages of moral thinking and experiential factors that have been found to influence their development. Much of this research is included in the recent book, *Character Strengths and Virtues* (see box at right).

> **Most adults, including most teachers, don't see themselves as engaged in their own moral growth.**
>
> —Rick Weissbourd

RESEARCH ON CHARACTER OUTCOMES

For many, it may come as a surprise to realize how much knowledge there is regarding the development of character. In addition to a growing body of research on effective character education practices—see, for example, the *What Works in Character Education* report by Berkowitz and Bier[19]—there is also a growing body of research on the basic character outcomes we might wish to develop. The preeminent source of the latter research is *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman. In their book, they seek to provide the field of character research with a diagnostic and classification manual similar to other widely respected manuals in the social sciences.

Character Strengths and Virtues presents a scheme of six universal virtues and 24 particular character strengths that are manifestations of the six universal virtues:

1. Virtue: Wisdom *(strengths: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective)*
2. Virtue: Courage *(bravery, persistence, integrity)*
3. Virtue: Humanity *(love, kindness, social intelligence)*
4. Virtue: Justice *(citizenship, fairness, leadership)*
5. Virtue: Temperance *(forgiveness and mercy, humility, prudence, self-regulation)*
6. Virtue: Transcendence *(appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality)*

For each of the 24 character strengths, the manual provides:

- definitions and behavioral criteria
- theoretical explanation
- existing measurement tools
- known correlates of the strength
- research on how the strength develops and is manifested over the life span.

A resource such as this provides educators with a significant research base with which to align their character development practices. The more precisely practices are aligned with existing research on intended outcomes, the more likely schools are to consistently realize their twin goals of excellence and ethics.

PELC 2: Align practices.

Promising Practice 3:

Examine existing research on educational practices that contribute to desired outcomes.

Suppose, for example, that a high school decides that the creation or continued use of advisories is an aligned practice, consistent with its goal of excellence (since advisories potentially create a strong bond with an adult who can mentor a student's academic development), and with its goal of ethics (since advisories potentially promote mutual respect and support among peers as well as positive adult-student relations). The next question should be: Is there existing research demonstrating that advisories really do contribute to these outcomes?

The answer to that question is yes. A number of studies have found advisories to be effective in easing the transition to high school, strengthening teacher-student relations, increasing student achievement, reducing failing grades, decreasing drop-outs, and improving relations with parents.[20]

Wherever possible, a school should search the empirical literature for what it tells us about the effectiveness of any given practice.

PELC 2: Align practices.

Promising Practice 4:

Engage in a continuous cycle of research-based action and reflection in order to assess effectiveness and plan next steps.

Research-based action and reflection (Re-BAR) is, in essence, practitioner action research. It is a process of data-based reflection on the impact of a particular practice in a particular school setting. This kind of practitioner research is needed to answer the question, "To what extent is our school's implementation of a given practice effective in achieving our intended outcomes?"

> Continuous school improvement must be assessed on the basis of *results* rather than *intentions*.
>
> —Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker

For example, we know there is research showing the effectiveness of a practice such as advisories. But, as our school observations and interviews confirmed, advisories vary widely in focus, frequency, and effectiveness. One student told us, "We need to do something in our school to help the not-so-good advisories become more like the good ones."

> *"We need to do something to help the not-so-good advisories become more like the good ones."*

Therefore a school should ask, How effective are the advisories in *our* school, in the particular way we are implementing them? Would they be more effective if they were more frequent? Less frequent, but more focused on goals related to the development of performance character and moral character and the eight strengths of character?

One could get data on perceived advisory effectiveness (*"What's working? What needs improvement?"*) from formative evaluation (e.g., surveys of all advisors and students and sample interviews), make revisions based on the feedback, then repeat the survey in an action research cycle. One could also do an action research study comparing the performance of, for example, students who had advisories, with matched students who did not; or students who had advisory every day versus those who had it only once a week; or students whose advisory focused systematically on performance character and moral character goals versus those advisories that lacked such a focus.

In one large school we visited, faculty had begun to use "common assessments" (exams standardized across different instructors of the same course). We view this practice as a good illustration of a Re-BAR (research-based action and reflection) around a curriculum issue. The common assessments procedure in this school compares student performance on the same test in different sections of the same course (e.g., U.S. History, World Civilization). The purpose of this comparison is to enable team members to use the results to refine their teaching strategies in order to improve student performance. The chair of the history department explained how this process works:

Our department agreed to do four common tests a year—a midterm and a final each semester. After the office scores the test and gives us the data, we meet and look at the performance of each of our sections. We all see the *department* mean for the test and subtests, and we each see our own section scores. Looking at how your own students per-

formed—at the outcomes, in other words—forces you to re-examine your teaching methods. I might think, "Hmm, my kids did relatively well on Greece and Rome, but not so well on India and China." So I'd ask my colleagues, "Whose students did well on India and China? How do you teach those topics?"

If I find that a colleague's students got high scores on India and China, I'm going to pay close attention to the strategies he or she is using. Maybe they're using less lecture and more group problem-solving than I am. In this way, we pull each other up. In some departments, after teams have built trust, they each share data on how their own sections performed. Historically, teachers have worked in isolation. We're giving up some of our individual autonomy for excellence.

> *"We're giving up some of our autonomy for excellence."*

In this practice of using common assessments, the PELC is continuously assessing what is working and what might work better. To engage in such a process clearly requires that faculty possess several performance character virtues—diligence, perseverance, and ingenuity among them—as well as equally important moral virtues such as respect, honesty, and humility.

To summarize: All of the above efforts at alignment—aligning practices with desired outcomes; with what the research tells us about how those outcomes develop; with what the research tells us about the effectiveness of particular practices; and with what we learn from our own implementation-focused action-based research and reflection (Re-BAR)—help to determine what practices to start, stop, continue, or improve.

At this point, you might wonder:

Who takes primary responsibility for leading the effort to align practices? A leadership group of administrators and faculty will typically be needed to get the process under way.

Are all staff involved in the alignment process or only some? Alignment can begin with a leadership group, but over time, attention to alignment should become part of every PELC context and conversation (department meetings, faculty meetings, retreats, lunchroom talk); it must pervade the entire PELC culture.

Is expert help—an alignment "coach" or consultant—needed? At least in the early stages, most schools will likely find that expert guidance is helpful, perhaps even essential.

When, in the already packed high school schedule, can this kind of in-depth examination of school practices take place? Revisiting the school schedule in order to create the space and time for these crucial conversations among colleagues is a first-order priority for the PELC.

Are there existing research instruments available for use as we attempt to align our practices and increase the rigor with which we monitor the realization of our desired outcomes? In fact, such research tools do exist. For example, the Character Education Partnership's website includes a databank of many evaluation tools and resources (**www.character.org**). Although this kind of evaluation takes time, expertise, and resources, even a small investment in high-quality assessment has the potential to pay significant long-term returns (see box below).

Moving Toward Comprehensive Assessment

The long-term plans of the Smart & Good High Schools project include the development of a Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) built around performance character, moral character, the ethical learning community, the professional ethical learning community, and the 8 strengths of character.

The CAS will function like institutional research models used by colleges and universities—monitoring students upon their arrival, during their years in high school, and then in their post-high school endeavors. The CAS will offer a rigorous system that provides short and long-term research on the degree to which schools are achieving their objectives of developing performance character and moral character and the 8 strengths of character.

Until this Comprehensive Assessment System is available (research and development is scheduled to begin Spring 2008), however, we recommend that schools take advantage of existing instruments and resources to guide them in generating data and using that data to improve their character development efforts.

"Hotspots" such as cheating often have their own measurement tools. Don McCabe's Academic Integrity Survey (contact dmccabe@andromeda.rutgers.edu), available at no cost, is the measure of academic integrity that has been most commonly used to evaluate the impact of college and high school honor codes. See our *Smart & Good High Schools* website (www.cortland.edu/character/highschool) for other secondary-level assessment instruments.

PELC Principle 3:
Have a voice; take a stand.

Being members of the PELC, as is true for all members of the ethical learning community, means having a voice and being willing to speak up on behalf of excellence and ethics. The school as an institution must create the structures that encourage people to exercise their voice without fear of repercussion. But this institutional responsibility must be accompanied by an equal measure of personal responsibility. Every individual must develop, with the support of colleagues, the commitment and courage to speak out on issues that affect excellence and ethics.

Promising Practices For Developing Voice

1. Create school structures that provide faculty and staff with regular opportunities for collaborative discussion and decision-making.
2. Be willing to stop business as usual and confront important issues and events in the life of the school, community, and world.

PELC 3: Have a voice; take a stand.

Promising Practice 1:
Create school structures that give staff regular opportunities for collaborative discussion and decision-making.

Faculty and staff need regular, not occasional, opportunities to make their views known and to participate in decisions that affect school policies and practices and their professional lives. When their views are sought, valued, and acted upon in the PELC, they are more likely to be motivated to seek, value, and act upon the views of students in their classrooms, in extra-curricular activities, and in other school contexts.

◆ ***Faculty meetings.*** Many, perhaps most, teachers view faculty meetings as one of the least enjoyable and least productive things they do. "I'd like to die at a faculty meeting," quipped one high school teacher, "because the transition between life and death would be so subtle." But it doesn't have to be that way. Many schools have taken simple steps that transform the faculty meeting into a participatory process that makes a vital contribution to the PELC. For example:

(1) If the size of the faculty permits it, conduct the meeting in a circle—the way a teacher would conduct an effective class meeting—in order to improve the quality of communication; (2) enable staff to help set the agenda (e.g., through a suggestion box, an agenda committee, and being able to add emerging items to the agenda at the start of a meeting); and (3) using the meeting to share effective practices, examine data on some aspect of excellence or ethics in the life of the school, problem-solve, plan action, or have a guest speaker on a topic of shared interest.

◆ ***Voice in professional development.*** In many schools, faculty and staff have little or no voice concerning their professional development activities. As a result, they are less than receptive (e.g., sitting in the back of the auditorium, doing other work) to the speakers someone else has decided they should hear. Other schools, by contrast, have taken the enlightened step of surveying faculty on their professional development priorities. One school we visited, instead of offering the same in-service for all, ran a number of concurrent mini-courses on topics faculty had chosen.

◆ ***Common planning time.*** For many schools, reworking the schedule to provide faculty groups with a common planning time each week has been an indispensable step in developing new pedagogies such as project-based learning or engaging in data-based instructional improvement.

PELC 3: Have a voice; take a stand.

Promising Practice 2:
Be willing to stop business as usual and confront important issues and events in the life of the school, community, and world.

There is a hazing incident in a neighboring school district; how will your school make sense of this event? There is terrible sportsmanship at an athletic event; will there be discussions about this among staff, and between staff and students, in the days that follow? Natural disasters create devastation in another part of the world; will staff and students have a chance to express their reactions and consider how they might help? Our country goes to war; will it be discussed?

Our country goes to war; will it be discussed?

There is no more dramatic way to make the point that character matters than to stop business as usual—both in

the adult community and in interactions between adults and students—to discuss issues of ethical importance. If the school *doesn't* pause to reflect seriously on such incidents, then it sends the message that character doesn't matter—at least not very much.

As the leaders of the ethical learning community, the PELC shoulders primary responsibility for stopping business as usual. That may take the form of spending some time at the beginning of a department meeting or an academic class to discuss a current event, hallway incident, or school culture issue; using advisories to address such matters; having a special schoolwide assembly; bringing it up at "town hall"; or creating a special forum tailored to the issue. However they do it, faculty, staff, and administrators must be willing to take the time to make their own voices heard on character issues and to enable students to ask questions, think out loud, and take stands.

When the U.S. was on the brink of invading Iraq, a math teacher we interviewed said:

A lot of the kids are talking about the war. It's on their minds. I'll take some time in class today to discuss it. I don't just teach math; I teach whole-person development.

> *"I don't just teach math—I teach whole-person development."*

Another teacher described his school's strong stance regarding an occurrence of hazing:

There was a hazing incident in our football program. Students were held accountable, not only those who participated directly but also those that knew about it. The school made a statement—and teachers discussed this with their individual classes—that being passive was the same as being actively involved in the situation. Passive indifference was not excusable.

If we want individual teachers to take the time to talk with their students about important issues, adults in the PELC should address such issues among themselves. Most teachers are more likely to talk with their students about a school incident or international event if they have discussed that issue with colleagues. The adult conversation is needed to help staff find and develop their own voices and to encourage each other to give students the opportunity for the same kind of discussion.

PELC Principle 4:
Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

In the PELC, educators take responsibility for modeling and promoting the cultivation of excellence and ethics. In order to do this, they commit themselves to continuous self-development. As one school leader put it, "You don't teach well what you don't know well."

Promising Practices For Taking Personal Responsibility For Continuous Self-Development

1. As a school, provide the time, resources, and structures necessary to support the self-development of all staff.
2. Require all staff—school leaders, teachers, coaches, secretaries, custodians, and so on—to design and implement an annual self-development plan.
3. As a staff, share the journey of your own development.

PELC 4: Take personal responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 1:
As a school, provide the time, resources, and structures necessary for all staff members' continuous self-development.

PELC principle 4 calls on every staff member to take personal responsibility for staying on the journey of self-development. But the school must support that process by providing adequate opportunities for professional development.

Teachers must feel a strong sense of *responsibility* for fostering students' character development ("This is an important part of my job"), but they must also feel a correspondingly strong sense of *efficacy* regarding their responsibility as character educators ("I am able to do this effectively"). High-quality staff development, capable of promoting teachers' sense of efficacy as well as their sense of responsibility for both ethics and excellence, is another PELC priority.

Much has been written about best practices in staff development (see, for example, the standards of the National

Staff Development Council, www.nsdc.org). We believe these standards can be readily adapted to staff development aimed at performance character, moral character, and the eight strengths of character. In our site visits to high schools, we observed many ways schools went about providing high-quality support for professional development. Here are some:

◆ ***A small grants program.*** At a large high school (4,300 students) that had won multiple national awards, a 22-year member of the School Board described how the district provided tangible institutional support that helped faculty take responsibility for their continuous self-development.

We are committed to success for every student and to a philosophy of continuous improvement. We believed that if we were serious about continuous improvement, we should start an internal grants program for faculty. So, ten years ago, we did. Teachers can submit proposals for up to $2,000—for a summer curriculum development project, for example. We spend $25,000 a year on this small-grants program. We put our money where our mouth is. The small-grants program has become a permanent part of our school's professional culture.

"We put our money where our mouth is."

◆ ***Summer institutes and conferences.*** We visited other schools where it was a regular practice to provide a summer institute for faculty focused on some aspect of excellence or ethics, or where individual faculty could count on school support for attending at least one professional development conference of their choosing each year. (See, for example, www.character.org for a list of annual character education conferences.) Teachers at such schools conveyed enthusiasm about, and gratitude for, these opportunities to stay on top of their fields and continue to grow professionally.

Some schools took advantage of a "teachers' academy" offered by Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics (www.bu.edu/sed/caec/). The academy functions as an "intellectual retreat for educators" where they learn to promote their students' character development more effectively by engaging in their own personal development. In this week-long program, teachers come together to read, reflect, write, converse with scholars, and discuss great books. The academy provides them with the opportunity to study seminal readings in ethics and character, works that are complemented by clips from contemporary films. The academy also includes time for developing lesson plans and creating schoolwide practices and policies.

◆ ***A common book project.*** A common book project is another strategy that provides myriad opportunities for continuous development. Staff commit to reading, and to discussing as part of a faculty meeting, a book that pertains to some aspect of performance character, moral character, the eight strengths of character, the ethical learning community, or the professional ethical learning community. It's a good idea to choose books that are enjoyable to read, thought-provoking, and whenever possible, applicable to personal and family life as well as professional work. A few among the many that we would recommend: Ron Berger's *An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students*[21]; Laura and Malcolm Gauld's guide for parents, *The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have*[22]; Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom's *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*[23]; and Barbara Schneider's and David Stevenson's *The Ambitious Generation: America's Teenagers, Motivated But Directionless.*[24]

◆ ***A whole-school retreat.*** For many schools, a faculty and staff retreat has been a turning point in the life of the school—an opportunity to develop collegiality, confront problems, grow personally and professionally, and chart a different course. In our research, one of the most compelling examples of using a retreat in this culture-changing way came from a private urban school that a few years before had faced declining enrollments, low staff morale, and the danger of closing. A new principal was brought on board to try to save the school. He told us:

When I first came here, 75% of my time was spent in conflict resolution. There was constant arguing among the faculty. I'd be driving to work thinking, "Who's going to meet me in the parking lot and be upset?" I had a pancreatic attack and was hospitalized and nearly died. I knew we had to do something different. I announced we were going to do a 4-day summer retreat. A number of faculty tried to get out of it. But we did it.

Many changes grew out of the continuing self-reflective process that the retreat began: cross-grade family home-

Character-building begins in infancy and continues until death.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

rooms that now do community-building activities at the start of every school day; changing the Director of Discipline to the Director of Character Formation, with a new emphasis on planning for personal responsibility; a study skills group for any student who drops below a 2.0 GPA; increased communication with parents about their student's academic performance; a larger role for student government in the running of the school; a "Pursuing Victory With Honor" sportsmanship code[25]; holding a faculty retreat each summer; and taking the first several days of the school year to "build the environment."

The principal described how the school now uses the first day to set the tone for the rest of the school year:

> Day 1 is for new teachers. There's a welcoming breakfast, a prayer service, a presentation by the administrative team, a video that conveys what we're about as a school, a school tour conducted by students, and talks by second-year teachers on "Things I Wish Somebody Had Told Me When I Started Here." We introduce the year's theme; we have a different one each year. This year it's "Miracles." The new faculty walk away from the day feeling, "I've joined something special."

"The faculty walk away from the day feeling, 'I've joined something special.'"

PELC 4: Take responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 2:

Require all staff, including school leaders, teachers, coaches, secretaries, and custodians, to develop and implement an annual self-development plan.

The report, *Breaking Ranks: Strategies for Leading High School Reform,* states:

> In the end, the effectiveness of a comprehensive development plan is measured by each staff member's awareness of the skills they require to improve student performance—and by their ability to acquire those skills. Each staff member must reflect on his or her development needs as they relate to the [school's] action plan and create and continually update a Personal Learning Plan.[26]

In their book, *A New Vision for Staff Development*, Sparks and Hirsh point out:

> Rather than basing the Personal Learning Plan on the teacher's perception of what he or she needs (e.g., to learn more about classroom management), the plan should consider what students need to know and be able to do—and work backwards to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by the teacher—if those outcomes are to be realized.[27]

Staff development must be aligned with desired student outcomes.

In short, every PELC member's staff development must be aligned with desired student outcomes. In a Smart & Good High School, that means aligning individual self-development plans with performance character, moral character, and the eight strengths of character. As a staff member, how do my personal learning and development goals parallel, and contribute to, the growth we are seeking to foster in our students? Just as PELC members must grow in their knowledge and pedagogical expertise in the content areas, so too must they grow in their knowledge and use of the pathways to excellence and ethics.

PELC 4: Take responsibility for continuous self-development.

Promising Practice 3:

Share the journey of your own development with students and each other.

In *The Courage to Teach,* Parker Palmer states:

> As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.[28]

If, as Palmer argues, "we teach who we are," then perhaps the most powerful lesson we can teach students is that we, like them, are a work in progress. Students must come to understand that the quest for excellence and ethics is a lifelong process, a process that significant adults in their life continue to pursue; a process that is difficult, tiring,

If we're working on the virtues ourselves, we'll have more solidarity with our students who are struggling to overcome their faults. If we don't have a personal plan for self-improvement, we're not going to have as much empathy for kids.

—James Coughlin

and humbling, but ultimately worthwhile and ennobling. In order for students to know this, members of the PELC must be willing to share the journey of their own development—with students and with each other.

A male history teacher we interviewed said:

I share my own life with my students. I think it's important for them to know who I am. I've had a pretty rich life and have seen the ups and the downs. This is something I also share with parents on Parents' Night. I do this with the kids throughout the year when I think it is appropriate. I encourage them to share some of their experiences as well. They begin to see their lives more as a journey. If you really want to develop your 8th strength of character—a spiritual person who lives a life of purpose—you can't just be a teacher who has excellent techniques.

High school teachers and students have told us that one of the unaddressed reasons why character education is not embraced by some high school educators is that they feel vulnerable in addressing character issues with students, given moral indiscretions in their own lives. One high school teacher commented, "We may drive too fast, cheat on our taxes, do drugs—so we're not comfortable presenting ourselves to kids as paragons of virtue."

"We're not comfortable presenting ourselves to kids as paragons of virtue."

Standing for character and fostering good character, however, do not require being perfect. They do require a willingness on the part of adults to strive to meet the same standards they hold for students.

Most importantly, adults must be willing to stretch and grow—to actively engage in self-development. Consider forgiveness, one of the 24 character strengths identified by Peterson's and Seligman's *Character Strengths and Virtues* and a quality, we would argue, that is crucial for healthy interpersonal relationships in the school, family, and workplace. Recent data from a multi-year, countywide study using the *Global Portraits of Social & Moral Health for Youth and Adults* indicate that adults rate themselves lower on forgiveness than any other item. (The self-rating of forgiveness is measured using the item, *"Can forgive those who hurt them"* and a 5-point rating scale: "Not like me at all … Exactly like Me.")[29]

On a survey of moral health, adults rated themselves lowest on forgiveness.

What does this finding tell us? At the very least, it suggests that as adults we struggle to forgive and forget; we hold on to resentments and hurts; we do not put into practice the maxim, "Deal with the faults of others as gently as with your own." By contrast, when we do view ourselves and others as a work in progress, when we ourselves are struggling to root out bad habits and develop good ones, we are more willing and able to empathize and be patient with the struggles of others—both adults and youth. (For helpful resources on forgiveness, see *Forgiveness Is a Choice* and *Helping Clients Forgive* by veteran forgiveness researchers Robert Enright and Richard Fitzgibbons.[30])

When we share the journey of our own development with our colleagues and students, such testimony becomes a compelling witness to the importance of the quest for excellence and ethics. Initially, many adults may feel less vulnerable and more comfortable sharing their personal journeys with their students than with their colleagues. But we believe that the growth of the PELC requires that faculty and staff begin to engage each other, as well their students, in this kind of authentic self-disclosure.

PELC Principle 5:
Practice collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

Membership in the PELC means a commitment to the growth of others and avoiding the isolation that so often plagues teaching. Just as we encourage students to care enough to expect the best from one another, we must do the same in our adult relationships as colleagues.

"Individual teacher responsibility becomes easier to assume if fortified by collective responsibility."

Fred Newmann, director of the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, writes about the importance of collective responsibility in school reform:

To build cultures of collective responsibility for student learning, educators must overcome a common tendency to attribute students' difficulties largely to conditions beyond the school—especially the family, peers, and neighborhood. While these influences are real, teachers in a strong school community feel significant individual responsibility to maximize student success, regardless of student social background.

Individual teacher responsibility becomes easier to assume if fortified by collective responsibility—that is, by a sense of responsibility not only for one's own actions and students', but also for the actions of colleagues and other students in the school.[31]

Promising Practices for Developing Collective Responsibility

1. Develop Critical Friends Groups in which staff work together to design and critique teaching and learning practices.
2. Promote peer mentoring.

PELC 5: Practice collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

Promising Practice #1:
Develop Critical Friends Groups in which staff work together to design and critique teaching and learning practices.

Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) are a promising practice utilized by several schools in our study. (The word "critical" here means collaborative, supportive, and challenging for the purpose of mutual growth.) CFGs are an innovation of the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF, www.nsrfharmony.org), the professional development unit of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.[32] Its literature explains: "CFGs provide a way for teachers and administrators to create and sustain professional communities where they can develop shared norms and values, engage in reflective dialogue, give each other feedback on their work, and hold each other accountable."[33]

Each CFG consists of 6 to 10 teachers and administrators who commit to working together on a long-term basis toward better student learning. As recommended by NSRF guidelines, the members gather for "*at least* one 2-3-hour meeting each month, during the school day. They publicly state learning goals for students, help each other think more productively about teaching practices, examine curriculum and student work, and identify school-culture issues that affect student achievement."

CFG members meet at least once a month to give each other feedback on their work.

As "critical friends," group members also observe one another at work at least monthly and offer feedback in challenging but non-threatening ways. CFGs are supported and challenged in this process by a "coach," who is selected by the school from within the staff or from the ranks of trusted outsiders. One teacher describes the experience this way:

It's a risk throwing yourself, your work, your students' work into the ring in front of these group members. It makes you incredibly vulnerable at first. But with each meeting, the trust level among group members gets stronger. They start realizing that they have people to turn to for advice, help, even just to talk. It sure beats isolation.[34]

There are different CFG "protocols" for sharing examples of student work, discussing school issues, tuning up lesson plans, and inviting comment on critical classroom inci-

Success and excellence are not the same. Success is outside our control; excellence is not.

—Joe Paterno

dents. The box below describes, in abridged form, one protocol for examining student work.

A CFG Protocol for Looking at Student Work (www.nsrfharmony.org)

Getting started: The CFG coach reminds the group of the norms of no fault-finding, collaboration, and consensus and, with the group, sets time limits for each part of the process. The teacher providing the student work gives a very brief statement of the assignment but does not describe the student or evaluate the quality of the presented piece of work. (2 minutes)

1. Group members describe what they see in the student's work, avoiding interpretations or judgments about quality. (10 minutes)
2. Based on evidence, the group considers, how did this student interpret the assignment? What does the student understand and not understand? What was the student most interested in? (10 minutes)
3. Based on the above discussions, the group considers: What next steps could the teacher take with this student? What teaching strategies would be most effective? (10 minutes)

CFGs are a powerful practice, a structure that embodies many of the PELC Principles. They can also become a vehicle for increasing student voice. One high school principal in our study commented:

We use CFGs to develop what Fred Newmann calls "authentic learning tasks" for kids. At least once in a given unit, we'll take a lesson we've developed together in a CFG and present it to students: "What do you think of this? What should this lesson look like?" In this way, they really take possession of the assignment.

> Make yourself the kind of person you want other people to think you are.
>
> —Socrates

CFGs: What the Research Shows

The National School Reform Faculty reports that teachers participating in Critical Friends Groups, compared to non-CFG teachers:

- are more likely to feel that they are improving every year as a teacher.
- are more likely to share ideas about teaching, share samples of their students' work, meet regularly to discuss classroom problems, and believe that they could count on most of their colleagues to help out anywhere, anytime.
- are more thoughtful about the connections among curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy.
- have higher expectations for students.[35]

PELC 5: Practice collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

Promising Practice 2: *Promote peer mentoring.*

Peer mentoring, typically done one-on-one, was another form of collective responsibility we observed in schools with a strong PELC. Said one teacher:

I've worked in six different schools. The difference here is that people really care about and support each other. Anybody can talk to anybody else and get help.

"People here really support each other."

An experienced teacher will coach a new teacher, but it goes the other way as well. As a new faculty member, you feel immediately appreciated because people find out what you're good at and want to learn from you. This goes on informally during school, after school, and in our summer professional development program. It's rare that we have someone come in from the outside to do an inservice because we have so much expertise among our own faculty.

PELC Principle 6:
Grapple with the tough issues—the elephants in the living room.

Promising Practices For Grappling With The Tough Issues

1. **Grapple with educational policy issues impacting teaching and learning; create the conditions that maximize support for authentic school reform.**

At the outset of this chapter, we emphasized the interdependence of excellence and ethics. We argued that ethics (e.g., the extent to which people in the school treat each other with respect and care) affects excellence (e.g., students' motivation to learn and staff's willingness to work hard). We also argued that excellence (e.g., how well teachers teach) affects ethics (the extent to which students feel respected and cared about).

It's therefore crucial for the PELC to take the leadership in ensuring that all issues affecting ethics and excellence get addressed. In Chapter 3 we called the tough issues affecting excellence and ethics "the elephants in the living room." (See **page 57** for a survey a school can use to identify its elephants.) Sometimes the elephant is sitting on the sofa, but everybody is ignoring it. Sometimes the elephant is under the table and hasn't surfaced and been identified as the problem it really is.

The PELC must ensure that all issues affecting excellence and ethics get addressed.

Two examples from our high school study: At one school, during an otherwise productive Monday afternoon faculty meeting, a teacher brought up an incident that had happened after school on the previous Friday. Someone had broken into several students' lockers, taken their contents (books, papers, and the like), and strewn them over town. Another faculty member responded to this report by saying that school security would have to be improved.

No one raised what seemed to us the inescapably important ethical questions: Why did this happen? What does this say about us as a community? What collective responsibility do we have as a school community to make restitution to the victims of this violation? How can we prevent this from ever happening again? There was no discussion of the possible contexts—such as advisories, classes, student government, an assembly—in which questions like these could be addressed in the days ahead,. The meeting simply moved on, and a crucial opportunity for the growth of the PELC—and the whole school community—was sadly lost.

In another school we visited (not among those listed in the report), the principal explained to a group of visiting educators that the school's main mission was to narrow the achievement gap that held back the minority students who made up most of its enrollment. And yet, in several of the classes we observed, student engagement seemed lacking. Advisories seemed drawn out and not organized to make the most productive use of time. Bathrooms weren't clean and had several toilets that didn't work, contributing to a climate that did not send the message to students, "You are important to us." Visitors complained to each other in hallways that they weren't seeing the progressive practices they had been led to believe were being implemented at the school.

The most dangerous form of deception is self-deception.

And yet, in the faculty meeting that followed this disappointing day, the school's leadership asked teachers to do an exercise that celebrated all the good things about the school. Following this, another administrator invited the visitors present to share "your observations and questions from the day" but then added, "We really don't have time to get into criticisms, so we'd appreciate it if you would limit your comments to positive things." Here was a missed chance to get valuable feedback. All the elephants went unaddressed—a pattern we strongly suspected had become the norm in this school's culture.

The writer Josh Billings observes, "The most dangerous form of deception is self-deception." The PELC has no greater responsibility than to create the structures and patterns of communication that confront, with honesty and humility, all the elephants that affect excellence and ethics. Racism, sexism, hazing, cheating, bullying, verbal harassment, cliques—all these are among the difficult issues that schools often ignore at their peril. In the absence of a professional ethical learning community that effectively confronts such problems, many students will fail and some will drop out of school. Others may graduate and even perform well on standardized tests, but they will never manifest the deepest indicators of human excellence as measured, for example, by our 8 strengths

of character and by the long-term goals of excellence and ethics in school, work, and beyond.

PELC 6: Grapple with the tough issues.

Promising Practice 1:

Grapple with educational policy issues impacting teaching and learning; create the conditions that maximize support for authentic school reform.

In order to create the PELC, schools must confront a brutal fact: educational policy issues are macro forces that directly impact the quest for excellence and ethics. School size, teacher course load, teacher-student ratio, per-pupil expenditures, authentic assessment of student mastery—these are often the elephants in the living room. Everybody knows that these issues deeply affect everything schools do, yet we often ignore them and look instead for "silver-bullet" practices or programs that will succeed in spite of the missing preconditions for success. Our failure to adequately address these preconditions seriously inhibits the pursuit of excellence and ethics.

The PELC must therefore grapple with issues such as:

- ✔ How much planning time is necessary to implement the practices we need to develop performance character and moral character?
- ✔ Where will that time come from?
- ✔ What is the role of school size in our quest to develop performance character and moral character? What about class size?
- ✔ What are optimal teaching loads if we expect faculty to cultivate significant relationships with students?
- ✔ What are the real dollars required to train faculty and staff so they can implement new practices?

PELC members must persevere and have a "can do" attitude.

The high school reform literature—see, for example, NASSP's *Breaking Ranks II*—has devoted much attention to issues like these. A given school may or may not agree with, or be able to fully implement, all of the NASSP recommendations for optimal solutions. Every school, however, must at least grapple with such issues if it wants to fully realize its potential for excellence and ethics.

PELC members must also have a "can do" attitude and a commitment to persevere for as long as it takes to create the conditions that support the collaborative pursuit of excellence and ethics. As one teacher, chair of his history department, told us, "Trying to figure it out just takes rolling up your sleeves and then not giving up." He described his faculty's determined effort to find a time, during the school day, for weekly teacher collaboration, now a signature practice of his school and a linchpin of its success.

We went to the school board and said, "This [teacher collaboration] is something we would like to do." They said, "We're all for it—do whatever you want, but don't spend any more money, don't change the school day, and you can't alter the bus schedule." We were on an 8-hour day—from 7:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Classes started at 8:05 and went to 3:25. Teachers stayed 20 minutes before and 20 minutes after to help kids or to fulfill their administrative responsibilities.

It was actually our teachers' union that came to us and said, "We've got the solution. On the first day of the week, we will come in 15 minutes early—7:30 a.m.—and leave at 3:30, so it's still an 8-hour day. Faculty can meet from 7:30 to 8:15, and we'll just push back the start of school 20 minutes until 8:25. We sacrifice 20 minutes of instructional time on Monday, but we pick up 45 minutes of collaborative work every week for our teams."

"Our teachers' union came to us and said, 'We've got the solution.'"

This plan, the teacher said, has worked amazingly well for his school. "We still have the same number of kids in the building. We just opened up early: The gyms, the library, the resource room, the computer labs—they're all open. And in five years, we've never had a major discipline problem."

Some educators have said to us, regarding a given idea for school reform, "Unions wouldn't support that." Indeed, in many schools, the union may be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. But as the above story shows, a union can take a very constructive role in helping to create the PELC.

If critical issues such as time for faculty collaboration go unconsidered and unchanged, the institutional verbiage about school reform and excellence and ethics can feel, in the words of one veteran high school reformer, like a "cruel joke." However, if the educational policies that

shape a school are addressed and handled in a manner that creates supportive conditions for reform, the PELC—and the whole school—will thrive.

The report *Reinventing High School*[86] outlines ten practices (see box below) for restructuring schools in ways that address the systemic issues affecting teaching and learning.

Ten Practices for High School Restructuring

1. *Benchmarking curriculum to high standards that all students are expected to meet.*
2. *Ensuring effective instructional practice.* Teaching practices must focus on literacy, applied learning, and the use of problem-solving strategies.
3. *Multiple, ongoing assessments.* Students should be assessed using a range of measures:
   - collaborative assessment
   - portfolios
   - exhibitions
   - competency-based graduation.

   These assessments should be used to give prompt and useful feedback to teachers.
4. *Creating small learning communities.* Options include:
   - school-within-a-school models
   - academies organized around different themes
   - career pathways
   - single-grade clusters
   - multi-grade clusters.
5. *Flexible use of time, such as block scheduling or extended day, that make it possible for:*
   - students to get inquiry-based instruction and advisories
   - faculty to get common planning times.
6. *Reduced student-teacher ratio, achieved through:*
   - the above scheduling patterns
   - course integration
   - resource reallocation
   - inclusion of special populations
   - engaging all professional staff in teaching
7. *Extending the classroom to the workplace and community, achieved through:*
   - work-based internships
   - service learning
   - classroom-related, field-based projects.
8. *Creating a personalized and respectful learning environment, including:*
   - clear codes of safety and discipline
   - support services to ensure that all students can achieve high academic standards:
     a. advisories
     b. mentoring
     c. health and social services.
9. *Developing and sustaining a collaborative professional culture.* Teachers must have continuing opportunities for professional growth, such as:
   - coaching
   - developing curricula
   - study groups
   - team teaching
   - workshops
10. *Building partnerships with all sectors of the community to support student learning:*

    Families:
    - supporting learning at home
    - participating in school decision-making.

    Business:
    - providing financial assistance
    - providing technical assistance and mentoring
    - providing internships and opportunities for field-based learning.

    Higher education:
    - changes in college admissions
    - tutorial/mentoring support
    - collaboration on curriculum development.

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CHAPTER 5

Fostering the 8 Strengths of Character

The person who has most profoundly affected my performance character is my basketball coach. During the first week of practice, Coach B. moved me from a wing player to a power forward—a position physically grueling and emotionally demanding for someone who is only 5'4". When I became frustrated in games, I would become upset quickly and use my height as an excuse.

But Coach B. never allowed me to give up. He told me directly when he expected more from me, and he never forgot to mention when he was proud of me. Before playing for him, I had never been asked to do something so far out of my comfort zone—never had to persevere in the face of what I saw as impossibility.

—A High School Girl

What gives my life a sense of purpose is the knowledge that the things I do throughout the day make a difference and that I am continually growing in new directions. One of the greatest challenges you face as an adolescent is to establish a personal identity and to discover your own beliefs when you constantly receive a barrage of opinions from your parents, teachers, and friends. Only this year, in my third year in high school, have I really been defining my own identity.

Part of what has helped me is being involved in extra-curricular activities in addition to demanding in-school activities. I've had the opportunity to act in ten shows, and each time I've learned more about myself and grow as a person. I've also been involved in our school's democratic governance system, which has strengthened my moral character by developing my moral awareness and leadership skills. I see my future almost as an uncharted adventure, but the growth I have experienced in the past three years fills my life with purpose and the desire to move forward.

–A High School Boy

How can a Smart & Good High School foster the development of the eight strengths of character that make up performance character and moral character? As noted in chapter 2, we draw these eight strengths, or developmental outcomes, from cross-cultural wisdom, classical conceptions of the good life, social science theory and research, positive psychology's emphasis on assets, and our own grounded theory research. We identify these eight strengths as:

1. **Lifelong learner and critical thinker**
2. **Diligent and capable performer**
3. **Socially and emotionally skilled person**
4. **Ethical thinker**
5. **Respectful and responsible moral agent**
6. **Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle**
7. **Contributing community member and democratic citizen**
8. **Spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose.**

Philosophers have long posed the question, "What does it mean to be a complete human being?" Educators have long agreed that we need to educate "the whole child." We offer the eight strengths of character as what schools will aspire to if they are deeply committed to excellence and ethics—truly serious about developing the whole person and helping young people become the best persons they can be. Schooling for these outcomes aims to foster human flourishing over a lifetime.

Within every young person is the desire to lead a flourishing life.

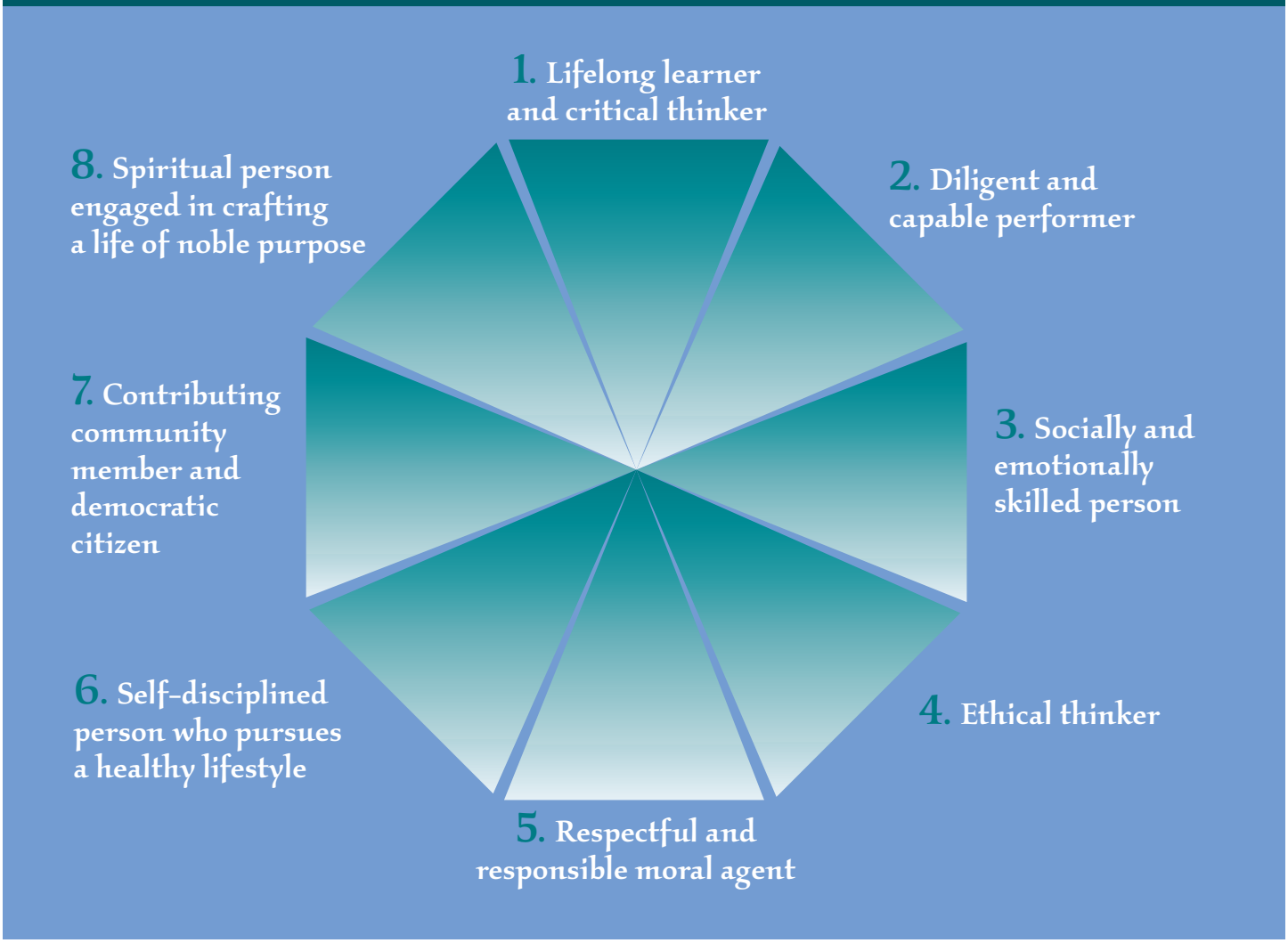
We believe that deep within every young person is the desire to lead a flourishing life. In their book, *The Ambitious Generation: America's Teenagers, Motivated But Directionless,* authors Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson observe:

Popular media images often portray adolescents as "slackers," drug users, and perpetrators of violent crime. The overwhelming majority of teenagers, however, graduate from high school, do not use hard drugs, are not criminals, and do not father or have babies while still in their teens.[1]

The realization that you know very little and that life is very short is the beginning of wisdom.

—Sir Isaac Newton

Performance Character and Moral Character are defined in terms of
8 Strengths of Character



We believe that young people are attracted to the ideals of excellence and ethics represented by the eight strengths of character, and that these strengths will provide motivating goals to help them avoid destructive behaviors and develop their full human potential.

The order of the eight strengths does not reflect a hierarchy of importance. For example, we don't think that being a critical thinker is more important than being an ethical thinker, or that being a diligent and capable performer is more important than being a contributing community member and democratic citizen.

We also see the eight strengths as interdependent, each needed for the optimal functioning of the others. Being a diligent and capable performer, for example, contributes to the level of excellence with which we pursue all the other strengths of character. Being an ethical thinker—bringing our best moral judgment to bear on every situation—guides how we live out all the other strengths. As we grow as spiritual persons, deepening our sense of purpose in life, that brings new energy to the development of the other strengths. And so on.

In the pages that follow, we discuss theory and research showing why each of these eight strengths of character is important for success in school and beyond. We also describe promising practices, drawn from our research, showing what teachers, schools, parents, the wider community, and adolescents themselves can do to develop each strength of character.

Outcome 1:
Lifelong Learner and Critical Thinker

A Lifelong learner and critical thinker . . .

- Strives to acquire the knowledge that characterizes an educated person
- Approaches learning as a lifelong process
- Demonstrates skills of critical analysis
- Takes seriously the perspectives of others
- Seeks expert opinion and credible evidence
- Makes connections and integrates knowledge
- Generates alternative solutions
- Demonstrates willingness to admit error and modify thinking.

Our school has had a significant influence on our development as lifelong learners. It has taught us to enjoy learning—to see it not as a chore, but as an exciting and new experience. It has created this environment by de-emphasizing competition between students through abolishing class rank and by having teachers seen as fellow learners.

—A High School Boy

In his book *Intellectual Character: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How to Get It,* Ron Ritchhart of Harvard's Graduate School of Education asks some hard questions: Does schooling make kids smarter? How do we define "smart"?[2]

Asked how they see their jobs, Ritchhart says, many teachers in today's high-stakes testing environment might answer, "I'm teaching so as to help my students do well on the state test in the spring. I'm teaching to the state learning standards. I'm trying to make sure my kids are prepared for next year."

What's the message to kids? School and learning can easily become dreary tasks that they must approach in a workman-like manner. The message is: "Do the work, get the grade, and move on."

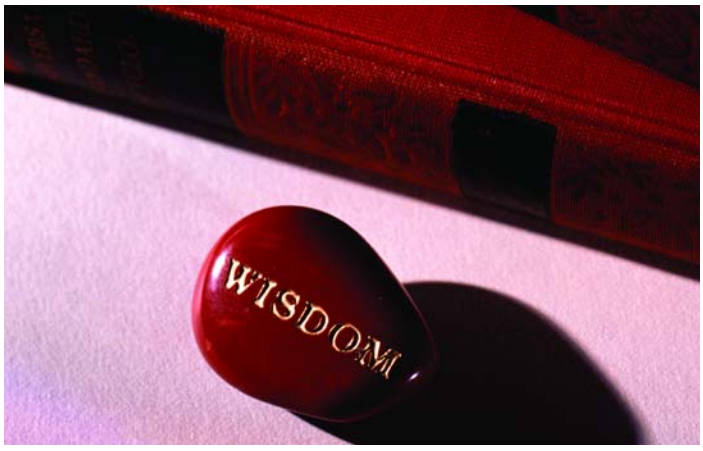
"What if," Ritchhart asks, "education were more about cultivating the dispositions and habits of mind that students will need for a lifetime of learning, problem-solving and decision making?" Ritchhart calls these habits of mind "intellectual character." They include being curious, metacognitive (able to think about one's thinking), eager to find truth and understanding, skeptical (looking for evidence, probing others' reasoning), and able to plan (set goals, devise steps, figure out what resources are needed). Such dispositions "motivate intelligent action in the world." "We must educate students not just to be smart," Ritchhart says, but to "*act* smart."

"We must educate students not just to be smart but to act *smart."*

Ritchhart's emphasis on "acting smart" finds strong support in Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg's book, *Successful Intelligence: How Practical and Creative Intelligence Determine Success in Life.* Sternberg writes:

Successful intelligence is the kind of intelligence used to achieve important goals. People who succeed . . . are those who have managed to acquire, develop, and apply a full range of intellectual skills, rather than relying on the inert intelligence that schools so value. These individuals may or may not succeed on conventional tests, but they have something in common that is much more important than high test scores. They know their strengths; they know their weaknesses. They capitalize on their strengths; they compensate for or correct their weaknesses.[3]

Drawing on a range of research and his own observations as a psychologist, Sternberg states, "I have found that successfully intelligent people have many things in common, whatever the degree or nature of their success." He names 20 characteristics (see box on next page). To us, two things stand out from his list: (1) Each of the 20 characteristics is something that students can develop both in the short-term and the long-term; and (2) these characteristics of successfully intelligent people are not specific to a particular field of endeavor.



Successfully Intelligent People:

1. motivate themselves
2. learn to control their impulses
3. know when to persevere
4. know how to make the most of their abilities
5. translate thought into action
6. have a product orientation
7. complete tasks and follow through
8. are initiators
9. are not afraid to risk failure
10. don't procrastinate
11. accept fair blame
12. reject self-pity
13. are independent
14. seek to surmount personal difficulties
15. focus and concentrate to achieve their goals
16. spread themselves neither too thick nor too thin
17. have the ability to delay gratification
18. have the ability to see the forest through the trees
19. have a reasonable level of self-confidence and a belief in their ability to accomplish their goals
20. balance analytical, creative, and practical thinking.

—Robert Sternberg[4]

How do Ritchhart's and Sternberg's emphasis on the importance of applied intelligence relate to our first strength of character, "lifelong learner and critical thinker"? We believe that applied intelligence is at the core of this developmental outcome. Moreover, everyone can develop this kind of practical intelligence within the limits of natural endowment. Becoming a lifelong learner is not just for those with high IQs or those pursuing advanced degrees; it is a universal challenge—and a distinguishing mark of individuals who have used their talents to achieve excellence in any field.

The preparation for lifelong learning and the development of critical thinking are vital and achievable outcomes of schooling. The ability to think and problem-solve is clearly important in the workplace; it repeatedly shows up on lists of what employers say they are looking for. Moreover, given the rapid advances in knowledge and technology and consequent increases in job complexity in many fields, being a lifelong learner is an ever more important workplace asset. It is also clearly an asset with intrinsic value, one that keeps us intellectually alive and growing—part of a flourishing life.

4 Promising Practices for Developing a Lifelong Learner and Critical Thinker

1. Have a relevant, rigorous, and engaging curriculum.
2. Develop critical thinking through in-depth, balanced investigation of controversial issues.
3. Use published curricular materials that develop critical thinking about value-laden current events.
4. Teach media literacy.

Outcome 1: Lifelong Learner and Critical Thinker

Promising Practice 1:

Have a relevant, rigorous, and engaging curriculum.

The school's most fundamental task—and the first step toward helping students become lifelong learners and critical thinkers—is to engage them effectively in learning. Because the academic curriculum is a school's central vehicle for teaching and learning, there can be no higher priority than ensuring that the curriculum is relevant, rigorous, and engaging. All three qualities are essential.

A curriculum must be seen by students as relevant to their lives and aspirations.

A curriculum must, first of all, be seen by students as relevant to their lives and aspirations, helping them to build a positive future. It must also be rigorous—sound in content and design, consistent with learning standards and other markers of quality, and challenging both faculty and students to strive for excellence. Finally, it must be engaging in how it is implemented. One can have a curriculum that is relevant and rigorous but taught in a way that fails to

actively engage students as thinkers and learners.

The good news is that for the past two decades, American high schools have taken significant steps to strengthen the curriculum. These efforts have begun to bear fruit. A major report, *Parsing the Achievement Gap,* by Educational Testing Service cites "a strong trend for students of all ethnic and racial groups to take a more rigorous curriculum." This report indicates that increased rigor in the curriculum predicts higher student achievement and is especially important for traditionally low-achieving students.[5]

Increased rigor in the curriculum predicts higher student achievement.

Cause for hope but also cause for concern come from another major report, *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn,* issued in 2004 by the National Academies.[6] With a special focus on the challenges facing urban schools, a committee of 18 scholars drew from research on motivation and studies of educational practices that foster student learning. The report's Executive Summary (abridged here) states:

There are many examples of schools in which students deemed at risk of disengagement and failure are productively engaged and achieving at high levels . . . . The core principles that underlie engagement are applicable to all schools—whether they are in urban, suburban, or rural communities. Engaging schools and teachers:

- promote students' confidence in their ability to learn and succeed in school by providing challenging instruction and support for meeting high standards.
- make the curriculum relevant so that students see some value in it.
- promote a sense of belonging by personalizing instruction.
- show an interest in students' lives.
- create a supportive and caring social environment.

The report then strikes a sobering note:

This description of engaging schools, however, applies to few urban schools . . . In many urban high schools with large concentrations of students living in poverty, it is common for fewer than half of the 9th-graders who enter to leave with a high school diploma. Many of the students who do not drop out altogether attend irregularly, exert modest effort on schoolwork, and learn little.[7]

High School Reform Designs

Whatever their situation—struggling school or successful school wanting to go "from good to great"—high school educators can now choose from many different models of school reform, each of which offers its own approach to curriculum. *Engaging Schools* profiles a dozen such models (see box). Summarizing "the little evidence that exists on the efficacy of high school designs," *Engaging Schools* states:

Research on the most long-standing high school reform designs as well as more recent data emerging from internal studies of new high school designs indicate that when levels of personalization increase, so do levels of attendance and parent involvement, and disciplinary problems decline . . . . Evaluation studies of high school reform models show students taking more advanced academic courses and having higher levels of enrollment in post-secondary schools, increased retention and graduation rates, and decreased drop-out rates.

High School Reform Designs

1. America's Choice: www.ncee.org/acsd/program/high.jsp
2. Atlas Communities: www.atlascommunities.org
3. Coalition of Essential Schools: www.essentialschools.org
4. Community for Learning: www.temple.edu/lss/cfl.htm
5. Co-NECT: www.co-nect.com
6. Edison Schools: www.edisonschools.com
7. Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound: www.elob.org
8. First Things First: www.irre.org/ftf/
9. High Schools That Work: www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/hstwindex.asp
10. Modern Red Schoolhouse: www.mrsh.org
11. Paideia: www.paideia.org
12. Talent Development High School: www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/index.htm

In our own study, we saw many examples—including some of the 12 models listed above—of efforts to provide a curriculum that is relevant, rigorous, and engaging. Here we describe just two and draw general lessons from each. The first curriculum was developed by a small, suburban, private school in the northeast; the second, by a large, urban, public school on the west coast.

A Core Works Program

In the small private school, we asked the headmaster—under whose leadership the school had received two national awards—to explain his vision of an engaging school. He said:

You need three things happening at the same time: (1) teachers ready to teach; (2) students ready to learn; and (3) something important to teach. The something important to teach is the curriculum—the essential understandings you want students to acquire in any given class and in the program as a whole.

"To have an engaging school, you need three things: teachers ready to teach, students ready to learn, and something important to teach."

At the center of this school's curriculum is its Core Works program. A booklet on the program explains: "Our purpose is to teach the best that has been thought and said in the world." Its Core Works include "works of enduring significance, including great works of literature, works from the visual arts and music, and documents and speeches that inaugurate, define, or explain our nation's institutions, or which record important historical events and processes."

The Core Works are selected by the faculty using four criteria developed by the National Endowment for the Humanities:

1. ***timelessness*** (judged important by thoughtful men and women over long periods of history)
2. ***centrality*** (involves major themes)
3. ***influence/importance*** (reaches beyond the discipline)
4. ***originality*** (offers new vision).

A key factor supporting this school's implementation of its Core Works curriculum is its strong professional ethical learning community. Faculty at a given grade level develop common lesson plans for each core work studied. They also study with national scholars each year so that their presentations of the texts will be at the highest level of teaching and learning. The Core Works booklet states: "The school has budgeted sufficient funds so that faculty teams responsible for teaching a specific text or art piece will have the opportunity to work with scholars or engage in other learning, such as traveling to Mississippi to a William Faulkner seminar or working closely with experts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art."

"Our purpose is to teach the best that has been thought and said in the world."

These are the lessons we draw from this school's curricular efforts:

1. **A visionary school leader provides a strong impetus for a quality curriculum.**
2. **"Core works" contribute to a rich and rigorous curriculum with strong potential for developing critical thinking.**
3. **National criteria, such as those provided by the National Endowment of the Humanities, are helpful in selecting core works.**
4. **Having faculty choose the core works and then plan together how to teach them is an excellent way to strengthen the professional ethical learning community.**
5. **Ongoing support for faculty development in teaching the core works promotes high-quality implementation.**

Paideia

What if a school does not have the resources available to the private school that provides such strong support for its Core Works program? In a large, urban multi-ethnic California public school that operates with much leaner resources, we nevertheless found an example of the three crucial ingredients—passionate teachers, motivated students, and a rich curriculum—named by the Core Works headmaster as essential for an engaging school. We also found the personalized learning environment identified as essential by *Engaging Schools*.

For the past 18 years in this urban school, Ms. W. and Ms. J. have teamed up to staff their Paideia program, recipient of two awards for excellence.

Based on a model developed by University of Chicago philosopher-educator Mortimer Adler, Paideia develops thinking and writing through Socratic methodology, the integration of English and history, and demanding writing requirements. At Ms. W.'s school, 100% of the Paideia graduates go to four-year colleges— including many of the country's most competitive—and consistently score well above the national average on Advanced Placement exams in History, American Government, and English.

Students read arguments presenting contrasting perspectives on social and political problems.

When the Paideia program began in 1987, virtually all of the students were African-American. As word spread, the school began to have applicants from all across the district. Says Ms. W.:

We have a night in the spring when we invite students and parents from all the feeder schools and explain what we do in the program. It's gotten to the point where it's like having a good basketball team— everybody wants to play. We're constantly getting calls from parents who say their child is in eighth grade and they want them to be in Paideia when they get to tenth.

About 80% of Paideia's 360 students come from the school's Engineering Academy and 20% from the rest of the school (Health Academy, Computers Academy, and no academy).

The version of Paideia that Mrs. W. and her colleagues have developed looks like this:

10th grade
World Literature
World History

11th grade
American Literature
American History

12th grade
English IV—AP
Political Theory
American Government and Economics

As just one example of course content, here is an excerpt from the syllabus of the 11th-grade American History course:

The themes to be examined in this course are:

1. **the philosophical and religious underpinnings of the nation**
2. **the development of our political system**
3. **the cultural heritage/changes America has experienced**
4. **the territorial growth of the nation**
5. **the fissures the American system has experienced**
6. **the exploitation of America's minorities, women, and the poor**
7. **the nation's technological development**
8. **the role of the U.S. in world affairs**
9. **the issues confronting America today.**

Ms. W. showed us the reading lists for this course and other program courses. In our judgment, they would be daunting for many college students.

The rest of our interview unfolded as follows:

Could you give us a picture of how a typical Paideia class is conducted?

In senior American Government, we recently did a unit on the impact of money on politics. We began by having students read a variety of arguments that laid out conflicting perspectives. One author argued for doing away with political action committees—seeming to show that *this* money got *that* result. Another argued that people should be able to spend their money as they choose; it's a form of free speech. In class discussion, we always move through a series of questions for each major article:

1. What is the author's main thesis?
2. What evidence does the author provide to support his or her thesis?
3. What slant, if any, do you see in this piece? (For example, note the source.)

We keep a running list of all the arguments and evidence on each side of the issue. I really emphasize evidence. When students speak in discussion, I'll always ask, "What is your evidence? This argument isn't going to go anywhere without evidence."

The program promotes critical thinking by continually asking, "What is your evidence?"

We always devote time to solutions. First, I'll ask them, how do you think this problem could be solved? Then, for homework, they read articles that offer different ways of alleviat-

ing the problem. We come back and discuss those.

1. How do the solutions proposed in the readings compare with the ones we came up with?
2. Are some solutions better than others? If so, how?
3. Can we add to them?

We're reaching for much more than just passing the AP exam. The exam doesn't ask them for solutions to anything. I want them to look for solutions to social problems. I want them to be part of the solution.

So you're going beyond what's required in a normal AP class?

Yes—and in the reading requirements as well. In our 11th-grade American History course, we use over 200 additional readings—everything from an op-ed essay to a *New York Times Magazine* article. For each reading, they highlight what they consider the important points. No zeroes are given; if by Friday something is missing, I ask them to stay after school to do it. So far this semester, everybody in both blocks has turned in everything—every reading, every quiz, every exam. They keep up; they know I mean business.

What type of students take Paideia?

We do tend to get the best students in the school, but it's not like they're all National Merit scholars. I've got a kid this year, Joey—not an academically sharp kid, but he kept bugging me, "Can I please get in? I'll sit on the floor." He's not doing all that well on exams, but he'll improve as we go along.

You also have to measure what these kids are doing against what the school's best students were doing before Paideia. Before 1987, in what was then called our "Gifted and Talented Class," students read one novel all year.

The program engages students. Discussions often run longer than I plan because there's so much intensity in the room. They can go for 20 minutes without my saying anything.

100% of this school's Paideia graduates go to four-year colleges.

What challenges do you face?

The classes get bigger every year. When we started, we had 20 students in a class. Now we have 40. That makes it harder to get everybody involved in the discussion. We need more faculty in order to expand the program.

Is there a capstone project?

Their major senior project is a University of Michigan-style debate. They choose controversial issues—gun control, same-sex marriage, and the like. We tell them it's best to do the side you do *not* believe in. To prepare, they must do a series of research pieces using the Internet, magazines, and books—a certain amount from each source.

We also try to get every student to go to Washington, D.C. for a week to see the government in action. This program is run by the Close-Up Foundation (www.closeup.org). Two kids from our school room with two kids from another state. Some have never stayed in a hotel before. At $1,400 a student—many of our kids are on public assistance—we do a lot of fundraising. Last year we had so many students that we had to go on two planes.

They observe Congress and the Supreme Court and interview government officials. We go to the Holocaust Museum; on the last trip, we stayed there for four hours. Students were most moved by the room that contains thousands of children's shoes.

In Paideia, we are already a small learning community; our kids really bond over the three years of the program. But the Washington trip—besides being a tremendous learning experience they talk about in class for months after—makes us even more like a family. There's a special power in doing something like this together outside of the classroom.

"There's a special power in doing something together outside the classroom."

Have you done any follow-up to see what your graduates do with their lives?

It would be wonderful to have a grant to do that. We do know that some of our students go to places like Stanford, Harvard, and Yale and become doctors, professors, and engineers. Quite a few of our graduates send us checks so that other kids can go on the D.C. trip.

We think there are many larger lessons to be drawn from this school's implementation of Paideia:

1. **A curriculum that requires students to read widely, think deeply, and discuss vigorously can produce a passion for learning—and high levels of engagement and achievement among students normally underserved.**
2. **Like a core works program, Paideia requires talented, dedicated faculty and may not be easy to "scale up."**
3. **While this model may be difficult to replicate widely,**

many of its elements—small learning community, seminar discussion, integrated coursework, rich and diverse learning materials, a meaningful capstone project, a class trip—are generic strategies that can be used within any curriculum to foster students' development of performance character and moral character.

The National Paideia Center (www.paideia.org) at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, supports Paideia educators through staff development, a newsletter, and other publications.

Outcome 1: Lifelong Learner and Critical Thinker

Promising Practice 2:

Develop critical thinking through in-depth, balanced investigation of controversial issues.

An old saying goes, "When everyone thinks alike, no one thinks very much." Nothing stimulates thinking like controversy. Handled well, controversy provides an excellent opportunity to develop Outcome 1.

Balance and fairness must characterize the school's approach to controversial issues.

Controversy typically occurs when widely accepted values—peace and national security, life and liberty, individual freedom and the common good, economic development and protection of the environment—come into conflict. Since controversy is a fact of life, especially our public life, teaching students to make reasoned judgments about controversial issues and to be able to discuss them rationally is an essential part of the school's civic mission: educating for citizenship in a democratic society. Democratic disagreement doesn't come naturally; it's learned.

Balance and fairness must characterize the school's approach to controversial issues, whether the issue is abortion, stem cell research, homosexuality, or war in Iraq. Out of respect for school and community members' deep differences on such issues, public school educators must take great care to treat a controversial issue in a way that's fair to diverse perspectives—or not treat it at all.

For example: Prior to the U. S. invasion of Iraq, a group of students at a Chicago high school asked permission to perform "Lysistrata," Aristophanes's anti-war play in which women vow to abstain from sex until men abstain from war. The principal agreed to allow the play—but insisted that the performance be followed by a panel discussion including persons who supported military action. After the panel, students who had been involved in putting on the play said they had learned the importance of hearing different viewpoints.[8]

The box above offers four guidelines for approaching controversial issues in a way that is balanced, rigorous, and challenging for students and teachers alike.

Teaching Controversial Issues

1. Develop School Board-approved guidelines for teaching controversial issues.
2. Use high-quality published curriculum materials, if available, to teach a controversial issue.
3. In studying any controversial issue:
   - Make the classroom safe for intellectual diversity by acquainting students with the diversity of opinion in society—as represented, for example, in public opinion polls on the issue.
   - Provide readings of the highest quality on both sides of the issue and pose questions (e.g., "What supportive evidence is provided?") that help students critically evaluate the readings.
   - Bring in speakers on both sides of the issue.
   - Refrain, as the teacher, from disclosing your personal views—at least until the students' inquiry is completed and grades given.
4. Use a cooperative learning format—"structured controversy" (see next page)—to maximize the benefits of studying controversial issues while minimizing the divisive effects.

> Our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue to grow as long as we live.
>
> —Mortimer Adler

Structured Controversy

A promising, research-based approach to controversial issues—one that prevents teacher bias from skewing the discussion, maximizes student participation, and reaps the benefits of cooperative learning—is "structured controversy." Developed by cooperative learning experts David and Roger Johnson, the model defines controversies as "interesting problems to be solved, rather than win-lose situations." The Johnsons reject the classic debate format in favor of a cooperative format in which students work together rather than antagonistically. They use the issue of hazardous waste disposal to illustrate their procedure[9]:

Teaching students to be able to discuss controversial issues rationally is part of the school's civic mission.

Assignment. A teacher assigns students to groups of four, comprised of two-person "advocacy teams." Each foursome is asked to prepare a report titled "The Role of Regulations in the Management of Hazardous Waste." Within each foursome, one team of two is assigned the position that more regulations are needed, and the other team of two the position that fewer regulations are needed.

Planning. During the first class period, the two-person teams each receive materials from the teacher that support their assigned positions. Their task: "Plan how to present your position so that you and the opposing team in your group will learn your position so well as to find it convincing."

Advocacy. During the second period, the two teams present their positions to each other. Then they engage in general discussion in which they advocate their positions, rebut the other side, and try to reach the best decision possible about the need to regulate hazardous waste management.

Position switch. In the third period, each team switches positions, arguing for the position it originally opposed.

Reaching consensus. During the fourth period, the four group members synthesize what they see as the best information and reasoning from both sides into a consensus solution. They then write a group report.

Individual accountability. After the consensus report is completed, each student takes a test on the factual information contained in the reading materials.

To help students develop a set of cooperative attitudes and skills, the Johnsons recommend asking students to commit to these rules:

I am critical of ideas, not people.

I focus on making the best decision possible, not on "winning."

I encourage everyone to participate and master all the relevant information.

I listen to everyone's ideas, even if I do not agree, and restate what someone said if it is not clear.

I first bring out all the ideas and facts supporting both sides and then try to put them together in a way that makes sense.

I try to understand both sides.

I change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so.

Structured Controversy: What the Research Shows

Based on more than a decade of classroom research on structured controversy, the Johnsons report that students:

- Gain in their perspective-taking abilities
- Demonstrate greater mastery and retention of the subject matter than is true with debate or individualistic learning formats
- Produce higher-quality solutions to problems
- Have a more positive attitude toward other student participants
- Show higher academic self-esteem
- Develop more positive attitudes toward the topic under discussion and the process of controversy itself.[10]

A caution: The Johnsons' structured controversy format may not be appropriate for some issues—such as abortion, euthanasia, and sexual behavior—where students' convictions of conscience are so strong that it would be uncomfortable and contrary to their sense of integrity for them to argue, through a "position switch," the opposite of what they truly believe. With such issues, the teacher is wise to use other formats, such as having students listen

to or read about conflicting views, and then demonstrate, perhaps through a written report, their understanding of the arguments and evidence on different sides of the issue.

Whatever the format, the goal should be to develop critical thinking and the capacity for rational dialogue that grows from entering into the perspectives of others, however deeply we may disagree.

Outcome 1: Lifelong Learner and Critical Thinker

Promising Practice 3:

Use published curricular materials that develop critical thinking about value-laden current events.

Ms. G. is in her third year of teaching 9th and 10th- grade literature. Like most high school teachers, she is pressed for time. She is therefore very grateful to find high-quality ready-made lessons that develop critical thinking about character-related issues. She draws these lessons from Virtue in Action (**www.virtueinaction.org**), an online biweekly service that uses current events to help students understand and practice ethical and intellectual virtues.

Designed for secondary classrooms, Virtue in Action lessons have covered a wide-range of high-profile topics: September 11, high school hazing, Internet music piracy, the stem cell debate, the war in Iraq, the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal, ethnic persecution in Sudan, the presidential election, and the "basket-brawl" between players and fans at an Indiana Pacers-Detroit Pistons basketball game.

> *"I use these lessons to meet state learning standards."*

Each lesson begins with three to four pages of background narrative laying out the important issues, followed by a list of key vocabulary for understanding the issue. The lesson plan for the teacher includes goals, virtues to highlight, discussion questions, writing activities, extension projects, and links to relevant readings and websites. Ms. G. comments:

I use the Virtue in Action lessons to meet a number of the state learning standards, such as being able to express a point of view, develop one's ideas, hold a conversation, and respond to another's viewpoint. I find my students need a lot of help in these areas. Many of them don't have opportunities, either in their families or with their friends, for the kinds of conversations we'd like them to be able to have when they get to college. For many of them, their education until now has been mostly "listen to the teacher, read the text, answer the questions."

At this age they love to share their opinions, but I want them to really listen and share *in light of* what someone else has said. We always sit in a circle to encourage eye contact. At the start of the year, we set ground rules for good discussion. I don't make them raise their hands; I want them to be able to follow the conversational cues. I sit back for the most part, posing an occasional question: "Have you experienced something similar to this?"; "If you were in this person's shoes, how would you feel?" I give credit for participation and also give them a rubric for that.

She says the Virtue in Action lessons work well with students of varied backgrounds.

I have honors students, and I have struggling students. These lessons give all of them the opportunity to think about what they believe and express their beliefs with greater confidence. It's refreshing for me to listen to their ideas about these issues.

> *"For many students, their education has been, 'Listen to the teacher, answer the questions.'"*

The prepared lessons, she says, ensure a greater level of objectivity than if she were to try to create them.

First of all, I wouldn't have the time—but even if I did, I think there would be a tendency for me to select issues that I have strong opinions about. My own bias might creep into how I would frame the issue. The Virtue in Action lessons do an excellent job of presenting all facets of an issue. I keep my opinion to myself, even though my students always try to get it out of me.

She says she has also been pleased by some of the connections students make across lessons.

About a year ago, we did the lesson about the awful high school hazing incident that happened in a Chicago suburb, and discussed the "mob mentality" that can lead people to go along with what the group is doing rather than exercising individual judgment and responsibility. Recently, when we discussed the lesson on the abuse of prisoners in Iraq, they brought up the hazing incident and the similarities they saw between the two situations.

Not all of the lessons, she says, deal with controversial issues.

Some just present an inspiring role model, like Pat Tillman [the U.S. Army Ranger who, at the peak of his NFL career, left football to volunteer for the Army and was later killed in Afghanistan]. We all could agree on the qualities that made him admirable. The same was true for the lesson about the disabled student who overcame obstacles to achieve academic excellence.

Some lessons present an inspiring role model.

To illustrate the design and content of Virtue in Action lessons, and how they can be used to develop critical thinking, an excerpt from the lesson on music piracy appears below, and an excerpt from the lesson on the hazing incident appears on the next page.

> I am learning all the time. The tombstone will be my diploma.
>
> —Eartha Kitt

Thou Shall Not Steal . . . . Does That Include Music? (www.virtueinaction.org)

Lesson Goals: Help students understand the virtues of integrity and respecting others' property; see the connection between copyright protection and creativity; understand the civil justice system's role in deterring illegal activities. *Read the introductory narrative, then discuss the questions below.*

Discussion Questions

1. What are the reasons so many people are downloading music without paying?
2. What is the purpose of copyright law?
3. Do you agree with the decision of the recording industry to sue downloaders?
4. If we didn't have copyright laws and artists and recording companies weren't assured that they would be paid for their work, do you think artists would strive to create as much music?
5. Do you agree that downloading copyrighted music without paying for it is ethically the same as stealing a pair of shoes from a sports store? How do you define stealing?
6. Do you think downloading copyrighted music lessens our integrity? How do you define integrity?
7. If the recording industry had been responsive to consumers by developing an inexpensive downloading service, do you think most people would have used the legal service—or would they still download illegally for free?

Writing Options. Should people proven to have violated copyright laws through music piracy be held responsible for their actions by being convicted and punished? Why or why not? Given what we have discussed in this lesson, has your view on illegal downloading changed? Explain.

Extension Projects

- Conduct a survey of parents asking: "Is illegal downloading of music stealing?"
- Should parents be held responsible for the illegal downloading activities of their children?
- Organize a class trip to your local music store. Ask, "What effect does music downloading have on your sales?"
- Have the class research getting something copyrighted: www.copyright.gov/
- Investigate the landmark Supreme Court decision in which freelance authors wanted compensation for works they had previously written which were being offered in a new form on the Internet.

Links

How File Sharing Works
http://computer.howstuffworks.com/file-sharing.htm

Future of Music Coalition www.futureofmusic.org/

Free and Legal Music Downloads
http://mp3.about.com/od/freebies/tp/freemusictp.htm

Hazing Incident Highlights Virtues of Respect and Responsibility (www.virtueinaction.org)

Hazing is any action or situation created intentionally to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, or harassment for people trying to join a group.

On Sunday, May 4 (2003), junior girls from a suburban Illinois high school got ready for a secret "Powder Puff" football game, where the senior girls play the junior girls. As many as 100 people are thought to have been at the "game," which included a lot of alcohol consumption by players and spectators before and during the event. The junior girls assumed they would receive the standard abuse of having ketchup, mustard, eggs, and flour poured all over them. A junior girl who was injured said, "About 10 minutes into it, everything changed—buckets were flying, people were bleeding, girls were unconscious." Some senior girls brought baseball bats; others shoved excrement into people's mouths. At one point, some of the senior girls began punching and kicking the junior girls. Five girls ended up in the hospital. Most of the student spectators did nothing to help those being abused.

What turns a girls' football game into an act of group violence against others? These are some of the factors:

Lack of respect for others. Someone who abuses others lacks the virtue of respect for others' worth and dignity. The abuser often views the victim as a mere object.

Alcohol. Excessive drinking affects our ability to make judgments and see clearly the consequences of our actions.

Courage. Some of the spectators probably fully realized the abuse was wrong but lacked the courage to do anything about it.

Mob mentality. As a group begins to do something wrong, it can be very easy to get caught up in the crowd.

(The next section of the narrative discusses the responsibility of students enacting the abuse, the responsibility of parents, the responsibility of spectators, and the responsibility of the school.)

Vocabulary: Hazing, courage, respect for others, responsibility. (Each term is defined.)

Lesson Goals: Help students become more aware of what hazing is, its dangers, and how to prevent it; relate the virtues of respect for others, courage, and responsibility to the prevention of violence.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think were the various factors that enabled such a violent act of hazing to occur?
2. Where do you think we should draw the line between a fun ritual of initiation and abusive hazing?
3. Why do you think people accept being abused in order to be part of a group? What are other ways to bring a group of people closer together?
4. Recalling the lesson's discussion of responsibility—being accountable for our actions—what level of responsibility and punishment do you think is appropriate for those students enacting violence on other students? Those in the crowd cheering on the abusers? Those who provided alcohol for the event?
5. Let's think about the times we've done something bad for which we wanted to be forgiven. How did we show we were sorry for our actions?
6. Place yourself in the position of a junior who was beaten and abused. Could you forgive the ones who abused you? What would you want them to do to help you forgive them?

Journal Writing. Would you have done anything as a spectator to stop the violence? Why or why not? Given this lesson, would your actions now be different? If so, why?

Extension Project. Divide the class into teams; each team researches one aspect of high school hazing from the topics below, using the links at the bottom of the page.

1. What is hazing and its history in high schools?
2. How often does it occur? Whom does it affect?
3. How do schools respond to high school hazing? What effect does their response have?
4. How do the community and police respond?
5. What can be done to prevent high school hazing?

Links

The history of high school hazing
http://hazing.hanknuwer.com/hs2.html; www.stophazing.org

Initiation Rites in American High Schools: A National Study by Alfred University
www.alfred.edu/news/html/hazing_study.html

Center for the Prevention of School Violence
www.cpsv.org

Outcome 1: Lifelong Learner and Critical Thinker

Promising Practice 4: *Teach media literacy.*

No effort to develop lifelong learning and critical thinking can ignore the media culture in which young people now come of age. In the surveys we conducted, high school students themselves described what they see as the deleterious effects of the mass media on young people's values and sense of self (see page 11).

To be sure, the media offer benefits as well as dangers. At its best, television is a window on the world, expanding our intellectual, aesthetic, and moral horizons and connecting us with the rest of humanity. Similarly, the Internet puts a wealth of useful information and a network of other people at our fingertips.

But the growing role that the electronic media play in the lives of youth poses at least two threats to their healthy development.

Media can be a thief of time.

First, the media most commonly used by young people are a thief of precious time. The return on investment is low: Time spent watching television (still the dominant medium), playing video games, surfing the Net, and so on is almost always time more profitably spent doing something else—reading a book, getting exercise, talking with family or friends, doing homework, developing a talent, practicing a skill, helping a neighbor or one's community, pursuing one's spiritual growth. Activities such as these enhance our relationships; develop our mind, body, and soul; and contribute to the eight strengths of character—including becoming a lifelong learner and critical thinker. The adolescent years are a critical period for learning and development that will lay the foundation for a young person's future. Opportunities missed then can never be regained.

The media's second threat to character is its increasingly negative content. Reality shows outdo each other in sensationalism and ways to exploit human beings for entertainment. Commercials promote the belief that things make us happy. Prime-time television dramas contain rising levels of profanity and sex; contemporary movies feature escalating violence. Vulgarity unimaginable a decade ago has become commonplace. According to a recent Federal Trade Commission report on youth and the media,[11] children from early ages watch programs such as WWF's *Smackdown,* in which the wrestlers saunter out, grab their crotches, and bellow "Suck it!" to their "ho's" standing by. Pre-teens as well as teens are devoted fans of MTV and what one media critic calls "teen sex soap operas" such as *Dawson's Creek*.[12] Much popular music features obscene lyrics that denigrate women and other groups. The Internet has made pornography more ubiquitous. The photographs showing American soldiers sexually humiliating Iraqi prisoners did not come out of a vacuum; they came out of a culture.

TV: Our Constant Companion

Television is our constant companion, from the nursery school to the nursing home. Students spend more time in front of the television than they spend in school. They see more than 100 commercials a day. They see 25,000 TV murders by the time they are 18. Americans devote more of their lives to watching TV than to any other single activity.

—David Aronson, "Changing Channels"[13]

Schools alone can't stem the tide of media sleaze. They can, however, encourage parents to step up to the plate in this area. They can send home examples of how different families have put reasonable limits on media use, and they can urge parents to engage their children in conversations that help them think critically about the media and the growing role it plays in most of our lives. Parents can be encouraged to explain their moral standards for media use to their adolescents, and also set an example of concerned citizenship by supporting a media-watch organization such as Parents Television Council (**www.ParentsTV.org**) and participating in their e-mail campaigns against networks and sponsors that promote or support objectionable television programming.

The Media Literacy Movement

Schools can do something else that we must come to see as an essential character development practice in our media-driven society: They can teach media literacy.

In the past 15 years, instruction in media literacy has become its own national movement. According to one recent study, all 50 states now have at least one element of media literacy included in the state's educational framework; most incorporate it as a component in major sub-

ject areas such as English, social studies, and communication arts.[14] The accompanying box lists an array of media literacy resources now available to educators and parents.

Media Literacy Resources for Educators and Parents

Action Coalition for Media Education
http://www.acmecoalition.org

National Association for Media Literacy Education
http://www.amlainfo.org

Cable in the Classroom
http://www.ciconline.com

Center for Media Literacy
http://www.medialit.org

Media Literacy Clearinghouse
http://medialit.med.sc.edu

Media Literacy Online Project
http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/home/

National Telemedia Council
http://www.nationaltelemediacouncil.org

Media Awareness Network
http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/

According to the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, "media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms."[15] Media-literate persons "can think critically about what they see, hear and read in books, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies, advertising, video games, the Internet, and new emerging technology."[16]

"We must teach young people to 'read' electronic media just as critically as we teach them to read print."

One high school teacher commented, "Because our kids are getting so much of their information from the electronic media, we need to teach them how to read this medium just as critically as we have traditionally taught them to read print."[17] Advocates of media literacy emphasize five principles for critical analysis of media messages:

1. **Media messages are constructed.**
2. **Media messages are representations of reality with embedded values and points of view.**
3. **Each form of media uses a unique set of rules to construct messages.**
4. **Individuals interpret media messages and create their own meaning based on personal experience.**
5. **Media are driven by profit within economic and political contexts.**[18]

A growing body of research indicates the effectiveness of media literacy education ranging from brief peer-led workshops to full courses. Media literacy interventions have:

- **Helped juvenile offenders learn to think critically about the consequences of risk behaviors and develop strategies to resist the impulse to engage in such behaviors**
- **Helped high school girls learn to deconstruct media messages that promote unrealistic body images and unhealthy eating**
- **Reduced the likelihood that teen athletes use steroids and illicit drugs**
- **Reduced drinking and driving and susceptibility to peer pressure to smoke**
- **Improved students' skills in critically analyzing a variety of media.**[19]

Research shows varied positive effects of media literacy education.

Analyzing Media: Key Questions

1. Who created this message and why are they sending it?
2. What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?
3. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in this message?
4. What is omitted from this message? Why do you think it was left out?
5. How might different people interpret this message?[20]

What One Teacher Does

In one of our high school visits, we interviewed a former English teacher who has been teaching video production and media literacy for the past ten years. What began as a single section of an introductory course has expanded, in

response to student interest, to six sections of that course and two additional, advanced-level courses which include year-long internships working with cable TV stations, web developers, newspapers, and the like.

These courses have attracted a wide range of students, including many previously unmotivated and low-achieving students. Once in the course, she says, these students typically show improved school attendance because they don't want to miss the video production classes—one reason being that they are members of a cooperative learning group that is working together on a course project.

She explained why she first got involved in teaching media literacy:

The social norms and values of young people are profoundly influenced by the media. I want them to really *think about* what's being conveyed. I want the girls to think about how the ads are telling them how to dress, how to be sexually appealing to boys, and to worry more about "How can I impress others?" than about "What kind of a person do I want to be?" Among boys I see a lot of posturing, a lot of concern with being "cool" that reflects the role models they are assimilating from the media. Television also leads them to think that money is what's important and to have expectations of success—the "I-can-be-an-NBA-star" mentality—that are out of touch with reality.

"I want them to really think about what's being conveyed by the media."

She said her introductory course begins with commercials. Students view TV commercials together in class and individually for homework. She has them consider:

- **What's the message?**
- **Who is the target audience?**
- **What psychological appeals are being used?**
- **What camera angles are being employed, with what effects?**
- **What's the pacing of images?**
- **How is audio/music being used?**

For the next assignment, they must make their own commercials: one which is truthful and one which is not. She comments: "After viewing their commercials, we discuss the ethics of manipulation. Is it ethical to manipulate someone to buy something they might not need, or to buy a product that doesn't live up to its claims?"

The course then involves students in creating high-quality Public Service Announcements that are shown on local cable TV stations—work that must measure up to real-world standards. Topics have included buckling up when you drive, not drinking and driving, the dangers of smoking, and so on. "This assignment," said the teacher, "requires them to research their topic thoroughly so they can create a message that is clear, concise, factually accurate, and motivating for the viewing public."

Students learn to critically analyze television news.

Next, the course turns to critical analysis of the news. They look at TV news, compare the different spins put on the same story by different networks, and examine how television reporting is very superficial compared to the analysis found in a good newspaper. They compare American television coverage of the Iraq war with coverage by the BBC.

They pay particular attention to television interviews. The teacher explained:

First, I have them interview each other on a social or political issue that's in the news. We discuss, what makes for a good interview—a fair interview? How can an interviewer bias an interview? Then we look at actual TV news interviews and ask:

- What questions are being asked?
- What questions are not being asked?
- How long is the interview?
- Is the person interrupted or cut off?
- How is the camera being used? The lighting?

They see that it's easy to make someone look bad—by a close-up that isn't flattering, for example, by focusing on the person looking down, or by cutting them off before they really explain their position, and so on.

She then described a field trip her classes did right after the U. S. presidential election campaign—to witness a live CNN show in which four panelists analyzed the election and responded to student questions submitted prior to the program. Students later commented on how "staged" the show was: Panelists' practiced their responses in a pre-program rehearsal, and there was a noticeable selectivity regarding which student questions got chosen for panel response.

"Some very good environmental questions were not chosen," the teacher said. "So I said to the class, 'Let's investigate the vested interests of those who own and operate CNN.' My goal was not to pick on CNN but to explore the hidden factors that may shape what gets included—or omitted—by any news source."

She said she can tell from students' conversations that the course affects how they view the media. For example, they look at television commercials much more critically. "They'll come into the class saying to each other, 'Have you seen the such-and-such commercial—can you believe it?'" She says that in general they look at TV and film in a more analytical way; some report that they have become more selective about the movies they go to. "I've also had parents say to me, only half-jokingly, that I've ruined TV for them, because their high school student is now constantly making comments such as, 'That's not true,' and 'That's manipulative,' during television programs."

"I've had parents say, 'You've ruined television for us.'"

Pornography

Pornography is arguably one of the big elephants in society's living room. Few adults, including parents and educators, talk about it, although most people are aware that the Internet has significantly increased young people's access to pornography (45% say they have friends who regularly download it, as we noted in Chapter 3). Even though it is a huge part of the culture—second only to gambling as an Internet business—pornography enters public discourse only occasionally, as it recently did when some female public library workers protested the practice (defended by others as "free speech") of allowing patrons to use library computers to view and download pornography.

Given the absence of public discourse about pornography, many people are likely to underestimate its effects on the minds and behavior of young consumers. As one example of the impact it can have, the director of an ethics and character education center cited the following encounter with a junior high school student:

> This week I had a conversation with an 8th-grade boy who spoke enthusiastically about all the pornography he watches with his friends. All kinds of sex—oral sex, anal sex, you name it. His mind is full of this stuff. He says he and his friends play "Truth or Dare," in which they perform various sexual acts on each other as part of the game.

At an independent K-9 school we visited, several female faculty confided that they had long been unhappy about a "tradition" among the 8th and 9th-grade boys of hanging pornographic pin-ups in their hallway lockers. These teachers considered this practice to be degrading to them as women and saw it as fostering among the boys an attitude of viewing women as sex objects. When we asked them if they had ever raised this for discussion at a faculty meeting, they said no, moral issues were never a matter for discussion in faculty meetings.

Female faculty were disturbed by "pin-ups" in boys' lockers.

Clearly, if we're serious about media literacy and serious about young people's character development, we can hardly turn a blind eye to this particular elephant. How to address it?

Obviously, we can't, and wouldn't want to, have students examine and discuss pornographic materials in the classroom the way they are able to review and discuss other media. But we can ask them to write in response to an essay or book that provides a critical perspective on pornography. (Sample reflection questions: In the pornography business, who has the power? Who is making money? Who is being exploited or hurt? See box on the next page for other questions.) Unless students become critical thinkers about this issue, they are unlikely to understand the dangers of pornography or its victims.

Students might, for example, be asked to respond to a no-nonsense, non-preachy discussion of pornography in the popular book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens,* by Sean Covey.[21] Some schools have used this book, which also deals with themes such as communication skills and goal-setting, as part of a character development course for freshman. Treating pornography under the topic of addictions, Covey writes:

> One of the more subtle but dangerous addictions is pornography, and it's available everywhere. Now, you can argue all you want about what pornography is and isn't, but I think deep in your heart you know. Pornography may taste sweet for the moment, but it will gradually dull your finer sensitivities, like that inner voice called your conscience, until it's smothered.
>
> You may be thinking, "Take it easy, Sean. A little skin isn't going to hurt me." The problem is that pornography, like

any other addiction, sneaks up on you. It reminds me of a story I once read about frogs. If you put a frog in boiling water, it will immediately jump out. But if you put it in lukewarm water and then slowly turn up the heat, the frog will get cooked before it has the sense to jump out. It's the same with pornography. What you look at today may have shocked you a year ago. But because the heat was ever so slowly turned up, you didn't even notice that your conscience was being fried.

Have the courage to walk away, to turn it off, to throw it away. You are better than that.[22]

"Pornography can fry your conscience, and you won't even notice."

We can also invite young people to consider the possible long-term consequences of using pornography—for example, damage to marriage relationships.

The accompanying box lists other critical thinking questions that invite students to think deeply about the ethics and effects of pornography.

Taking a Critical Look At Pornography

1. How does pornography affect our respect for the dignity of other people?
2. Who are pornography's victims? How are women affected? Children? In what way are child pornography and violent pornography offshoots of pornography in general?
3. How does pornography negatively affect our self-respect?
4. How does it negatively affect our sexual attitudes and behavior?
5. For which gender is pornography more of an issue? Explain.
6. Why is pornography such big business?
7. What should parents do about pornography, especially Internet sites? If you were a parent, what rules would you establish in your home?
8. What could you say to someone who shows you pornography, or downloads it in your presence, if you wanted to convey that you don't think it's cool? What do you think is your moral responsibility in a situation like this? Is thinking, "It's none of my business" an ethically adequate response?
9. What are some of the possible long-term consequences of viewing pornography? In what way might pornography be "progressive"—the use of one form leading to the use of other forms?

Endnotes

[1] B. Schneider & D. Stevenson, *The ambitious generation: America's teenagers, motivated but directionless.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[2] R. Ritchhart, *Intellectual character.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

[3] R. Sternberg, *Successful intelligence: How practical and creative intelligence determine success in life.* (New York: Penguin, 1997).

[4] Sternberg.

[5] P.E. Barton, *Parsing the achievement gap.* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 2003).

[6] National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, *Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn.* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2004).

[7] National Research Council, **www.nap.edu**

[8] S. Dillon, "Schools seek right balance as students join war debate," *The New York Times* (March 7, 2003).

[9] D.W. Johnson & R.T. Johnson, "Critical thinking through structured controversy," *Educational Leadership* (May, 1988).

[10] Johnson & Johnson.

[11] Report of the Federal Trade Commission, Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children **http://www.ftc.gov/reports/violence/vioreport.pdf** (Sept. 2000).

[12] K.S. Hymowitz, "Parenting: The lost art," *American Educator* (Spring, 2001).

[13] D. Aronson, "Changing channels," *Teaching Tolerance* (Fall, 1994), 29.

[14] Kaiser Family Foundation Report, Media literacy, **www.kff.org**, (Fall, 2003).

[15] P. Aufderheide, National leadership conference on media literacy. Aspen Institute (1993).

[16] Kaiser Family Foundation Report.

[17] Quoted in Aronson, 31.

[18] See, for example, E. Thoman, "Skills and strategies for media education," Center for Media Literacy, **www.medialit.org**, (July 23, 2003).

[19] Kaiser Family Foundation Report.

[20] Center for Media Literacy.

[21] S. Covey, *The 7 habits of highly effective teens.* (New York: Fireside, 1998).

[22] Covey, 239.

Outcome 2:
Diligent and Capable Performer

A Diligent and capable performer . . .

- Strives for excellence; gives best effort
- Demonstrates initiative and self-discipline
- Knows standards of quality and creates high-quality products; takes pride in work
- Sets personal goals and assesses progress
- Perseveres in the face of difficulty.

In their book *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement,* R.J. Marzano and colleagues report this finding: Students who believe that achievement is something that they earn, and not primarily the result of innate abilities, do best in school.[1]

Students who believe that achievement is something they earn do best in school.

Similarly, research on talent development in teens (discussed on **pages 24-25**) finds that adolescents who are more successful than equally gifted peers in developing their natural talent to a high level have a stronger "achievement and endurance orientation" and better goal-setting skills and work habits.[2]

Findings like these confirm everyday observation: In school and in life, achievement is, to a large extent, a function of character. Our innate ability is clearly a factor, but our performance character—qualities such as effort, initiative, positive attitude, and perseverance—determines what we do with our natural ability. How can we help all students develop these character strengths, so that they strive for excellence and give their best effort—the distinguishing mark of a diligent and capable performer?

Giving our best effort, of course, doesn't mean that we can be our best, in an absolute sense, all of the time. Performance will inevitably vary as a function of internal and external variables (how many competing demands we're facing, how much support and challenge we experience from our environment, how tired we are, and so on). But performance character means, "Even if at this time and in this situation, I'm only operating at 50% of my capacity, I'm going to give 100% of that."

Our efforts are greatly affected by our ambitions. Ambitions are goals that provide direction and therefore motivate best effort. In their book *The Ambitious Generation,* Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson write:

> Ambitions are an important part of the lives of adolescents . . . . They can use their ambitions like a compass to help chart a life course and to provide direction for spending their time and energy. Ambitions can increase the chances that adolescents will take schoolwork seriously, gain admission to the college of their choice, and view their success as the product of hard work. Ambitions developed during adolescence have lifelong significance.[3]

Christopher Unger, a researcher at Brown University's Educational Alliance, argues that in order to foster ambition, high schools must help young people see that what they learn in school will contribute to their subsequent success and happiness in life.[4] As one example of a school that helps teens see that connection, Unger cites a career magnet high school with academies in law and public service, health, and trades such as horticulture, electronics, and construction. Students in this school said they liked the school programs because even in 9th and 10th-grades, they could "see where they are going" and that school was providing them with the training to get there. (See also **Futures for Kids**, page 8.)

Furthermore, if we wish to motivate students to care about their work and to become diligent and capable performers, we should provide opportunities for them to experience what it feels like to achieve excellence. Here we return to Ron Berger's observation in *An Ethic of Excellence:* "After students have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less."[5] A boy on our Student Leaders Panel echoed that sentiment:

> **The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. Successful people don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.**
>
> —E.M. Gray

Schools should place greater emphasis on challenging students with rigorous curricula. Once students see the excellence they can achieve, they will keep going back for more.

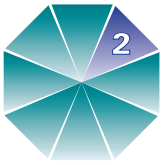
> *"Once students see the excellence they can achieve, they will keep going back for more."*

We now examine seven promising practices, drawn from high school classrooms and schools, for developing diligent and capable performers.

7 Promising Practices for Developing a Diligent and Capable Performer

1. Involve students in learning experiences that challenge them to meet real-world standards.
2. Use a pedagogy that requires all students to achieve a specified level of mastery.
3. Teach study skills and hold students accountable for using them.
4. Use a teaching methodology and grading system that help students understand—and strive for—quality work.
5. Use rubrics to help students self-assess, set performance goals, and monitor their progress.
6. Use co-curricular activities to develop students' individual talents and the collective pursuit of excellence.
7. Develop perseverance through a high-challenge rite of passage.

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer



Promising Practice 1:

Involve students in learning experiences that challenge them to meet real-world standards.

In *Real Learning, Real Work,* Adria Steinberg notes that in 1995 the term "school-to-work" entered the national vocabulary with the passage of the School to Work Opportunities Act.[7] The high school reforms that flowed from that—see, for example, the 2000 report *Reinventing High School*[8]—were intended to make school more meaningful and career-oriented for all students in two ways.

First, through internships and apprenticeships, schools provided students with work placements—in hospitals, factories, businesses, and so on—where they could "try on" different work identities while learning concepts and skills that were useful, whether they pursued college or immediate employment after high school.

Second, there was an effort to make schoolwork more like real work—by designing work-like problems and projects for the classroom that challenged students to meet real-world standards. For thousands of students who had complained of being "bored" at school and just "going through the motions," school-to-work reforms brought learning to life. Said one boy who used to "just wait for the bell to ring" until he began a career internship in facilities management:

During freshman and sophomore year, I didn't pay attention in class because I really did not care. I care now because this is something I really want to do. When you are interested in the work you are doing, you want to do a good job.[9]

> *"When you are interested in the work, you want to do a good job."*

An Automotive Services Technology Class

In one high school we visited, we observed a senior-level class, "Automotive Services Technology 2" that was an example of bringing real-world work and standards into the classroom.

The garage-classroom was full of cars and students busily working on or under them. Students are there for half a day, twice a week. A student foreman—a responsibility that rotates weekly—runs the shop; the teacher circulates, observes, and offers occasional suggestions.

Sean, foreman for the day we were there, explained how the course works:

Students apply to this program through their home schools. Mr. L. interviewed each of us. Selection is based partly on GPA but also on attitude. He's looking for kids who are serious about what they do.

We work on both student and faculty vehicles. We get a good variety of vehicles—jeeps, trucks, BMWs. As shop foreman for the week, I'm responsible for giving students the data on their car and what needs to be done. I also order parts and get them supplies they need.

Sean said they spend the first 6 to 8 weeks of the course on electrical circuit boards. "Cars today are as much electrical as mechanical. We go to the computer for instructions on whatever we need to do—how to remove a front-end axle, for example."

He said that students have book work and take 2-3 tests a week. "But," he added, "the real accountability comes from knowing that somebody's going to drive this car out of here. If you do a brake job, for example, there's no A, B, or C grade—the job has to be done right. Mr. L says, 'You have the power to fix a car. You also have the power to kill somebody.'"

Mr. L. also talks to his students about the importance of being a lifelong learner. Sean commented:

Mr. L emphasizes that in this line of work, you have to keep studying. He says you have to keep reading and learning in order to stay at the top of your field, because this is an industry that changes every three years. Mr. L. also takes us to community colleges and opens our eyes to a lot of opportunities. We found out that we can enter competitions sponsored by vocational tech programs and win college scholarships.

"Mr. L. says, 'You have the power to fix a car—or kill somebody.'"

Because of students' training in this course, the teacher can also find them after-school and summer jobs at area car dealerships. "Normally," Sean said, "you have to be 18 to work at a dealership. But the best thing is that when we graduate and go to get a job, we've already had two years of training."

Later, we spoke with Mr. L. He said:

I have 26 years in the industry. I tell them I want to give them the benefit of what I've learned. I give them clear performance criteria for a quality job. Many of these kids were labeled in middle school as "slow." I tell them, "You're only as dumb as you let people make you."

Later the principal told us, "A lot of these kids get excellent jobs straight out of high school. Last year one of our graduates got a job working for a local Mercedes-BMW dealer making $85,000 a year."

A Science Research Course

In the same school we observed another example of students who were deeply engaged by the opportunity to do real-world work to real-world standards. The context: a science research class, conducted in an L-shaped lab big enough to hold 20-plus students working on a wide range of research projects involving a great variety of equipment and technology.

Students have written more than $300,000 in research grants.

The instructor began the class with a 10-minute slide presentation on the experiments and measurement methods of the Wright brothers. Then students busily picked up where they had left off on their individual or team projects.

A junior girl was building a device that could be used to harness tidal currents to supply electrical power to homes—"much safer and environment-friendly," she explained, "than nuclear power." Another girl, with a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, was growing and studying plant species endangered in the state of Maryland.

A group of students had recently completed a water quality study project in which they used eleven standards to test six area water systems and then, through a United Nations project, compared their data with those of students from several other countries.

A team of students were working on a "supercavitation and underwater rocketry" project. Several others were preparing a PowerPoint presentation for their county government, on their study—carried out in collaboration with the University of Maryland—of a blight that was killing the state's chestnut trees.

Two girls were working together to test the effects of various antibiotics on different kinds of bacteria. Two boys explained their study of the effects of feeding creatine—an over-the-counter steroid—to fish. "It made them grow twice as fast. They also turned nasty and aggressive and began eating other fish." They said that two of the school's star football players who had been taking creatine stopped after they saw the results of this experiment.

"Over the 15 years of the program, we've gotten more than $300,000 in grants," the instructor later told us. "Students have written all of them. Many of them get jobs in local science labs while they're still in high school and then pursue careers in science. Later, quite a number of them have made donations to our science research course and have thereby enabled us to purchase the state-of-the-art equipment we need to conduct certain kinds of research."

He concluded:

As you can see, these kids are doing original research, not cookbook science. We're teaching process here—problem-posing, problem-solving, cause-and-effect thinking, teamwork. You really get to see the creative thinking of the students. We don't know the answers when we begin—they're not in the book. When they've finished a project, many say it was the most difficult thing they ever did. Often they write a report that teaches me.

"These kids are doing original research, not cookbook science."

One could not observe such dynamic and productive classes as this science course and the automotive technology course without thinking, "Shouldn't all students have the opportunity to experience the rewards of this kind of learning and the preparation it provides for work beyond school?"

To scale up school-to-work reforms, however, can be difficult—given the planning, faculty commitment, community partnerships, and entrepreneurship required, and also given the counter-pressures, such as concerns about covering required academic content, the pressures of state and national testing, and the like. But one thing seems clear: Making connections between school and real-world work has great motivational power for students—and contributes significantly to their development as diligent and capable performers.

In my high school, students are taught to be diligent and learn subject matter very well. Every day, I know exactly what I have to do, my homework is set out for me, and I am told how I should do things. But in life, not everything is laid out for you—creativity and adaptability are important parts of character. I wish we were given more opportunities in school to create, overcome obstacles, and figure things out for ourselves rather than having so much of it spoon-fed.

—A High School Boy

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer

Promising Practice 2:

Use a pedagogy that requires all students to achieve a specified level of mastery.

John Cheever, one of the preeminent writers of our time, once said, "I'm not a great writer, but I'm a great rewriter."

We visited a small public high school (235 students)—recipient of several national awards—that embodies Cheever's ethic of revision in the quest for quality. In all subject areas, the faculty of this school employ mastery learning. A core principle of this method was first set forth by John Carroll in 1963.[10] Carroll argued that nearly all learners have the potential to learn any material but take different amounts of time to do so.

In 1968, Benjamin Bloom developed Carroll's ideas into the approach that became known as mastery learning.[11] This theory of learning represented a radical shift in teachers' responsibility. With mastery learning, it became the challenge of teachers to provide enough time and adequate instructional strategies so that all students could achieve a given level of learning.

Five research reviews substantiate the positive effects of mastery learning.

The Educational Resources Information Center database lists nearly 2,000 articles on mastery learning. Five of the six major research reviews of this approach substantiate its positive effects on student achievement.[12]

At the mastery learning high school we observed, a teacher articulated its benefits for the development of performance character: "Our whole program is about perseverance. In the beginning, kids don't realize that they will have to redo an assignment—two or three or four times—until they get it right. They learn to persevere."

Another teacher elaborated on this theme:

We explain to students, "With mastery learning, we push you out of your comfort zone. At another school, if you fail the test or the paper, that's it. Here we say, 'That's okay; you can try again.'"

There is also academic freedom for faculty to define what constitutes quality work in their class. Explained one teacher: "In each class, students have to revise their paper

or retake the test until they meet that teacher's standard. At the same time, there's a lot of cross-staff sharing of student work and collaborative discussion of what constitutes quality. Students know that."

With some students, teachers said, especially at the start, mastery learning can become a battle of wills. One instructor commented:

When that happens, we may send a student to another teacher for feedback. That way, they hear more than one person saying, "It's not good enough yet—here's a way you could make it better." If they choose not to go to another teacher for feedback, they can go to another student. Students do a lot of work in groups, so they are very comfortable seeking critique from their peers.

Another teacher said:

We're very flexible in how we work with kids. In my junior history class, all students had to do a two-minute speech. A boy with Tourette Syndrome became very anxious; his tics were getting worse and worse. So I said to him, "You can do this with me alone." By his senior year, however, he was doing a 15-minute speech to the class with no problems.

A student at this school offered his view of mastery learning:

The benefit of mastery learning is that you have to know your work forwards and backwards. If your data analysis on a project isn't good, you'll get it back. And if you get lower than a B in a class, you don't get credit for that class—you have to retake it the following year.

"They come to set an internal bar for the quality of their work."

Through the process of mastery learning, faculty believe, students really get to see what a quality paper or product looks like when it's finished. In the words of one teacher:

Over the four years, students come to set an internal bar for the quality of their work. Our goal is for them to internalize the revision process, so we gradually wean them. They know that in senior year, they have only one chance to revise a paper or retake a test. They begin to turn in quality the first time. They know that in college they won't get a second chance.

> Character is what you do on the third and fourth tries.
>
> —James Michener

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer

Promising Practice 3: *Teach study skills and hold students accountable for using them.*

In school, a large part of performance character is acquiring and practicing the skills needed to be a good student. Research finds that students who improve their study skills—such as being prepared for class, time management, note-taking, and test preparation—show significant improvement in their learning.[13]

Many high school teachers express particular frustration with students' being unprepared for class. Said one teacher: "More and more of our students come to class without the necessary materials. It's worst with freshmen, but it's become a problem all the way up the grades."

Students who improve in their study skills improve in their learning.

Mr. B., a veteran 9th-grade World Civilization teacher, told us: "My single greatest problem was students not being prepared for class. I was constantly on their case: 'Where's your text? Where's your notebook? What have you got to write with?' By the time the bell rang, I was in a lousy mood. I was thinking of getting out of teaching."

Halfway through one year, he decided to attack the problem systematically. His strategy was to provide an incentive that would get students to develop the habit of being prepared. At the start of the third quarter, he explained that there would be just two rules for the rest of the year:

Be respectful to everyone—treating them as you would like to be treated.

Be prepared to work when the bell rings: at your desk with text, planner, notebook, homework (if due), and a pen or pencil.

He explained that he would be doing a "preparation check" at the start of class:

I'll go up and down the rows, and if you've got your text, planner, notebook, homework, and a pen or pencil, you'll get an A for preparation that day. If you're missing even one of these, you'll get an F for preparation. Your preparation grade will be 25% of your participation grade, which, as you know, is 25% of your total grade.

He then explained that there would be a two-day training period:

For the first two days, the preparation grade won't count. For example, if Bob is in his seat and ready to go with all five things—text, planner, notebook, homework, and pen or pencil—I'll say to him, "Bob, you would have gotten an A for preparation today." But if he's missing any of these, I'll say, "Bob, because you don't have your such-and-such, you would have gotten an F for preparation."

He commented:

This worked better than I hoped. Students who had a reputation for being chronically unprepared quickly learned that they could earn an easy A for preparation if they got their act together. This system didn't eliminate all problems, of course, but it reduced them significantly.

> *"Students who had been chronically unprepared got their act together."*

Another freshman history teacher said he "used to have a lot of problems with students not being prepared for class." At the start of the new school year, he posted a sign in his room:

> Excellence is not an act but a habit.
>
> —Aristotle

He explained:

My materials check now begins every class. For the first two marking periods, they get 0-4 points, depending on how many of four items they have ready: text, planner, class binder, and writing tool. Their preparation grade makes up 10% of their total grade in the fall term, 5% in the winter, and 0% in the spring.

In the spring term, points come off their homework if they're not prepared. I tell them they've got two terms to establish good habits before I penalize them for not demonstrating those habits. This has worked well for me.

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer

Promising Practice 4:

Use a teaching methodology and grading system that help students understand—and strive for—quality work.

A principal in an urban school we visited described a challenge common to urban schools:

This is an orderly place—we don't have guns and knives and craziness—but we struggle when it comes to academics. Even our best kids are doing well if they can get a combined 800 on their SATs. We received an award for improvement on our state test scores, whereas a school in another district getting the same scores was put in receivership. No matter how hard our kids work, they're at a disadvantage because of where they are when they come to us.

We asked a focus group of students from this struggling urban school for their thoughts on what limits students' learning and achievement. One girl said: "A teacher has to check on individual students to make sure they are getting it. If students don't understand, they just give up. In a lot of classes, this happens most of the time."

Other students agreed. A boy said, "If five or so students in the class appear to understand, some teachers will move on, but that doesn't work for the rest of us. If the teacher goes too fast, we just stop trying."

An English Teacher Raises the Bar

We interviewed an English teacher in this school who is in her third year of teaching. On her own, she was experimenting with what appeared to be a breakthrough way to monitor individual students' work to make sure they were "getting it"—and to inspire them to strive for a standard of excellence that would compare favorably with quality work in demanding high schools.

How do you see the challenge you face?

The fact is that our students are academically behind students in other districts. They are reading books in 10th-grade that students in other public schools are reading in 7th or 8th-grade. In some classes here, they have gotten used to thinking, "Effort equals A." I want to teach them that "Effort plus quality output equals A," that there is a standard of excellence that I expect from their work.

Could you describe your approach to getting students to do quality work?

I use Reader's Workshop, which is now a district-wide initiative. The philosophy of Reader's Workshop is that there are certain skills that a good reader needs—making intelligent inferences, making connections between the text and other experiences, being able to ask questions on various levels, and so on.

There is a giant poster on the wall that says our ultimate purpose in reading any work is to determine its purpose or

relevance: How does it help us better understand ourselves, our world, or the historical period in which it was written?

How long are your class periods?

Eighty-five minutes. Going to block scheduling this year has made it much more feasible to do Reader's Workshop.

I divide the class into three parts. For the first 15-20 minutes, I teach a mini-lesson, say, on inferential thinking. We define inference and then practice making inferences—by watching a film clip, for example, and asking, "What can you infer about the characters?" We might look at a list of statements about a poem or comic strip and ask, "Which of these statements are facts, and which are inferences?"

For the second part of the class—50 minutes or so—there is independent reading and guided practice on the thinking skill we're focusing on. If the skill is inferential thinking, they would write in their notebooks inferences about the piece they are reading, provide a quote from the text to support each inference, and then explain the quotation in their own voice.

During this "workshop time," I conference with individual students. With Reading Workshop, the teacher keeps a log to make sure that every student gets one-on-one time with the teacher at some point during the week.

> *"I want them to understand that effort plus quality output equals A."*

And the third part of the class?

The last part—about 5 to 10 percent of the total period—is review. Typically, I'll give feedback on what I saw during guided practice. "In a number of notebooks, I saw statements that were facts rather than inferences. Who can tell me whether or not this statement is an inference? Why or why not?"

How do you evaluate students' notebooks?

That's crucial. In their notebooks, they're making text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. I needed to create a precise language that would inspire quality work by saying, "This is how much more is possible, and this is how much more I would like to expect from you."

Therefore I give them a grade for each of three criteria—thoroughness, variety, and thoughtfulness—and explain the rubric for each. On every set of notebook entries about a particular reading, they get three grades—one for each of my three criteria. I made these little tickets, and I write each grade on a ticket and staple it to a page in their notebook.

Along with the tickets, there is a note from me identifying a focus area for improvement. It might say, "You made some interesting inferences, but you didn't support them with quotes from the text. You need to work on providing more evidence." Or, "You posed some interesting questions, but you didn't answer them. Can you try to answer a small percentage of your questions the next time?"

> *"I needed to create a precise language that would say, 'This is how much more is possible for you.'"*

How do you calculate the grades?

In both my honors class and regular classes, I decided to start them with a baseline grade of 35, which is, of course, an F. I explain from the beginning that although I'll record all their grades in my book, I won't average them to get a final grade. Rather, they will be graded on progress over time—on where they end up. Still, a lot of kids are shocked when they see their first 35. I get a few calls from parents.

However, the tickets and the specific feedback I give to them say, "This is how much more you can do." Basically, it creates an entirely new standard.

They respond to the feedback and try harder, and one day a kid goes, "Wow, I got a 75—last week I got a 50, and now I got a 75!" And I say, "Did you ever think you'd be *excited* about a 75?" And they think, "Well, now I want to go for higher!" And then one day a girl gets the first 90, and I announce to the class that someone has broken the 90 barrier. I have kids who tell me, "I actually *like* doing this."

They begin to see what quality looks like. They become excited about doing quality work. They can look back at their previous notebook entries and see the difference. They can say, "*This* is better because . . . "

I'm finding that a grading process that gives very specific feedback helps students achieve quality. They can say, "Hey, I'm *thoughtful*—I ask really good questions—but I need to be more *thorough* by trying to answer some of them."

Do you ever have students who improve but then slack off instead of being committed to continued growth?

Yes, that happens. Usually it has to do with things going on outside the classroom—they did poorly in another class, or it didn't look as if they were going to play basketball so they just said "Forget about school." Or something is going

on at home. If I think something serious is happening that's interfering with their work, I'll allow them to go back and redo an entry.

Do you ever use models of excellence?

If a student has done something that's really excellent, I'll put their work up on the overhead, and we'll work through the rubrics together for that. Or we might look at three different pieces—from students in their class or from previous years. We talk a lot about voice—I want them to see that quality writing has a distinctive voice.

> There is no easy way to learn difficult things.
>
> —Joseph de Maistre

Do all students take to this system right away?

Not all. I had a student last year who failed my class the first term. She did very little work and just wasn't invested in the workshop. But by the end of the year she had an A. And this year she came back to me when she had to write a persuasive essay for her English class, and said, "I thought it would be a good idea to talk about what my opponents might think in response to my arguments and wondered where I should bring that in." I thought that was sophisticated thinking and a measure of how much she had grown as a thinker and writer.

The essence of this whole approach is to constantly push students to go to higher levels—to think things through more carefully, to dig deeper into the text, to consider something from yet another point of view. They begin to take real ownership of their notebooks. We're creating a culture of thinking.

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer

Promising Practice 5:

Use rubrics to help students self-assess, set performance goals, and monitor their progress.

Rubrics help students self-assess and set goals for improvement.

A well-designed rubric can be an effective tool for helping students become diligent and capable performers. Rubrics help students assess their work habits and other aspects of their performance character, set goals for improvement, and then assess their progress in meeting those goals.

An Effort and Achievement Rubric

In *Classroom Instruction that Works,* Marzano and colleagues present an "effort and achievement rubric" that has helped students see the relationship between their effort and their achievement. With this rubric, students rate themselves on both effort and achievement for a particular task, using a 4-point scale where 4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = needs improvement, and 1 = unacceptable.[14]

Effort Rubric

1. I put very little effort into the task.
2. I put some effort into the task but stopped working when difficulties arose.
3. I worked hard on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to work on the task even when difficulties arose and a solution was not immediately apparent.
4. I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to work on the task even when difficulties arose and a solution was not immediately apparent. I viewed difficulties as opportunities to strengthen my understanding.

Achievement Rubric

1. I did not meet the objectives of the task or lesson.
2. I met a few of the objectives of the task or lesson, but I did not meet others.
3. I met the objectives of the task or lesson.
4. I exceeded the objectives of the task or lesson.

Levels of Academic Functioning

Kathy Beland's *Character Education: Providing a Meaningful Academic Curriculum* (Book VI of the *Eleven Principles Sourcebook)* describes a rubric for assessing levels of academic functioning (see box on page 111) that was developed by a high school receiving a National School of Character award.[15] Using a 5-point Leader to Detractor Scale, students at this school can locate their level of functioning for each of the rubric's five performance areas—and then set goals for improvement.

When we visited this school, we noted that this rubric had become part of the everyday discourse that defined the school's culture. Faculty will say to students, "Are you being a 5, or are you being a 1?" If you ask students, "What does character mean to you?", they are likely to answer, "Being a 5 and not a 1." Parents said that they find their students' report card ratings on the rubric more meaningful than their academic grades.

Teachers say to students, "Are you being a 5, or are you being a 1?"

Contract for Increasing Commitment

The most difficult students to motivate are those who simply "don't care." Alan Mendler's book, *Motivating Students Who Don't Care,* describes a Contract for Increasing Commitment[16] (see box), an instructional strategy that can be used in combination with a rubric to help students set goals and work toward self-improvement.

The logic of a Contract for Increasing Commitment is this: Students might not love a particular subject or care about the grade they get in it. However, they might commit to work harder if they give their word to do so to a teacher, coach, parent, and/or friend who clearly cares about them and whom they care about in return.

The Contract for Increasing Commitment integrates two key strategies for developing performance character that were discussed in Chapter 2: (1) Self-Study, because through the Contract, students are reflecting on personal habits and setting personal goals; and (2) A Community That Supports and Challenges, because students are receiving additional help and making a commitment to someone else to give their best effort.

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer

Promising Practice 6:

Use co-curricular activities to develop students' individual talents and the collective pursuit of excellence.

Adults often look back on a high school co-curricular activity—playing on the football team, being in the class play, singing in the choir—as having had greater impact on their character development and sense of who they are than their academic work. These co-curricular activities provide connection to a group, a vehicle for developing one's distinctive talents, and opportunities for leadership.

Analyzing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), researcher Ann Power finds educational attainment benefits from co-curricular participation for students from all socio-economic strata, including those from low-income families. Students participating in co-curricular activities experience support from significant adults such as teachers, coaches, advisors, and counselors. These mentors serve as advocates for students and facilitators of their education beyond high school.

In addition, students in co-curricular activities experience a strong social network of peers who value education beyond high school and are preparing themselves for such a reality. As a result, they are more likely than students who don't participate in co-curricular activities, to be thinking about education beyond high school and taking the necessary steps to be admitted to college or vocational training programs. Power's research also identified a positive relationship between co-curricular participation and school retention among 12th-grade students.[17]

In our site visits, we came across a number of co-curricular programs that appeared to make an important contribution to students' character development—including their growth as diligent and capable performers.

Contract for Increasing Commitment

1. What can you do to be more successful at school?
2. What is your plan for making more of an effort to be more successful?
3. What obstacles or difficulties might keep you from making your plan a success?
4. What are some ways you can avoid these obstacles or overcome them if they occur?
5. How can I, or other people at this school, help you to be successful with your plan?
6. What are some fair consequences if you don't follow through with your commitment?
7. What are some appropriate ways we can celebrate the fulfillment of your commitment?

_____ _____

student signature *other signature(s)*

Adapted from A. Mendler, *Motivating Students Who Don't Care.*

Leader to Detractor Scale for Levels of Academic Functioning (Adapted)

	Attendance, Preparedness & Attitude	Healthy Habits of Learning	Demonstration of Learning	Intellectual Work Ethic	Role in Group Work
Leader (5): *Demonstrates personal commitment and mastery, and encourages others by word and deed to do the same.*	Arrives on time with materials; functions with intensity and stamina; advances the goals of the class through personal contributions and by assisting others in these areas.	Demonstrates exemplary organization, time management, and excellent note-taking; demonstrates strong word- processing, reading and writing skills; actively assists others in these areas.	Demonstrates mastery of course requirements at highest level including ease and flexibility of using expected learner outcomes; assists others in these areas.	Demonstrates strong persistence, dedication, curiosity, and enthusiasm for individual academic pursuits, while encouraging the development of these qualities in others.	Demonstrates teamwork, initiative, and willingness to work with others; demonstrates the ability to organize and lead group toward stated goals, but also does his/her part in the actual group tasks; encourages teamwork and leadership in others.
Participant (3): *Carries out responsibilities in an adequate way, but does not take on a leadership role.*	Arrives on time with materials; functions adequately—not leading, but not detracting.	Demonstrates adequate organization and time management, note-taking, word- processing, reading and writing skills—not leading others, but not detracting either.	Demonstrates adequate mastery of course requirements, and some facility and flexibility in using expected learner outcomes—not leading others, but not detracting either.	Demonstrates adequate (i.e., lacking intensity and consistency) persistence, dedication, curiosity, and enthusiasm for individual academic pursuits—not leading others, but not detracting either.	Demonstrates adequate teamwork, and willingness to work with others; rarely, if ever, demonstrates the ability to organize and lead group toward stated goals, assumes adequate responsibility for group tasks—not leading others, but not detracting either.
Detractor (1): *Doesn't meet the standards personally, and detracts from others meeting the standards.*	Does not arrive on time with materials; is not personally functioning at an adequate level, *and* detracts from the class's ability to function adequately.	Does not demonstrate organization and time management; poor-to-incompetent note-taking, word-processing, reading and writing skills—detracts from the class's ability to function adequately.	Demonstrates little or no mastery of course requirements and no facility or flexibility in using expected learner outcomes—detracts from the class's ability to function adequately.	Demonstrates little if any persistence, dedication, curiosity, or enthusiasm for individual academic pursuits—detracts from the class's ability to function adequately.	Demonstrates poor teamwork and an inability to work with others; demonstrates an inability to organize and lead group toward stated goals, assumes no responsibility for group tasks, and detracts from the class's ability to function adequately.

**Note: An individual who is progressing toward a higher rating (e.g., a 3 or a 5), but who has not fully arrived (i.e., demonstrates some but not all of the criteria, or demonstrates criteria inconsistently) can be identified as a 2 or a 4.*

An Award-Winning Forensics Program

In a multi-ethnic, working-class, west coast high school, we observed a forensics program that had, during its 15 years, won four national championships in addition to many state championships. More than 270 students participate in the program. Whereas schoolwide, fewer than 40% of students go to four-year colleges and universities, the figure for forensics students, according to their coach, is 99%. Some of them have won scholarships to Harvard, Yale, and Stanford.

Co-curricular participation has academic benefits for students from all socio-economic levels.

This co-curricular program provides students with an opportunity to synthesize academic skills and performance character attributes such as hard work, diligence, perseverance, and self-discipline. Talking with the forensics students and their coach, one felt a deep sense of purpose and passion, commitment and dedication. The coach said:

Every kid wants to be something. They want to be able to prove to someone that they are successful. It's a matter of getting them to believe in themselves. Once you do that, they can expand their potential in unbelievable ways. There is not much that can hold them back.

Public speaking is the number one fear in the world. Our kids learn to speak before any group. They develop a self-confidence that you don't often see. They recently went before the School Board here and blew people away by how eloquently they spoke about the forensics program. In every classroom they're part of, they add quality—a level of critical thinking that raises the bar for all students.

According to the National Forensics League (www.nflonline.org), forensics, since its inception in 1925, has sought to "encourage and motivate high school students to participate in and become proficient in the forensic arts: debate, public speaking, and interpretation."[18] Advocates of forensics believe that it offers students an opportunity to: (1) develop skills in research, critical thinking, organization, persuasion, and oral communication; (2) gain useful career preparation in law, education, politics, broadcasting, religion, public affairs, business, and other professions requiring critical thinking and communication skills; (3) develop personal and social values through confrontation with the judgments of others; (4) learn respect for dissenting opinions and acquire knowledge and skills crucial to effective participation in a democratic society; and (5) develop teamwork and the ability to compete responsibly and effectively in an intellectual environment.[19]

One student in the program we observed said he was the first of his 20 cousins to graduate from high school. He was also the recipient of a full scholarship to a four-year college. He described the impact of forensics on his peer-group culture and his educational aspirations:

My family doesn't really push for education. I mean, I guess they're more pragmatic—go into the Army or just get a job right out of high school. But in forensics, it's the norm to go to college. Everyone does. If you're not getting good grades and succeeding in life, then you're really not cool; you're not fitting in.

99% of the forensics students go to 4-year colleges.

We asked the coach how he got his students to perform at such a high level of excellence. He said:

First, I try to help them feel at ease. After a competition, I begin by asking them, "What's your self-critique? What do you feel good about? What could you have done better?" Then I offer my critique. Then we make a plan for working on the flaws: "What did the judges say? How are you going to work on that?" Then they practice. Getting better is all about repetition.

An assistant coach spoke to us about the ways the program contributes to moral character as well as performance character:

If you're ever caught fabricating any of your evidence, you're off the team. We are absolutely committed to integrity. We think this program helps kids develop more than just a skill set; it helps them become good citizens—people who can understand both sides of an issue, who care about what's happening around them.

"This is a program that changes kids' lives."

One reason why these kids are so committed to the program is they know how much we care about them. We get a lot of kids who don't have fathers. Coach L. is a father to them. They work amazingly hard. This is a program that changes kids' lives.

Benefits of Participation in Co-Curricular Activities

Diverse studies suggest that co-curricular activities contribute more to adult success than do traditional academic measures. In one study, Harvard researchers tracked the development of 392 inner-city boys from age 14 to 47. They found that those who participated in clubs, sports, or other co-curricular activities, compared to non-participants, were mentally healthier as adults, had closer and warmer adult relationships, enjoyed their marriages and children more, had been employed more frequently, and had higher incomes.[20]

Another study of thousands of high school students found that those who participated in co-curricular activities, compared to non-participants, got higher grades, felt better about school, had higher morale, drank less alcohol and used drugs less often, and acted more ethically.[21]

An Award-Winning Music Program

Not far from the school with the outstanding forensics program, we interviewed the director of an award-winning music program. Its students take music classes during the school day and also participate in after-school choir and compete in various events. The program's director communicated a love of his craft and a love of his students as he described what he sees as the program's benefits:

Choir is like a community—a microcosm of what we would like society to become. It's a group of people from all different races and backgrounds working together to create something beautiful. We travel, we go to festivals, we do a tour in the spring. In the process, we get to know each other very well. There are values you learn when you work together in this way: discipline, teamwork, self-respect, what beauty is, what art is.

How is the program structured?

Our school schedule uses 90-minute blocks. Block scheduling has been great for the music program because it increased our rehearsal time by 50%. My first block is women's chamber ensemble. This is open by invitation and is primarily an intermediate level class.

The second block is men's choir, which is open to all men regardless of their musical background. Block three is women's choir, which is where freshmen typically begin. Fourth block is chamber singers, my advanced class.

The different blocks provide a place for every level of performer. But in the after-school concert choir—in which everyone participates—the levels are mixed. This has two benefits. First, it unifies the program because we are all singing the same music. In this way we're like a family: at least once a day we have a meal together.

> *"In choir you learn teamwork, discipline, what art is."*

A second benefit of coming together in this way is that the younger, less experienced singers are exposed to the more advanced ones. Because we mix the levels in concert choir, the younger kids can learn from the more advanced singers in the program. I can say to them, "Sopranos, I need you to make your voices more like so and so."

What opportunities do your students have to perform publicly?

In the spring we have a solo and ensemble festival that is available to the students. This is where they get their training in how to stand in front of a group and perform a beautiful piece of music. It's a little bit frightening for students because they are singing for a judge who rates them "superior," "excellent," or "good" and then gives comments. The judges always begin with something positive before they offer constructive criticism. After their critique, the judges actually work with the group to help them improve. So it's like a clinic. Because of this, the kids come away with a really good feeling about themselves.

At the end of every school year, we have a pops concert that all the students want to sing in. I use this as the motivator for festival participation. I tell them that in order to sing in the pops concert they must do the solo and ensemble festival. Most do participate.

How do you help your students set personal and group goals that motivate them to strive for excellence?

I want the freshmen, as soon as they come into the program, to understand that the future of the program is really important. So I have them write goals on two pieces of paper and put them into two envelopes. On the first paper,

> **What we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence.**
>
> —Samuel Johnson

they write what they want our choir to look like when they are a graduating senior. "What do you hope we'll accomplish by the time you leave?"

Then they seal that envelope and don't open it until the end of their senior year. In the second envelope, they put their personal goals for their freshman year. "What do *you* hope to accomplish?" They look at those goals at the end of their freshman year. For example, we have a state choral competition—a lot of kids will say that they want to win Golden State. That is a real motivation for them.

> *"We ask freshman to set one goal for the choir and one for themselves."*

How do you view the role of competition?

I believe competition can be healthy. We set it up in such a way that no one feels they have to prove something. All the choirs that compete are so good—they're all there because they are into the music. It really is a wonderful thing.

In the competitions we go to, all the groups are very supportive of each other. I think a lot of that is because we see each other every year. And if you win, you can't compete the next year, but you host the event in your hometown—which is a great honor. Over the years the competition has been held in beautiful concert halls and public venues where upwards of 3,000 people attend—which solidifies the power of the experience for the kids.

How do you help kids keep competition in perspective?

I tell them that it's an honor just to be invited. If you perform the music well, you bring honor to it regardless of whether you win. I say, "Sure they're going to rate you, but during the day when everybody is listening to you, not that many people are thinking about the points."

I tell them to take the opportunity to get to know the other students and the other choirs. Through the exposure to other amazing performers and performances, our kids are challenged to better understand excellence.

At the end of the evening, all the choirs sing a required piece together. It is just phenomenal—a thousand kids across a huge auditorium joined together singing.

When students are already achieving at high levels, how do you keep them continuously striving to improve?

Models of excellence. For example, I try to find other festivals where I know some group is going to be better than us. This way our students always have something to aspire to, a standard by which to make themselves better.

Recently, the choral leaders at an area college presented their fall concert. I bought thirty tickets and gave them to students in our program that I thought would be interested. Later, in class, I asked for their feedback on the concert: "What did these other performers do that we should incorporate into our performance?"

> *"I ask, 'What did these other performers do that we should incorporate?'"*

My students offered all kinds of insights from what they saw and admired. For example, one student focused on a particular male singer and said, "When the women were singing, he never stopped paying attention. You could see it in his eyes and in his face; he was fully engaged. It was not like it was break time." We talked about how that kind of concentration would help our rehearsals.

What do you see as the long-term benefits of students' participation in this kind of program?

My goal is to have students approach music as a lifelong passion. I tell them that my job as an educator is to make them lifelong singers no matter what level they perform at. I say, "I don't expect you all to go to college and be music majors. But I would hope that you would always have a love of singing and would always want to do it—whether it's in community theater, church choir, community choir, whatever."

Outcome 2: Diligent and Capable Performer

Promising Practice 7:

Develop perseverance through a high-challenge rite of passage.

"They do something they never thought they could do."

"They move out of freshman year when they cross that Delaware Water Gap Bridge. Many of them cry."

The speakers are faculty at an inner-city Catholic boys' high school. For more than 25 years, the school has served mostly Black and Hispanic students from low-income families. Nearly all of the school's graduates go to college; many become successful entrepreneurs, and many others enter the professions.

The faculty are talking about one of the school's defining

events, a rite of passage for all freshmen at the end of that first year: a grueling, 5-day, 50-mile hike through New Jersey's Kittatinny Mountains.

"Perseveres in the face of difficulty" is one of the characteristics of a diligent and capable performer. Perseverance is the habit of not giving up when you don't do something well on the first try. It's also the habit of not giving up when you have to do something you'd rather not do at all. For most of the boys in this school, the 50-mile hike fits that latter category.

The project developers explain the rationale for the Backpacking Project:

There is no lack of talent or intelligence in the youngsters who live in the middle of the city. Lack of self-confidence, however, and the inability to work hard when things get tough prevent far too many students of minority background from developing their talents and succeeding in school.

"The goal of the Backpacking Project is that you will long remember completing a hard job you wanted to quit."

The 5-day Backpacking Project for our freshmen students is one remedy that has proven helpful in assisting students to face the challenge of growing up in the middle of one of America's poorest cities.

A person simply cannot "quit" in the middle of a 50-mile camping trip because he has lost heart or is afraid of failing; or is just sick and tired of dirt, bugs, and his friends; or just feels that he cannot go any farther. The goal of the Backpacking Project is that each student will long remember the experience of successfully completing a hard job that he really wanted to quit.

This memory may help these young men continue to struggle in math class during the blahs of a high school February, during History class in college when no face seems friendly, when applying for a job after being turned down following several attempts, or when they don't feel qualified or appreciated at work and are tempted to stay in bed for the day.

The Backpacking Project is designed to make maximum use of leadership from older students who have already survived the challenge.

- **Three weeks of preparation precede the hike, including one day-long hike and two overnight trips.**
- **Each freshman class is divided into 16 teams of 8 members each. Each team elects a captain. Four teams make up a "company" which is led by three specially trained older students.**
- **The older student leaders train the freshmen team members in the skills they will need on the hike, and all team members practice leadership skills.**

"At graduation many give credit to the lessons of perseverance learned during the Backpacking Project."

Four instructional areas make up the day-to-day activities:

1. Team Challenges. Nine team activities, or "initiative games," enable teams to practice their ability to work together, solve problems, and take care of each other.

2. Leadership Training. Company leaders give exercises in a different leadership skill each day. For each team challenge, the teams must evaluate their use of the leadership skill and are evaluated, in turn, by the company leader.

3. Specialty Skills. Sophomore student leaders teach the freshmen skills in four specialty areas: safety and first aid, camping, nature and navigation, and cooking.

4. General Skills. Each day an older student gives an inspirational or spiritual talk to the whole company.

"'Don't Quit' is the motto of the Backpacking Project," said one of the faculty. "We tell them: 'If you go 95% of the way, that's not where the bus is going to pick you up.'"

At graduation time, seniors always look back on their 50-mile hike with considerable nostalgia. Many give credit for their accomplishments to the lessons of perseverance they learned during the Backpacking Project.

> If you wish to succeed in life, make perseverance your close friend.
>
> —Joseph Addison

For a resource designed to help teens, especially low achievers, answer the question, "Why try in life?", see **www.whytry.org**. For a resource that links character education, technology, and student learning, see **www.MindOH.com**.

Endnotes

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Outcome 3:
Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

A Socially and emotionally skilled person . . .

- Possesses a healthy self-confidence and a positive attitude
- Demonstrates basic courtesy in social situations
- Develops positive interpersonal relationships that include sensitivity to the feelings of others and the capacity for "care-frontation"
- Communicates effectively
- Works well with others
- Resolves conflicts fairly
- Has emotional intelligence, including self-knowledge and the ability to manage emotions.

He's a talented athlete, but his temper, mood swings, and selfishness prevent him—and by extension, his team—from realizing their potential for excellence. The coach is considering cutting him from the team.

She's a well-educated, ambitious young employee in the company, but her lack of tact and generally poor communication skills make her a very difficult person to work with.

He's a passionate advocate willing to devote his time and energy to important social causes, but he routinely comes on too strong and alienates potential supporters.

These are familiar profiles. Teachers, coaches, and employers encounter many individuals with these characteristics. It's not a lack of talent that prevents them from realizing excellence; it is their lack of social and emotional skills. Their deficiencies in this area are likely be at the root of struggles they experience in varied interpersonal relationships—as parents, in their marriages, and in many other areas of life.

Research on Social-Emotional Skills

In his classic 1954 study of intellectually gifted youth, Stanford professor Lewis Terman reported that those who "fulfilled their intellectual promise later in life," compared to lower-achieving gifted youth, were:

- **emotionally stable**
- **persistently motivated**
- **purposeful and self-confident personalities.**[1]

Other studies have reached a similar conclusion: Successful talented persons are likely to be not only ambitious but also interpersonally mature.[2]

Recent psychological theory and research have raised society's consciousness about the importance of social and emotional skills. In his 1983 book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner argued that interpersonal intelligence (the ability to understand other people and work cooperatively with them) and intrapersonal intelligence (the ability to understand oneself and use that understanding to guide one's behavior) are two of seven important human intelligences.[3] In their 1990 article, "Emotional Intelligence," Yale psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer offered a map of the many ways we can bring intelligence to our emotional lives.[4] In his 1995 book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, author Daniel Goleman did much to popularize psychological theory and research in this area.

Schools, in turn, have responded by paying more attention to social and emotional skills. "SEL," social-emotional learning, is now a staple of educational conferences and a focus of much educational writing and research.[5] In 2003, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) published *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs*, summarizing eleven research reviews of various educational interventions aimed at creating caring school environments and reducing anti-social and risk behaviors.[6] The *Safe and Sound* report concludes that social and emotional skills can be taught and that they predict motivation to learn and academic success as well as positive social behavior.

Our View of Social and Emotional Skills

Different educational writers have advanced different lists of social and emotional skills and different views of the relationship between social and emotional learning and character education. Some educators treat social and emotional learning and character education as equivalent; we do not. Our theoretical perspective is defined by four points:

1. Being socially and emotionally skilled is only one of eight necessary character strengths. While social and emotional skills are a critically important area of human development, they represent only one of eight strengths of character necessary for leading a flourishing life. Being a lifelong learner and critical thinker, a diligent and capable performer, an ethical thinker, a respectful and responsible moral agent, a self-disciplined person, a contributing community member and democratic citizen, and a spiritual person are also vital parts of performance character and moral character. All eight strengths contribute importantly to the pursuit of excellence and ethics over a lifetime. Educating for character in this full sense is broader in scope than just social and emotional learning.

2. Seven social and emotional skills are especially important for success in school, work, and beyond. These are: (1) a healthy self-confidence and positive attitude; (2) basic courtesy in social situations; (3) positive interpersonal relationships that include sensitivity to the feelings of others (which draws on virtues such as listening, understanding, empathy, and compassion) but also the capacity for "care-frontation" (which draws on virtues such as honesty, courage, wisdom, and tact in addition to concern for another); (4) the ability to communicate effectively; (5) the ability to work well with others; (6) the capacity to solve conflicts fairly; and (7) emotional intelligence, including self-knowledge and the ability to manage a range of emotions.

There is a synergy between social and emotional skills and the other strengths of character.

3. There is a synergistic relationship between social and emotional skills and the other strengths of character. As is true of each of the eight strengths of character, there is a synergy between social and emotional skills and the other strengths of character. For example, social and emotional skills such as our self-knowledge and understanding of others inform our ethical thinking and enable us to act effectively on our ethical judgments in relationships. Reciprocally, our thinking about what's right and wrong guides our use of social skills. (A skill such as understanding others, for example, can be used for good or bad ends.) Social and emotional skills help us be diligent and capable performers by enhancing our ability to bring out the best performance in others. Being a diligent and capable performer, in turn, motivates us to work harder at sharpening our social and emotional skills. And so on.

4. Social and emotional skills should be taught with an emphasis on their lifelong importance. Social and emotional skills are needed for facilitating social relations in the school setting, but they also have crucial importance for success beyond school. We should stress their long-term importance with our students. The book *The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace* addresses the role of social and emotional skills in the work environment.[7] Other books, such as *Cultivating Heart and Character: Educating for Life's Most Essential Goals*, address the need to develop the social and emotional maturity that will help young people build strong marriages and healthy families,[8] a life outcome with obvious importance for both personal fulfillment and a flourishing society.

A word about a particular social-emotional skill that we think is greatly neglected in both families and schools and therefore very much underdeveloped in most people: the skill of "care-frontation." Exercising this social competence requires that we care enough about another person to intervene—to raise a problem, give honest feedback, work through a conflict—and that we have the skills to do this effectively. In his book, *Caring Enough to Confront*, spiritual author David Augsburger speaks to the importance of care-fronting in the context of the conflicts that are an unavoidable part of our interpersonal lives:

> Care-fronting has a unique view of conflict. Conflict is natural, normal, neutral, and sometimes even delightful. It can turn into painful or disastrous ends, but it doesn't need to. Conflict is neither good, nor bad; right nor wrong. Conflict simply is. How we view, approach, and work through our differences does—to a large extent—determine our whole life pattern.[9]

We believe that care-frontation and related conflict resolution skills (taking perspective, reflective listening, finding ways to meet each other's needs) are social and emotional competencies that will serve youth well in their adult relationships, in the workplace, as parents, and as democratic citizens.

What follows are five promising practices for helping to develop the social and emotional skills that young people will need in school, work, and beyond.

> Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die, even the undertaker will be sorry.
>
> —Mark Twain

Five Practices for Developing the Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

1. Develop and regularly renew a positive relationship with every student.
2. Foster positive peer relations.
3. Teach the power of a positive attitude.
4. Teach manners.
5. Teach the art of asking questions.

Outcome 3: Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

Promising Practice 1:

Develop and regularly renew a positive relationship with every student.

Research underscores the importance of "school connectedness" for teens' emotional well-being and avoidance of risky behaviors.[10] Developing students' social and emotional skills begins by building a relationship with them. Teachers and other school staff build bonds with students in different ways that are authentic expressions of their individual personalities. Here are three approaches we encountered in our research:

◆ ***The personal conversation.*** Said a high school boy: "Teachers need to motivate every student *individually*, not just as an entire class. The personal connections teachers have made with me—something as simple as a short conversation—have kept me motivated to learn."

◆ ***The e-mail connection.*** One school district with four high schools set up an internal e-mail system to facilitate communication between teachers and students. Students e-mail teachers about lessons, assignments, tests, and careers. "We have found that students use it a tremendous amount," the superintendent said.[11]

◆ ***The daily handshake.*** A number of teachers said they found great value in greeting students with a handshake at the classroom door each day. Said one teacher, twice named Teacher of the Year in his school: "I greet every kid, every class, every day—starting with Day 1." Said another, "In the half-second it takes me to shake a hand, I make a direct, meaningful, and personal connection with the student." Another said, "I can tell in a heartbeat what kind of day a kid is having. You can nip problems in the bud at the door."

One teacher commented: "I had always stood at the door, but didn't do the handshake. When I tried it, the kids loved it. If I wasn't there when they arrived, they'd line up at the door waiting for me."

> *"In the half-second it takes me to shake a hand, I make a personal connection with that student."*

These teachers pointed out that in addition to making and renewing a connection with every student, this greeting ritual teaches an important social skill: how to shake hands. Charlie Abourjilie, a former high school history teacher, writes in *Developing Character for Classroom Success* about how he conducted a mini-lesson on the value of a handshake:

> I talked to my class about the power of a handshake. I pointed out that it has ended wars and created powerful alliances. We discussed the value of a good handshake in the business world, on job interviews, in meeting a date's parent—what a positive human resource it is.[12]

A superintendent said, "If a candidate in an interview doesn't give me a firm handshake, I might talk with that person for a few minutes out of courtesy, but the interview is essentially over."

The Social-Emotional Benefits of Positive Peer Relations

High school students in small learning communities, whose small size helps students get to know each other, not only achieve at higher levels than students in bigger schools but also feel less anonymous, are more attached to their schools, and are less likely to engage in negative social behavior.[13]

Similarly, research by the Child Development Project on six socio-economically diverse elementary schools finds that the stronger the classroom and schoolwide "sense of community" (indicated by students' agreement with statements such as, "People in my classroom care about each other"), the more likely students are to show positive social-emotional outcomes such as greater liking for school, less loneliness, greater empathy, stronger feelings of social competence, stronger motivation to be helpful, and more sophisticated conflict resolution skills.[14]

Outcome 3: Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

Promising Practice 2: *Foster positive peer relations.*

In addition to caring relationships with adults, adolescents need caring relationships with each other. Positive peer relations provide many opportunities to develop and practice social and emotional skills (see box on page 119). Teachers and schools can take steps that increase the likelihood that every student will enjoy such relationships in school.

◆ ***The 2-minute interview.*** Said one teacher: "My students come from diverse backgrounds and neighborhoods. It's not uncommon for a student to know only two other students in a class of 35." To help students get to know each other, he uses the first four minutes of every class during the first two weeks of school to have students do paired 2-minute interviews. They each have two minutes to ask their partner five questions and to record the answers.

1. Where do you live?

2. What's an achievement you're proud of?

3. What is a special interest you have?

4. What's a goal you're working on?

5. Who is a hero for you?

This teacher comments: "We continue this until every student has interviewed every other student in the class. The first test of the year asks them to list the names of everyone else in the class."

◆ ***A class mission statement.*** The same teacher who does the 2-minute interviews explained how he involves students in developing a class mission statement. He leads into that by asking, on the first day of school, "What are the characteristics of a caring community?" He and the students generate a list on the board that remains in the front of the room. Then for homework, he asks them to bring in mission statements from the companies their parents work for.

On Day 2, they look at the different examples and discuss what a mission statement is and how it defines and drives an organization. He says:

Then I have them work in groups of six to develop a mission statement for our class. It can't be more than two sentences. After the groups post their proposed mission statements, we discuss them and combine them into one. We write it in large letters and post it in the front of the room. Two of my favorites:

- THIS IS A GOLDEN RULE CLASSROOM—WE PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH.
- THIS IS A POSITIVE STROKES CLASSROOM—THE MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU GET.

One teacher asks his students to develop a class mission statement.

◆ ***A community-building activity at the start of class.*** Many teachers find that a short community-building activity at the beginning of class renews the sense of solidarity, creates a positive attitude toward subsequent academic work, and gives students interactive experiences that develop their relationship skills.

One teacher begins class with what he calls his Daily Four. He starts by asking, "What are we celebrating today?"[15] Students can then choose one of four ways to contribute:

1. Share good news.

2. Tell about someone or something you're grateful for.

3. Affirm someone in the class.

4. Make us laugh (joke must be clean).

This opening ritual takes about five minutes. The teacher comments: "There's always more energy in the room after we do this. And because of the trust and comfort level created, students are more willing during the rest of the period to risk offering their viewpoint in a discussion."

◆ ***Advisories.*** When they are conducted well, advisories can benefit both performance character and moral character, including the development of social and emotional skills. A boy on our Student Leaders Panel said: "You learn to use your advisor as a mentor, someone you can talk with when you have a problem and who helps you set goals and improve as a student. Advisory also enables you to get to know and appreciate other students you wouldn't normally meet or associate with."

Whatever job you are asked to do, do a good one—because your reputation is your resumé.

—Madeleine Albright

Students themselves should be asked to help design advisories in order to maximize advisories' contribution to performance character and moral character. Schools can start by asking students to write down their ideas about what should be addressed. One girl on our Student Leaders Panel wrote:

Many teens aren't happy with how they look or the crowd they hang out with. Many don't know how to talk about their feelings and try to escape through drugs, alcohol, or sex. I used cutting to avoid dealing with my feelings. It's very scary to deal with emotions. Schools should teach you what to do when you feel lonely or depressed or any other emotion. So many people don't know.

◆ ***"Families."*** In addition to advisories, one award-winning high school we visited has mixed-grade "families." Each family meets every morning from 8:30-9:05 a.m., includes about 25 students from grades 9-12, and is led by a faculty facilitator. Students receive academic advisement in their families but also participate in a variety of community-building activities and discussions of school, local, and global issues. In the family we sat in on, students discussed their visit to a homeless shelter the day before. Students remain with the same family until graduation. Said the principal:

In these family groups, students really find and bring out the best in each other. The older students mentor the younger ones. And they all hold each other accountable to the values and standards of our school. If somebody messes up, we'll sometimes think that through together: "What school values did you not follow when you made that decision?"

"In their family groups, students find and bring out the best in each other."

Outcome 3: Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

Promising Practice 3: *Teach the power of a positive attitude.*

A positive attitude is an essential human virtue and a key social-emotional competence. If we have a negative attitude in life, we are a burden to ourselves and others. If we have a positive attitude, we are an asset to ourselves and others.

The Effect of Attitude on Achievement

If we have a positive attitude, we are also more likely to have hope in the face of a setback. In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman reports a study carried out by University of Kansas psychologist C.R. Snyder that shows the impact of a positive attitude, or hope, on students' academic achievement.[16]

Snyder presented college students with the following hypothetical dilemma:

Although you set a goal of getting a B, when your first exam (worth 30% of the final grade) was returned, you received a D. What do you do?

Students who said they would work harder and think of a range of things they could do to raise their grade were characterized by Snyder as being high in hope. Those who thought of some things to try but expressed less determination were characterized as being moderate in their level of hope. Those who said they would be discouraged and would probably give up were characterized as having the lowest level of hope.

Snyder's central finding: *Students' level of hope as measured by this exercise was a better predictor than their SAT scores of their actual first-semester college grades.* He commented:

Students with high hope set higher goals and know how to work hard to attain them. When you compare students of equal intellectual aptitude on their academic achievements, what sets them apart is hope.[17]

Hope in the Face of Adversity

In his 1959 classic *Man's Search for Meaning*, the Jewish psychiatrist Viktor Frankl recounts the horrors of his experience in the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz.[18] He writes that although the Nazis could strip him of everything else, they could not control his mind or spirit. He tells of how, in his darkest hours, he fought off despair by focusing his mind on his beloved wife, sent by the Nazis to another concentration camp. It was not until after the war that he discovered that she and his parents had been murdered, along with millions of other victims.

Positive attitude predicts students' academic achievement.

After surviving Auschwitz, Frankl returned to civilized life. As a psychiatrist, he used the strength and wisdom he had gained from his ordeal to counsel patients, helping them to find meaning in their lives through loving other persons, through their work, through their suffering, and by serving God. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, he writes:

We must never forget that we may find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what matters then is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential to transform a tragedy into a triumph. When we are no longer able to change a situation—just think of an incurable disease such as inoperable cancer—we are challenged to change ourselves.[19]

Frankl concludes: "Everything can be taken from us except one thing—the freedom to choose our attitude in any set of circumstances."

> *"Everything can be taken from us except one thing—the freedom to choose our attitude in any set of circumstances."*

How to Develop Students' Ability to Maintain a Positive Attitude

How can we help students learn to maintain a positive attitude—whether in the face of a bad grade or great suffering?

◆ ***Share the research.*** Students should know what the research shows about the power of attitude. We should share with them the findings of a study such as Snyder's on the impact of a hopeful attitude on school achievement. Reading even part of a book such as Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, which reports many studies in non-technical language, would give students valuable exposure to research on the importance of social and emotional skills, including a positive attitude.

◆ ***Reflect on inspiring role models.*** Some teachers have had students read, write about, and discuss Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. Others share stories of individuals they have known personally whose positive attitude in the face of life's difficulties has been a source of inspiration. One award-winning high school teacher speaks to his students at the beginning of his courses about three persons who have significantly influenced his philosophy of life. One of them is a former student named David. This teacher says to his classes:

> **We never know how high we are 'til we are called to rise.**
>
> —Emily Dickinson

When David was 16, his mother died of cancer. When he was 17, his father was struck and killed by a drunk driver. Six months later, his oldest brother was killed in a freak trucking accident. Three months after that, his youngest and only remaining brother took his life because of his overwhelming grief.

If ever in my life I met a person who would have been justified in slamming the door on life, it was David. But he took this miserable hand of cards that was dealt him and decided this was what he had to work with. He went on to get his Master's Degree in psychiatric social work where he specialized in grief counseling—in helping others cope with what he had, through no choice of his own, become an expert in.

When David talked to you, he was totally present in that moment because he had learned that the things we often assume are permanent in our lives—such as our families and our friends—can slip through our hands in a second. David is one of the greatest teachers in my life.[20]

Here is a story of a teenager whose response to terrible adversity is remarkably like that of Viktor Frankl. This high school teacher, by sharing David's story and disclosing how moved he is by David's fortitude, invites students to reach deep within themselves to develop similar strengths of character in the face of life's setbacks and sufferings.

◆ ***Have an Attitude Box.*** Another high school teacher has an Attitude Box which sits on a table next to the door. It is designed to give her students practice in controlling their attitude. She explains to them:

If you're going to do your best work here, you don't want to come in with an "attitude." If you do arrive with an attitude—"I'm mad at my boyfriend because we just had an argument," "I'm upset with a teacher because I just got a bad grade on a test I studied hard for"—I'd like you to write it on one of these slips of paper before class starts, and drop it in the Attitude Box. If you'd like to talk with me about it, write that at the bottom, and we'll make an appointment.

◆ ***Share the essay, "The Choices We Get to Make."*** Some teachers post in their classroom a mini-essay titled, "The Choices We Get to Make" (see box on page 123). They might comment on how it has helped them in their lives, give students a copy, and encourage them to apply its insights to their own lives inside and outside of school. In classes or advisories where students do journaling, they can be asked to reflect: What truths are expressed in this essay? What evidence do you see in your life and the lives of others that the author's statements are true?

The Choices We Get to Make

Life is a series of choices we get to make. We're free to choose our values. We can let the media tell us what's important, or we can decide for ourselves. We can base our standards on what others are doing—or on what we know is right and good.

We're free to choose how to treat other people. We can put them down—or lift them up. We can be self-centered and inconsiderate, or we can be respectful, kind, and helpful.

We're free to choose how much we'll learn. We can look upon learning as an unpleasant duty or as a great opportunity for bettering ourselves.

We're free to choose how we'll handle adversity. We can allow ourselves to be crushed, to give up, and to feel sorry for ourselves. Or we can look for a source of strength and deal with whatever life hands us.

We're free to choose our belief system and purpose in life. We can wander through life aimlessly—or we can search for the ultimate meaning of life and then live according to it.

We're free to choose our character. We can become less than we're capable of—or all that we're capable of.

We're free to choose our attitude, regardless of circumstances. This is the most important choice we'll ever make because it affects everything else.

—Hal Urban, *Life's Greatest Lessons* [21]

◆ ***Foster an attitude of gratitude.*** A positive attitude is difficult to sustain without a supporting virtue: gratitude. In his book, *With Love and Prayers: A Headmaster Speaks to the Next Generation*, Father Tony Jarvis, an Episcopal priest and head for 30 years of Boston's all-boys Roxbury Latin School, shares the following talk about gratitude that he gave at a morning assembly:

> *"If there is a secret of a happy life, it is living thankfully."*

If there is a secret to happy living, it is living thankfully. Right now, sitting among you, are boys with alcoholic parents, boys from dysfunctional families, boys living in situations where they are physically and/or psychologically abused, boys living with parents who are dying painfully. A boy whose mother was dying a hideous and painful death a few years ago said to me: "I'm grateful I can bring her some small comfort by something I do or say each day." No bitterness. No sense of entitlement to a trouble-free life.

Life entitles you to nothing. If you want to be happy, you will find happiness not from dwelling on all you do not have in life and feeling bitter about it. You will find happiness by dwelling on all that is good and true and beautiful in your life and being thankful for it.[22]

For thankfulness to become a virtue, however, it must become a habit—developed, like all habits, through repetition. Acting on that insight, a high school English teacher has her students keep a daily Gratitude Journal:

This semester I began having my classes do something I had been doing in my own life: keeping a Gratitude Journal. The first thing when they came into class each day, I asked them to write in their Gratitude Journals five things they were thankful for in the past 24 hours. It took just a few minutes but made a real difference in their attitude and the class climate.

Outcome 3: Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

Promising Practice 4: *Teach manners.*

"Manners"—once known as "common courtesy"—are an essential part of being a socially and emotionally skilled person. Manners are minor morals. They are everyday ways we show consideration for others. They facilitate human interactions; in the words of one writer, "Manners are the great social lubricant."

> *Manners are minor morals.*

When young people show good manners, they elicit a positive response from other people. They are also more secure, confident, and poised when they know how to act in social situations. And they will be more likely to teach manners to their own children someday if they become parents.

Some of the high school students we spoke with were very much aware of the importance of manners in school and in the workplace. They also commented on the absence of good manners they often see around them. A girl on our Student Leaders Panel identified "lack of manners" as a major character problem that schools should address:

High school students don't always have the greatest manners, but schools could help by teaching classes that simulate how it is in the business world. In school, if you're rude to the teacher, the punishment is likely to be minimal. When you have a job, if you aren't respectful, there's a good chance you will no longer be working there.

"In the real world, being rude can cost you your job."

Opinion polls reveal that large numbers of people, young and old, are distressed by the lack of manners they encounter in everyday life.[23] Books such as *Restoring School Civility* by Philip Fitch Vincent and David Waangard speak to the need to pay more attention in our schools and families to the teaching of basic courtesy.[24]

> **Manners are more important than laws.**
> —Edmund Burke

A Lesson on Manners

Many teachers would like to address the issue of manners but aren't sure how to do it without coming across as "preachy." We interviewed a high school teacher, troubled by what he saw as a general decline in manners, who had worked out a way to approach this issue that did not talk down to students but rather respected their ability to give the subject serious thought.

He raised the issue of manners on the first day of the new school year and began by making two points:

In my experience, most people are capable of courtesy when they know clearly what is expected of them.

The classroom is a more positive place when everyone treats everyone else with courtesy and consideration.

He then distributed a handout titled, "Whatever Happened to Good Manners?" At the top was a quote from George Bernard Shaw, "Without good manners, human society becomes intolerable."

After sharing some of his own perceptions on the state of manners, he asked students to consider several questions listed on the handout:

If manners are declining, why do you think that is happening?

Why is society better when people treat each other with respect?

Why is a classroom better when both students and teacher show mutual respect?

Why does Henry Rogers say, "Good manners are one of the most important keys to success in life"?

What is the "Golden Rule"? If it's so simple, why do more people today have difficulty practicing it?

Which impresses people more—being "cool" or being courteous?

His instructions to the class:

Please take out a sheet of paper and answer these questions. *Don't* sign your name. I'll collect your papers and read them aloud to the class.

He then collected students' written responses, read them aloud, and used them as a springboard for a discussion of manners. This took the rest of the period. He comments:

This activity made a noticeable difference in students' behavior. In the weeks that followed, several told me they wished their other teachers would discuss good manners. An exchange student from Germany told me, "I enjoy your class not just because I'm learning a lot of American history but also because of how polite everyone is." At the end of the semester another boy said: "That manners page you handed out really made me think. Sometimes we do rude things and aren't even aware that we're being rude."

"Why does Henry Rogers say, 'Good manners are one of the most important keys to success?'"

What were the features of this lesson that made it an effective character education experience for these high school students?

- ✔ The teacher taught the lesson on the first day. Students could reflect on manners without feeling defensive. This proactive approach illustrates one of the hallmarks of effective character education: It teaches what's right before something goes wrong.
- ✔ He took a whole class period to discuss good manners. That sent an unmistakable message: Manners matter.
- ✔ He exercised directive leadership. He didn't ask students, "How many people think manners are important?" Rather, he designed the whole structure of the lesson around the fact that manners are important in school and life.
- ✔ He started positively by stating his belief that most peo-

ple are capable of courtesy if they know clearly what's expected.

- ✔ He involved students actively—recruiting them as thinkers by seeking their input.
- ✔ He got all of his students engaged in thinking about this issue by posing good questions and having them write anonymously. Anonymity gave them the freedom to be candid.

The teacher comments in particular about the importance of writing:

If I want quality thinking and quality discussion, I almost always have students write first. Writing gets everyone involved. I get a much richer range of responses than if I simply posed the questions to the whole group—in which case only a few students carry the class.

> *"If I want quality discussion, I almost always have students write first."*

Outcome 3: Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person

Promising Practice 5: *Teach the art of asking questions.*

One of the most useful social-emotional skills we can teach young people is the art of asking questions—meaningful questions that draw out the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others.

Most of us spend much of our lives—literally thousands of interactions—in conversation with others. How much of that conversation goes beyond exchanges such as "How's it goin'?" "Not bad. How's it goin' with you?" "Pretty good." Even in their closest relationships, such as friendships and marriages, people often don't get beyond such superficial exchanges.

At the same time, most human beings have a desire for intimacy. True intimacy means knowing another person—their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and dreams—and being known in return. We have to *learn* how to attain this kind of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intimacy. Says an adolescent counselor, "If young people don't learn this, they will be handicapped in their adult relationships."

In this area, as in other areas of social and emotional learning, schools can make a contribution. In his book *Positive Words, Powerful Results*, former high school teacher Hal Urban writes:

I had a variety of questions I asked students when I greeted them at the door. I tried to avoid the standard "What's up?" and "How's it goin'?" Instead, I asked "SP" questions, which I also taught *them* to ask. SP means "strategically positive." It means the question is specific and will always elicit a positive and specific answer. Here are a few examples:

Who is someone you're thankful for?

What's been the highlight of your day so far?

What's an important goal you're working on?

Who's your best friend? Why?

"In all," Urban writes, "my students and I developed more than 100 questions. We found that these questions always accomplished a number of things: They made the other person feel important, the answers always led to more good questions, and the conversation that followed was always positive and upbeat."[25]

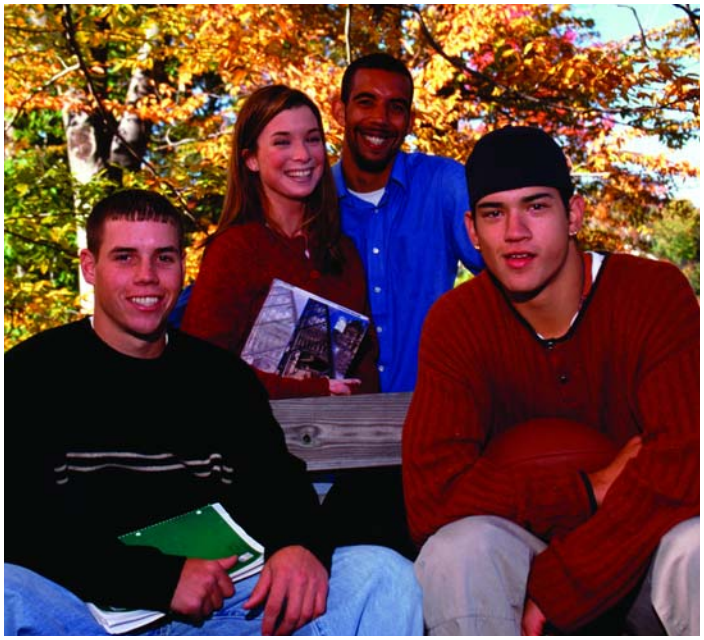
The Hot Seat Activity

At a school in the Midwest, we interviewed a history teacher who described a whole-class exercise he does in all of his courses. Called "The Hot Seat," this activity involves students in asking each other an array of meaningful questions—ones that could profitably be used in advisories, clubs, and any other context where the teacher wants to help students get to know each other at a deeper level and in the process learn the art of asking good questions.

> *One of the most useful social skills is the art of asking meaningful questions.*

"Only students who wish to participate do so," this teacher said. "About a half-dozen of the 100 or so students opt to just listen. Those students who are willing take turns on the Hot Seat, where they respond to a series of questions."

He explained that the questions have a two-fold purpose: (1) to give students an opportunity to talk about things that matter, and (2) to give their classmates access to a part of the person not previously publicly shared. "We set certain ground rules. An important one is, 'What's said here, stays here.'"



Sample questions (with option to pass on any one):

- **Who is your "captain?" (that is, your ultimate reference point for your values)**
- **What, so far, have been three of your greatest successes in life?**
- **What are three things you would like written on your tombstone?**
- **What is your favorite place to be?**
- **Where do you find solace and peace?**
- **Who or what do you think created life?**
- **Talk about your family.**
- **Describe the qualities of your best friend.**
- **If I were with your friends, what is the worst thing they might say about you? The best thing they might say about you?**
- **If you were going to advertise yourself, what would you identify as your greatest asset?**
- **What is the biggest character flaw you're going to have to overcome in order to succeed in life?**
- **How would you describe your soul mate?**

The teacher continued: "The kids hardly breathe as the person in the middle speaks. They are incredibly attentive. There are moments when we're crying, and moments when we can't stop laughing. We are witnesses to each other.

"I give the first, second, and third students who go a chance to do it over, because it takes a few turns for students to get comfortable with the process. By the third day, I say to the class, 'Tell me something you heard from one of your classmates that you thought was really cool.' One year, a boy said: 'It dawned on me when Holly Kaplan was up there, 'That's my soul mate!' They ended up getting married."

Mr. B. then described how the Hot Seat activity ended:

I always go last. This is their chance to ask, in effect, "Mr. B., who are you?" I don't give them the questions, but by now they know the parameters. All year long, they've tried to find out if I'm a Democrat or a Republican. I still won't tell them, but I do tell the six presidents I most admire—Lincoln, Truman, Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt, and Jimmy Carter—and why. Half of those happen to be Democrats, half Republicans. It drives them crazy.

What are the lessons we all learn from this? We learn that we all have problems; we're all human beings. We all have hurts. We all have hopes and dreams. On the surface we wear a lot of armor. Underneath, there are amazing commonalities.

He concluded: "In the exit interviews I do at the end of the year—when I ask students what they think they'll remember about the class—they consistently say, 'The one thing I'll never forget is the Hot Seat activity.'"

"I'll never forget the Hot Seat activity."

There are many other practices available to high school educators for developing social and emotional skills. Some schools have peer mediation programs. ("We find very few repeat conflicts with the same individuals," says one counselor.) Other schools make an effort, through advisories, a freshman character development course, or some other venue, to directly teach all students the skills of solving conflicts, in the belief that this is a universally needed competence, crucial for successful adult relationships as well as non-violent resolution of adolescent disputes.

Well-structured collaborative learning is still another strategy that gives students the opportunity to develop and practice a range of social-emotional skills, including the teamwork so highly valued in the workplace. In **Outcome 7,** Contributing Community Member and Democratic Citizen, we note the importance of cooperative learning in preparing students for the teamwork demanded by a highly competitive global economy.

We turn now to the next strength of character, one that builds directly on social and emotional skills—ethical thinking.

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Outcome 4:
Ethical Thinker

An Ethical Thinker . . .

- Possesses moral discernment—including good judgment, moral reasoning, and ethical wisdom
- Has a well-formed conscience—including a sense of obligation to do the right thing
- Has a strong moral identity that is defined by one's moral commitments
- Possesses the moral competence, or "know-how," needed to translate discernment, conscience, and identity into effective moral behavior.

A few years ago, four upstate New York teens—three girls and a boy—broke into their high school at night, emptied several jugs of gasoline, and ignited a fire that did $500,000 in damage. All four perpetrators were described as being "bright students." In 1999, following the killing of 12 teens and a teacher at Columbine High School, press accounts reported that the student shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were both A students.

Smart and good are not the same. If schools educate the mind and not the morals, as Theodore Roosevelt warned a century ago, they create menaces to society.

Smart and good are not the same.

In an echo of Roosevelt's admonition, Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg recently observed that the U.S. educational system is going rapidly and relatively smoothly—in the wrong direction.

That wrong direction is illustrated by the high-stakes system of testing that has come to dominate the country. It is not that high-stakes testing is, in itself, necessarily bad. It is that what the tests measure, to a large extent, doesn't matter all that much in the long run. What matters is not only how much knowledge you have but how you use that knowledge—whether for good ends (as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. did) or for bad ones (as Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin did).[1]

For the past several generations, Sternberg notes, in more than a dozen countries for which records have been available, IQs have been rising roughly at a rate of 9 points per generation (a 30-year period) for at least several generations.[2] The increase in IQ for the elites who lead these societies is likely to have been even greater. And yet, these increases in intelligence have not visibly improved people's or nations' relationships with each other. In fact, there appears to be more hate in the world than ever before.[3] This state of affairs reflects what Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles has called the "disparity between intellect and character."[4]

IQs have been rising, but human relations have not improved.

How Should We Define and Educate for Ethical Thinking?

Because intellect and character are not the same, schools must develop ethical thinking. But they must define and teach for ethical thinking in a way that maximizes the probability that it will lead to ethical behavior. If we define ethical thinking too narrowly—as merely being "book smart" about ethics—then we are likely to end up using narrow, overly intellectualized instructional strategies that merely teach students how to talk a good ethical game rather than inspiring them to want to lead an ethical life. Here, as with the other strengths of character, we need to begin with a good definition of the outcome in order to design effective teaching techniques.

Most of us could cite examples—including some from our own behavior—of the difference between knowing the ethical thing to do and actually doing it. Consider one particularly striking instance. Some years ago, the *New York Times* ran a story about an author who had his manuscript, *Telling Right From Wrong,* accepted by a major publishing house. The publisher considered it a "brilliant" treatment of everyday ethics but then halted publication when it learned that the author had completely forged several prestigious "endorsements" of his book.

As educators, would we be satisfied if we developed in our students the kind of ethical thinking exhibited by this deceptive author? Obviously not. A case like this should lead us to reflect: "This person *understood* ethics well

The most important human endeavor is striving for morality.

—Albert Einstein

enough to write a brilliant book about it but obviously didn't feel any obligation to *act* ethically. Are we teaching ethics in a way that has the potential to produce *that* kind of ethical thinker? If so, what should we do differently?"

The Four Components of Integrated Ethical Thinking

In view of the gap that often exists between knowing what's ethical and acting ethically, schools must conceptualize ethical thinking broadly—to include other components of ethical consciousness besides mere moral knowledge or reasoning. We believe there are at least four components of ethical thinking that must *work together,* in an integrated way, to dispose a person toward ethical behavior. Taken together, these four components define our fourth developmental outcome, Ethical Thinker. The components of integrated ethical thinking are:

1. Moral discernment—being able to discern what is right and wrong, recognize when a situation involves a question of right and wrong, and make well-reasoned decisions about moral matters ranging from simple questions ("Should I return a lost wallet?") to complex ones ("What is the responsibility of the United States to alleviate global problems such as AIDS and poverty?"); and having wisdom about what constitutes good character and an ethical life.

2. Conscience—awareness of what is right or wrong with respect to our own conduct, intentions, and character, coupled with a sense of obligation to do what is right.

3. Moral identity—the degree to which our moral character and commitments are central to our sense of self ("I am a person who does the right thing; my moral commitments define who I am").

4. Moral competence—the ethical skills (knowing, for example, how to be helpful in a particular situation) that enable us to translate discernment of what's right, conscience, and moral identity into effective moral action.

Integrated ethical thinking includes four components that work together to dispose a person toward ethical behavior.

We note that although integrated ethical thinking increases the likelihood of ethical behavior, it still does not guarantee it. We can discern what is right, feel obligated in conscience to do it, think of ourselves as someone who normally does the right thing, and have the skills needed to act ethically—but still fail to do so. Later, under **Outcome 5,** Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent, we discuss the important role of *moral agency*—a combination of confidence, courage, and a strong sense of responsibility for the welfare of others—in motivating a person to take *consistent moral action.* In short, ethical thinking, even broadly defined to include our four integrated components, does not equal ethical behavior; moral agency is still needed. But if we help young people become integrated ethical thinkers, we are helping them take a giant step toward becoming respectful and responsible moral agents.

Although integrated ethical thinking increases the likelihood of ethical behavior, it does not guarantee it. Moral agency is also needed.

Moral Identity: Why It Matters

While all four components of integrated ethical thinking are essential, we wish to call special attention to moral identity. As the psychologist Gus Blasi observes, we have a moral identity to the extent that we define ourselves in moral terms.[5] Psychologists Daniel Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez elaborate on this notion:

> Some individuals let moral notions penetrate to the core of who they are as a person; others choose to define the self in other ways. One has a [strong] moral identity when moral commitments are judged to be central, important, and essential for one's self-understanding—and when one commits to live in such a way that keeps faith with these identity-defining commitments.[6]

If I think of myself as someone who stands up for what I believe, for example, it will violate my self-concept to remain silent in the face of injustice. Indeed, my moral identity—my sense of the kind of person I am—will tend to motivate me to avoid committing such a moral lapse in the first place.

Research supports the importance of moral identity in the ethical life. Two psychologists, K. Aquino and A. Reed, developed an instrument to measure moral identity and found that individuals with a strong moral identity report a greater sense of obligation to help and share resources with less fortunate persons.[7]

For teenagers, developing an independent identity—figuring out what they believe, who they are, what they want to become—is a central developmental task. While they are in this formative period, we have a window of opportunity to help them develop an identity that has moral character at its core.

We have a window of opportunity to help teens develop a strong moral identity.

The Interdependence of the Four Components of Integrated Ethical Thinking

The four components of integrated ethical thinking must work together. Consider, for example, the interdependence of conscience and moral identity.

One of the functions of conscience is self-awareness—including an honest and humble examination of our moral behaviors. If our conscience is *not* honestly examining our behaviors, we may easily compartmentalize our negative actions in order to maintain a high opinion of ourselves as a moral person. To the extent that we distance ourselves from the less-than-ethical things we do, we are constructing what amounts to a "false moral identity"; we insulate our sense of the kind of person we are from our actual conduct.

Consider the following example, which we have used with educators and students to demonstrate this human tendency to compartmentalize negative moral behaviors rather than honestly looking at what they say about us. First, we ask our audience: "Please raise your hand if you are a liar." (Few, if any, self-identify this way.) Next, we ask: "Please raise your hand if you lie—even occasionally." (Most people get a little flustered, but most, if not all, raise their hands.) Finally, we ask, "How many lies does it take until you are a liar?"[8] Most people want to believe that even though they may lie some of the time, they are not really "liars."

If we are integrated ethical thinkers, however, and our conscience is doing its job, we will honesty examine our conduct and allow *all* of our actions to impinge on our moral identity, however uncomfortable that may be. Nothing gets compartmentalized or suppressed. If we are unhappy with what our behaviors say about us ("I guess I am a bit of a liar"), that can become an incentive for bringing our conduct into closer alignment with our ideal moral identity.

To sum up: In developing ethical thinkers we should do everything possible to avoid fostering "dis-integrated thinking," that is, ethical thinking divorced from conscience, moral identity, and the competence to act ethically. Instead, our goal must be to develop ethical thinkers characterized by the *integrated functioning* of the four components of moral discernment, conscience, moral identity, and moral competence. Finally, whenever possible, we should employ teaching methods that have the potential to develop more than one of these components simultaneously.

6 Promising Practices for Developing an Ethical Thinker

1. Model integrated ethical thinking in your relationships with students.
2. Study lives of character and challenge students to pursue their own character development.
3. Help students develop a "go-to" ethical framework and an understanding of the functioning of conscience.
4. Help students develop an ability to make well-reasoned ethical decisions.
5. Use writing and guided discussion to teach the value of a virtue.
6. Teach ethical wisdom through character quotations.

Outcome 4 Ethical Thinker

Promising Practice 1:

Model integrated ethical thinking in your relationships with students.

The first and most fundamental way we can develop integrated ethical thinking in students is to model it in our relationships with them. Relationships have motivational power; young people tend to become like the persons they trust and admire.

Modeling integrated ethical thinking has two parts: (1) explicitly teaching moral standards with conviction and even passion, and explaining *why* we consider such standards important; and (2) adhering to these standards in our interactions with students. If we do these two things, we can positively impact all four components of integrated ethical thinking.

We interviewed Mr. M, a high school English teacher who aimed for this kind of impact. He explained something new he was trying that semester:

I have a lot of kids who have never read a whole book in their life. So for their first-quarter book assignment this year, I said, "You have to read the *whole* book. If you don't finish the book, I'll have to take 15% off your final grade for the quarter."

On the day the book report was due, he asked his students, in class, to write a one-paragraph summary of their book and then said: "At the bottom of your paragraph, I would like you to write, if it is true, 'Upon my honor, I have read this entire book,' and then sign your name."

He then spoke about his deep belief in the importance of integrity.

To me, the most important thing here is that you be truthful. If you graduate from high school with a 4.0 and get a full-ride scholarship to Harvard but don't have integrity, you don't have what matters most in life. If you graduate from high school with average grades but you did your best and you have integrity, you have what you need to succeed in life. So don't sell your soul for a few points on your grade.

He told them a story about a graduate of their high school who had struggled academically but was hard-working and had a reputation for honesty, and went on to become one of the most successful businessmen in the valley.

This was not the first time he had appealed to their sense of integrity. He said to us:

At various times during the semester, I've made a big deal about "keeping your word." I talk about what an asset it is to be known as a person whose word can be trusted. If they're late for class, I question them about why, but before I do, I tell them that I will take them at their word—so it's very important to be completely truthful. I explain that if I find out they were not truthful, I won't be able to trust them in the future.

> *"Don't sell your soul for a few points on your grade."*

The night he was grading the book reports, he said he came upon a student's book summary on which the student had written:

Upon my honor, I have* not *read this entire book.

Mr. M. said to us, "I was really impressed by that. Well, it turned out I had *18* papers like that where students wrote that they had not read the entire book."

The next day, he told students how impressed he was by their honesty. In appreciation of that, he said he'd decided to revisit his announced grading system and give them another opportunity to finish the book and avoid the 15% penalty. All the students took him up on it.

"What do we have to do to prove we finished it?" they asked.

"You don't have to do anything," he said. "You just gave me your word."

In the week that followed, 15 of the 18 students came up to him and said, "Hey, Mr. M., I just want you to know that I finished that book."

> *"Few things help individuals more than to place responsibility on them."*

Booker T. Washington once said, "Few things help individuals more than to place responsibility on them, and to let them know that you trust them." Mr. M. did that with his students. In so doing, he provided an influential model of an integrated ethical thinker: someone who correctly discerned the lifelong importance of integrity, held it as a strong conscience conviction, made his own commitment to integrity a central part of his identity, and knew how to carry out that commitment in his relationship with his students.

Outcome 4
Ethical Thinker

Promising Practice 2:
Study lives of character and challenge students to pursue their own character development.

Studying lives of character—men and women who embody courage, love, justice, and other virtues—is a powerful way to help students understand what good character is, develop a desire to have a good character, and take steps to work on their own character development. Studying lives of character is also a way to deal with something that's very much a part of contemporary moral culture and that frustrates teachers when they encounter it in students, namely, moral relativism.

Moral relativism is the idea that "there is no right or wrong"; what's "moral" is whatever you or I happen to think is moral. This is a philosophy with serious conse-

quences: If it's true that morality is just a matter of personal opinion—and not a matter of universal obligation—then who's to say that you or I shouldn't lie, cheat, steal, blow up innocent people, or do anything else we might have a mind to do?

According to Christina Hoff Sommers, editor of *Vice & Virtue in Everyday Life*[9] and a former professor of ethics at Clark University, many students come to college "dogmatically committed to a moral relativism that offers them no grounds to think" about cheating, stealing, and other moral issues.[10] We interviewed high school teachers who said they also saw among their students a trend toward greater moral relativism, showing up as an increased reluctance to make moral judgments. A history teacher commented:

Students used to be more willing to say, "It's not okay for kids to be doing X, Y, or Z," whether the issue was using drugs, getting drunk, or being violent. Now they seem to be adrift about what's moral. They're willing to say, "Personally, *I* don't think that's right"—to talk about what *they* would do—but they are less and less willing to make a moral judgment, to impose any kind of standard.

Why this apparent increase in the reluctance to make moral judgments? Some observers cite the influence of multiculturalism and the idea that we should not criticize the views or values of other groups or cultures. Others cite a cultural emphasis on tolerance that tends to inhibit people from holding others accountable to high moral standards. One school head commented:

About a decade ago, a speaker stunned an audience of school leaders when he bluntly stated, "It is unfortunate that the supreme virtue of our age is tolerance." He went on to say that tolerance is an essential part of anyone's character, but that it is inadequate as a supreme virtue because it is a passive virtue. It doesn't demand that we have a commitment to moral and intellectual excellence.

> The most politically correct advice of our age is, be tolerant. Implicit in this toleration, however, is often a moral relativism that asserts we need to tolerate every viewpoint as the equal of every other.
>
> —F. Washington Jarvis

Whatever the sources of non-judgmental relativism, it's a problem for any school that wants to be an ethical learning community and hopes to foster the kind of ethical thinking that leads to ethical action. Students who adopt a relativistic stance may consider themselves "off the hook" when it comes to both personal responsibility and collective responsibility (being their brothers' and sisters' keeper). If there is no real right or wrong, why should they have moral scruples about what they do, and who are they to "judge" others' behavior, much less intervene when someone cheats, bullies, spreads rumors, sexually harasses or exploits another person, or engages in behavior harmful to themselves?

Studying Virtue

Rather than engaging students in an abstract philosophical debate about relativism—often an unsuccessful strategy—we can involve them in what is ultimately likely to be a more fruitful project: studying virtue ("What does good character look like?") and reflecting on their own character development. Christina Hoff Sommers has found this approach effective with her college students. She writes:

An exposure to what Aristotle says about courage, generosity, temperance, and other virtues makes an immediate inroad on dogmatic relativism . . . Once a student becomes engaged with the problem of what kind of person to be, and how to *become* that kind of person, the problems of ethics become concrete and practical. For many a student, morality itself is thereafter looked on as a natural and even inescapable personal undertaking. I have not come across students who have taken a course in the philosophy of virtue saying that they have learned there is no such thing as morality.[11]

The curriculum carries our moral heritage.

At the high school level, perhaps the most compelling way to study virtue is to encounter it in the flesh-and-blood lives of real people. The academic curriculum is full of opportunities to examine lives of character. In their book, *Building Character in Schools*, Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin argue that the curriculum carries our moral heritage.

The curriculum is a primary source of our shared moral wisdom. Stories, biographies, historical events, and human reflections provide us with a guide to what it means to lead a good life and possess strong moral character. This moral heritage also includes encounters with human failure,

tragedy, injustice, and weak and sinister characters. In effect, the curriculum can be used to sharpen our students' capacity to see what it means to lead one's life well or poorly.[12]

In any academic discipline, a teacher can introduce students to men and women of exemplary performance character and moral character and ask:

1. **What strengths of character enabled this person to do what he or she did?**
2. **What obstacles did this person have to overcome?**
3. **What can you observe or infer about this person as an ethical thinker? What evidence do you see of moral discernment, conscience, moral identity, and moral competence?**
4. **What particular character strengths did this person possess that you feel you also have, at least to some degree? What is one thing you could do to further develop that quality? Write out a plan.**
5. **What is one character strength possessed by this person that you do *not* now have but would like to develop? How could you do that?**

> For the young to become moral, they must be in the presence of people who take morality seriously.
>
> —Mary Warnock

There are published character education resources containing brief biographical portraits that can be used to enhance the character dimension of history, literature, or science. Such resources typically provide questions for student writing and discussion and suggest ways that students can incorporate character lessons learned into their own lives.

One such resource is *Great Lives, Vital Lessons*, designed to be accessible to middle-schoolers but useful, we think, at older levels as well.[13] Fifteen lives are portrayed, from Confucius to Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver, Albert Einstein, and Anne Frank. In his book, *A Call to Heroism: Renewing America's Vision of Greatness*, Peter Gibbon reminds us of the need for role models such as these.[14]

Lives of Character in Literature

Literature provides abundant opportunities to focus on ethical thinking and character. The teacher, however, must know how to capitalize on the character-building potential of a novel, short story, or other literary work. Consider, for example, one of the most memorable moments in Mark Twain's classic, *Huckleberry Finn*: The bounty hunters are searching for Jim, the runaway slave and Huck's river raft companion, and ask Huck if he has seen him. Huck decides to lie to protect Jim—even though he knows the law requires the return of a runaway slave and even though he thinks he might go to hell for doing so.

For an example of a teacher who puts the focus on character, Ryan and Bohlin take us into the 11th-grade English class of Ms. R. as they reach the point in the novel where Huck lies to save Jim. She asks her students to take 20 minutes to write an in-class reflection:

> What does this decision reveal about Huck—about the kind of person he is becoming? Drawing from our previous discussion of virtues, which virtue is he beginning to show in this scene? Or is he simply acting out of enlightened self-interest? Give evidence from the text to support your response.

At the end of the 20 minutes, Ms. R. engages the class in a discussion (abridged here) of their reflections:

Ms. R.: What kind of person is Huck becoming?

Deborah: I think Huck is really changing. He stands up for what he believes is right, even if he has to lie.

Steve: Yeah, Huck shows a lot of guts. He's changed a lot from the beginning of the novel.

Ms. R.: How has he changed?

Steve: I'd say he's gained courage.

Danielle: I don't think so. Huck needs Jim, and he doesn't want him taken away. I think he's acting out of his own self-interest.

Norma: No—for the first time, Huck realizes that Jim is a person, not property. It reminds me of people who hid Jews in their homes during the Holocaust and then lied to the Nazis. Huck shows respect for Jim—*and* courage.[15]

In *Teaching Character Education Through Literature: Awakening the Moral Imagination in Secondary Classrooms*, Karen Bohlin considers four novels and shows the teacher how to engage

students in identifying "morally pivotal points" in the development of the story's central character. She writes:

Characters in literature provide us with a window to the soul. By prompting students to pay attention to how fictional characters respond to the truth, we help them acquire greater respect for integrity, contempt for hypocrisy, and sensitivity to what accounts for moral growth or moral decline.[16]

Susan Parr's *The Moral of the Story* is another valuable resource that illustrates how to pose questions that highlight the ethical issues in a work of literature.[17] See **www.centerforlearning.org** for teacher-written units and lesson plans that link character and curriculum in literature, social studies, and religion.

Teachers of literature, history, science, and other disciplines often find that bringing the ethical dimension of subject matter to the fore makes it more meaningful and motivating for students. A high school girl on our Student Leaders Panel confirmed this. She said:

When students ask, "Why are we learning this?", we're not trying to be rude or obnoxious. Chances are the lesson has an embedded moral value that the teacher should take time to expose. When students see this value, they are more likely to work conscientiously.

> *"When students see the moral value embedded in a lesson, they are likely to work more conscientiously."*

Use Research to Study Lives of Character

Psychological research is another source of lives of character. One such work is Anne Colby's and William Damon's *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment.*[18]

Colby and Damon asked a group of "expert nominators"—theologians, philosophers, and historians of varying political ideology, religious beliefs, and sociocultural backgrounds—to define criteria for a "moral exemplar" and then to suggest persons who fit those criteria. There was a surprisingly high degree of consensus on five criteria for moral exemplars:

1. **a sustained commitment to moral ideals**
2. **a consistency between one's ideals and means of achieving them**
3. **a willingness to sacrifice self-interest**
4. **a capacity to inspire others**
5. **a humility about one's own importance.**

Using these five criteria, Colby and Damon proceeded to identify and interview 23 moral exemplars. The exemplars' educations ranged from completion of 8th-grade to M.D.s, Ph.D.s, and law degrees. They included religious leaders of different faiths, businessmen, physicians, teachers, charity workers, an innkeeper, a journalist, lawyers, heads of nonprofit organizations, and leaders of social movements. Ten were men; thirteen were women. Their contributions spanned civil rights, the fight against poverty, medical care, education, philanthropy, the environment, peace, and religious freedom.

One of these 23 exemplars was Cabell Brand, a businessman who, over three decades, has developed a small family company into a multimillion dollar corporation. During the same period, he has been the volunteer president of a social action program in the Roanoke Valley called Total Action Against Poverty (TAP). Through TAP, Brand has devoted much of his life to giving others "a hand up" out of poverty. TAP created one of the nation's first Head Start programs; went on to add programs for high school drop-outs, the elderly, ex-offenders, drug addicts, and the homeless; and developed a food bank, a program to bring running water to rural people, economic development programs for urban areas, and community cultural centers.

Brand's story reveals an integrated ethical thinker with keen discernment (including sophisticated economic understanding), a conscience driven by a sense of justice and compassion, an identity centered on his moral commitments, and abundant know-how for executing his vision. In one interview, he said:

The weakness in our capitalistic democratic system is the number of people who don't participate. That's measured by a poverty index which is currently 14%. There's another 14% or so that are the working poor, who struggle to get along. They don't have health insurance or quality education.

If we start off with children early and they have the proper health care, and if the family is in a positive mode and they have a chance for a decent job and are trying to improve themselves and the children are caught up in that, the fami-

> **Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness.**
>
> —Alfred North Whitehead

ly will develop, the children will develop, they'll live a happy life.

Cabell Brand's steadfast efforts to improve the lot of the poor and working poor could be the springboard for discussing the strengths and shortcomings of our nation's economic system and what each of us can do to promote greater economic justice. As part of that inquiry, students could be asked to interview government officials, political representatives, and scholars who have studied the problem of poverty and other economic issues. Issues to probe: Why so many poor people in the wealthiest nation on earth? Why, as recent scholarship has documented, is there a growing gap between the rich and the poor?[19] Concerning these issues, how does our country compare internationally?

"The weakness in our capitalistic democratic system is the number of people who don't participate."

Draw Lives of Character from Current Events

Current events are an ongoing source of lives of character. Students can be asked to read the newspaper, for example, to find persons who have put their ethical principles into practice. Over the course of the year, the class can develop a bulletin board displaying many such persons of character.

One example: In 2003, the Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to Shirin Ebadi, the first Muslim woman to be chosen and the first person from Iran to win this award. Her story (see box, page 136), used as the basis of a lesson on human dignity and courage by Virtue in Action (**www.virtueinaction.org**; see also **page 86**), is a compelling portrait of a principled ethical thinker who acts on her ethical convictions without counting the cost.

Shirin Ebadi's principled stand for universal human rights, like Cabell Brand's personal war against poverty, provides a model of social activism springing from the highest levels of ethical thinking. There are many such contemporary examples from which young people can draw inspiration, including South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Poland's Lech Walesa, and the late Pope John Paul II. In such lives, there is a deep sense of social justice that values the life and dignity of every person without exception—and that challenges societal structures, including unjust laws, that do not support full human dignity and justice for all.

Research on moral reasoning finds that currently, most people in any given society do not attain this high level of fully universalized respect for human rights—which helps to explain why many people easily fall into the mistreatment of out-groups or indifference toward such injustices.[20] But with more diligent efforts by schools to develop ethical thinking, there is reason to hope that a higher percentage of citizens will achieve a principled level of respect for the rights of all human beings.

With more diligent efforts by schools, a higher percentage of persons may develop a principled respect for human rights.

Students combing current events for examples of character should also be encouraged to find lives of quiet virtue—ones that they can readily emulate in their everyday lives. Ryan and Bohlin cite the example of Osceola McCarty. In 1995, someone at the University of Southern Mississippi revealed that McCarty had given the University her life savings of $150,000 to establish a scholarship fund for needy African-American students. A recently retired laundress, McCarty had saved nickels and dimes from a lifetime of washing and drying clothes. She left school when she was in the 6th-grade to care for a sick aunt and soon became a full-time helper in the family laundry business. Ryan and Bohlin write:

Her world was her three tubs, her scrub board, and her Bible. Never having had children of her own, and now crippled with arthritis, Osceola decided to let the young "have the chance I didn't have." Her gift has inspired many others to perform acts of generosity, but it has confused some. She is regularly asked, "Why didn't you spend the money on yourself?" She answers simply, "I *am* spending it on myself."[21]

Students contemplating the generosity of Osceola McCarthy might be asked to journal: *How, in my life, do I practice the virtue of generosity? How, and with whom, might I be more generous?*

Use Movies to Examine Lives of Character

When he was a professor of psychology at New York University, Paul Vitz carried out a study that asked, "Can movies be used to promote the virtue of altruism among young adolescents?"[22]

Vitz showed three classes of New York City students 30-

Shirin Ebadi: Defender of Human Rights

In 1978, Shirin Ebadi was a respected judge in Iran striving to fulfill her dream of promoting justice in her society. When radical Islamic clerics came to power in 1979, they banned women judges and stripped her of her title.

Many other professional women left Iran to escape the repressive laws, but Shirin Ebadi stayed to protest them. She stated: "Any discrimination based on gender, race, or religion is a challenge to our basic humanity. There is no future for mankind without human rights."

She continued to practice law and took on cases representing women and political dissidents who had been imprisoned for speaking out against the government. When people who criticized the government were killed, she pressed for an investigation of their deaths and the prosecution of the killers. Subsequently, she was beaten many times by radical groups and arrested.

Iranian law under this government permits a father to kill his wife, sister, or daughter if he believes she is guilty of infidelity. When a father did take the life of his daughter, Ebadi represented the girl's mother. In an interview, she said, "We asked people who opposed this law to throw white flower petals into the street. In a few minutes, the whole street was white with petals." This action reflected her belief in nonviolent protest.

To make the world aware of Iran's human rights abuses, Shirin Ebadi has written a book, *The History and Documentation of Human Rights in Iran.* In 2003, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Questions for student reflection and action:

1. Why do you think Shirin Ebadi stayed in Iran when other professional women were leaving? What did she believe about human rights?
2. Where does courage come from?
3. If you lived in Iran today, would you fight for your rights?
4. In working for human rights, what can we do? Choose one idea as a class to implement.

—Virtue in Action (www.virtueinaction.org)[23]

minute abridgements of films such as "The Miracle Worker" and "To Sir With Love" that contained dramatic examples of altruistic behavior. Clips from each film were followed by 20-30 minutes of discussion: "Who in the film showed altruism—helping another person without thinking, 'What's in it for me?'" "What were the effects of their altruistic behavior on others and themselves?"

In addition, each student had a daily homework assignment: to carry out an altruistic act of their choosing, record it in a journal, and note the effects of their actions on self and others. On a pre-post survey measuring how important students thought it was to be altruistic, those who participated in this program showed a significant increase in pro-altruistic attitudes. Many students also made statements indicating that the program had affected their moral identity—how they viewed themselves. Said one boy, for example: "I know I'm a good person because I do good things."

Students who viewed and discussed films depicting altruism showed an increase in pro-altruistic attitudes.

Love and Life at the Movies is a published curriculum that makes use of classic and contemporary films to engage students as ethical thinkers and choice-makers. Developed by Dr. Onalee McGraw (**onalee@EGIonline.org**) of the Educational Guidance Institute, the curriculum features one 4-film unit, "Celebrating Black History at the Movies," and another 4-film unit, "The Heart Has Its Reasons," on marriage and family themes. Lesson plans for each film promote critical analysis and writing about character issues. *Love and Life at the Movies* has been used in high school and junior high school classrooms, afterschool programs, and detention homes. McGraw comments:

The films are chosen for their power to depict personal virtues such as integrity, courage, and love, but also to show the meaning of moral and social bonds with the larger community. The films contain no bad language, violence, or sexual references.

In McGraw's curriculum, the classic film "It's a Wonderful Life" is used to explore themes such as:

- **Our choices and decisions in life shape our character and have lasting consequences.**
- **Loyalty to our family helps build a strong community.**
- **We must not let ourselves fall into despair when we fail**

to accomplish our goals.

- **We put life in perspective by understanding its parts in relation to the whole.**

A teacher who used "It's a Wonderful Life" commented:

> Some of my kids resisted it at first, but it won them over. Some said that they, like George Bailey in the movie, had been tempted to commit suicide. They were touched by the film's message that each of us makes a difference in the lives of others, whether we realize it or not.

Teach With Movies (www.TeachWithMovies.com) is an online resource that capitalizes on the power of film. It catalogues hundreds of films and offers lesson plans for using movies to explore character themes.

Studying lives of character is a holistic approach to developing ethical thinking. We see whole people, whether real or fictional, facing moral choices and challenges. As they navigate their moral journeys, we can examine how the four components of ethical thinking—moral discernment, conscience, moral identity, and moral competence—are present in, or absent from, their ethical lives.

Outcome 4
Ethical Thinker

Promising Practice 3:
Help students develop a "go-to" ethical framework and an understanding of the functioning of conscience.

The holistic approach of studying lives of character can be complemented by attention to the individual components of integrated ethical thinking—with the goal of developing a "go-to" ethical framework.

Reflect on Moral Discernment

The first component of ethical thinking is moral discernment. The dictionary defines "discern" as "to see, to understand." The ethicist Richard Gula observes, "We cannot do right unless we first see correctly."[24] In his book *The Art of Virtue*, Ben Franklin wrote, "The foundation of all virtue and happiness is thinking rightly."[25] The ethicist Christina Hoff Sommers states: "In teaching ethics, one thing should be made central and prominent: Right and wrong do exist."[26]

What are all of these authors saying? Two things: (1) Right and wrong do exist; and (2) Our challenge as ethical thinkers is not to *invent* what is right but to *discern* it, to discover what is really and truly good—and then form our conscience and conduct accordingly. For example, being unselfish is truly good; being selfish is not. Being a truthful and honest person is good; being a liar and thief is not. Discerning these "moral facts of life"—understanding them for the truths they are—is the essence of moral discernment and wisdom.

Every young person, like everyone else on the planet, wants to be happy. Franklin says if we want to be happy, we have to form a "right opinion" about "the nature of things" and then live in accord with that reality. This idea isn't original with Franklin. Over the centuries, many moral philosophers have put forth the same concept. Sean Covey, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, explains this idea in contemporary, student-friendly language:

> We are all familiar with the effects of gravity. Throw a book up in the air and it comes down. That is a natural law or a principle. Just as there are principles that rule the physical world, there are principles that rule the human world. Principles aren't religious. They aren't American or Chinese. They aren't mine or yours. They aren't up for discussion. They apply equally to everybody: rich or poor, king or peasant, male or female. They can't be bought or sold. If you live by these principles, you will excel. If you break them, you will fail.

Covey goes on to say you may *think* you can get away with violating these principles—with lying, cheating and stealing, for example—but in the end you will always pay a price. What are some of these principles? He says that honesty is a principle. Respect is a principle. Hard work is a principle. Love is a principle. Moderation—not eating, drinking, or indulging in other legitimate pleasures to excess—is a principle.[27]

> *We can choose to violate basic moral principles, but we can't escape the consequences of doing so.*

Again, it's true that we can use our free will to go against these moral laws or principles, but we can't escape the consequences of doing so. Consider, for example, the principle of respect. What happens when we treat other people disrespectfully? They lose respect for us. It damages our relationships. They may do something to get back at us. If we develop a pattern of treating other people disrespectfully, it will change the kind of person we are. We will find it hard to respect ourselves. We will find

it difficult to be happy leading this kind of a life.

Develop a "Go-To" Ethical Framework

All of us, young and old, face a common challenge: to use our powers of moral discernment to construct what one school head called a "go-to" ethical framework.

To me, character requires a "go-to" ethical framework. In times of stress, we can call upon that ethical framework and rely upon its guidance. It isn't all that valuable if it doesn't come to our aid in the face of unexpected challenges.

Character requires a "go-to" ethical framework.

A go-to ethical framework is another name for a well-formed conscience. It consists of ethical beliefs or standards that are based on correct discernment of what's right and good—standards we can apply with confidence, and with good outcomes, when making moral decisions.

Consider one example of a go-to ethical framework. The great basketball coach John Wooden, whose character-centered coaching we described on **pages 25-26**, tells how his father taught his brothers and him some simple ethical principles that served them for a lifetime:

Dad had "two sets of threes." These were direct and simple rules aimed at how he felt we should conduct ourselves in life. The first set was about honesty: "Never lie. Never cheat. Never steal." My brothers and I knew what this meant and that Dad expected us to abide by it.

The second set of threes was about dealing with adversity: "Don't whine. Don't complain. Don't make excuses." Dad's two sets of threes were an ethical compass for me in trying to do the right thing and behaving in a proper manner.[28]

We can ask our students: "What is your go-to ethical framework—your ethical compass?" In studying lives of character, students can consider, What is the ethical compass for this particular person? How did he or she develop it? What happens when a person's ethical compass, or conscience, stops working?

A go-to ethical framework isn't something that students are likely to have completely worked out by the end of high school; it may be strong in some respects but need development in others. Moreover, a go-to ethical framework at age 18 might not be adequate for all the moral challenges we will face at age 25. Just as we should continue to mature with time and experience in all of the strengths of character, our ethical framework should also continue to mature. We note that John Wooden, while retaining his father's "two sets of threes," later developed, as a successful coach, his famous **"pyramid of success"** containing 21 values. Our go-to ethical framework, like all of our character assets, should be a lifelong work in progress.

Develop an Understanding of the Functioning of Conscience

The dictionary defines conscience as "consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character, together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good."[29] Note that conscience applies our powers of moral discernment to our own behavior and adds a crucial component: *the feeling of obligation* to do what we have discerned to be right.

It's possible—indeed, common—for people to be able to discern what's right and wrong but lack a sense of personal obligation, the dictate of conscience, to actually do the right thing. Fifteen years ago we did a study of cheating at our college and found that more than 90% of our sample of about 300 undergraduates said on an anonymous survey that it was "wrong" to copy test answers, use crib notes, plagiarize a term paper, and so on. But then when we asked, "Would you ever do any of these things if you were sure you would not get caught?", nearly half said yes.

When it comes to conscience, each of us has two duties: (1) to form our conscience well; and (2) to follow our conscience faithfully. Discussions of conscience sometimes emphasize conscience-following but neglect the prior, crucial task of conscience formation. If we aren't discerning right and wrong correctly, we will form our conscience poorly.

We must form our conscience well and then follow it faithfully.

Most of us can think of examples of poorly formed conscience. One survey of middle school students found that two-thirds of boys thought it was "acceptable for a man to force sex on a woman if they have been dating for six months or more." Even more astonishingly, so did 49% of the girls.[30] From all indications, the terrorists who drove planes into the World Trade Center towers on September 11, or carried out the bombings in Madrid and London, were following their consciences; they believed they were waging a holy war against "the infidel." Throughout histo-

ry, badly formed consciences have been the source of much evil. Many things can contribute to poor conscience formation, including ignorance, a low level of moral reasoning, misinformation, prejudicial attitudes, and bad teaching and example. (Some terrorists, for example, have attended radical religious schools where they are taught to hate certain groups and to see suicide bombings as a noble martyrdom.)

We can begin to help students form their consciences well by helping them understand what a conscience is and how it operates. See the box below for questions to pose.

Questions About Conscience

1. What is a conscience?
2. Does everyone have one?
3. How is a conscience formed? What role do other people play in forming your conscience? What role do you play?
4. What is the difference between a "well-formed" conscience and a "badly formed" one? How can you discern whether you have formed your conscience well or poorly with regard to a particular moral issue (e.g., cheating, sex, drugs, drinking)?
5. Does conscience change over time? If so, why? What contributes to positive conscience development? To changes for the worse?
6. Do people always follow their conscience? If not, why not? What happens to our conscience if we repeatedly ignore it?
7. What if you don't "have a conscience" about doing a particular thing (suppose you don't feel guilty about cheating, for example); does that mean it's right for you to do it? What else might it mean?
8. What does this proverb mean: "A clear conscience is a soft pillow"?
9. Why does the writer Catherine Cookson say, "Do not cut your conscience to fit the year's fashions"?

Some psychologists have written in depth about how conscience functions. In her book *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision-Making*, Sidney Callahan examines the self-deceptive strategies that even basically good people often use to keep their consciences from working fully. Self-deception, she observes, is often "motivated by the desire not to face demanding truths that are suspected or already halfway known."[31] We sense that something is wrong in our life, but we turn away because the truth would be painful to face. She notes that psychotherapists must often "spend many hours slowly and gently getting persons to confront what their self-imposed blinders hide from themselves."[32]

In *All About You: A Course in Character for Teens*, character educator Dorothy Kolomeisky devotes a chapter to how conscience is developed, its role in an ethical and happy life, and what happens when we ignore it. She includes a story from a young woman who recounts going against her conscience at age 14 to join some friends in shoplifting.

> At first it was really difficult. I thought about being caught and what my parents would say. I knew they would be completely disappointed in me. But after a while it got easier and easier, until it became like a game. I was stealing all kinds of things, and I was good at it.[33]

This girl's story illustrates desensitization—the diminishing of emotional response that happens with the repetition of behavior or repeated exposure to a given stimulus. But it also illustrates how even when we numb our conscience, we may not succeed in killing it. Three years later, when this young woman applied for a job and was asked if she had ever stolen anything, she found, to her surprise, that her guilty conscience erupted and betrayed her past.

Identify the Factors That Corrupt Conscience

In *The Seven C's of Thinking Clearly* [34] author George Rogers addresses a question often neglected in discussions of ethical thinking and conscience in particular: What keeps us from thinking clearly? What clouds or corrupts conscience?

Rogers quotes Ben Franklin's warning about the human tendency to rationalize: "So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do." Rogers goes on to identify seven "highly error-prone thinking habits that severely inhibit our ability to think rightly." He personifies these error-prone habits of thinking with humorous names:

1. ***Erroneous,*** who can make things appear to be other than what they really are.

2. ***Prevaricator,*** who leads us to lie to others and to ourselves.
3. ***Perverter,*** who blows things out of proportion and causes us to lose perspective.
4. ***Polarizer,*** who leads people to think they are enemies.
5. ***Emotius,*** who agitates emotions that cloud judgment.
6. ***Possessit,*** who creates an "I Want Bias" by convincing us that what we want is more important than anything else.
7. ***Passionata,*** who fires up emotions to the point where rational thought and responsible choices are highly unlikely.

"When Possessit and Passionata are in control," Rogers writes, "hate, envy, lust, greed, and other raw emotions rule a person's choices." Rogers provides exercises that help students learn to spot the seven habits of error-prone thinking.

"Our ability to reason enables us to find a reason for whatever we want to do."

Although we may try to lead a good life, we will often fail. If we wish to help students develop as integrated ethical thinkers, we must help them gain insight into the many sources of moral failure. Forewarned is forearmed.

Outcome 4: Ethical Thinker

Promising Practice 4:

Help students develop an ability to make well-reasoned ethical decisions.

Teach Ethical Tests

The basic beliefs about right and wrong that form our go-to ethical framework, or conscience, don't necessarily need a lot of moral reasoning to explain them or prove their validity. John Wooden says that he and his brothers "knew what it meant" when his father taught them not to lie, cheat, or steal and not to whine, complain, or make excuses.

But in using their ethical framework, young people also need decision-making skills that help them *apply* general principles about right and wrong to particular situations. Granted, I should respect and care about other people, but what does that require me to do when someone tells me dirt about another kid at school? When I see another student cheating? Friends making sexual decisions that put them and others at risk? Granted I shouldn't lie, but do I have to tell my parents everything when they ask about the party I went to Friday night?

The front-page test: Would I want this reported on the front page of my hometown paper?

Part of the ethical equipment young people need in order to make good decisions in the nitty-gritty of moral living is a series of "ethical tests"—questions they can ask themselves when faced with a moral decision. Below are nine such tests (similar to the Four-Way Test promoted by Rotary International[35]) we can offer for students' consideration. Alternatively, we can have them brainstorm their own ethical tests in small groups and then construct a composite list as a class.

1. ***The Golden Rule (reversibility) test:*** Would I want people to do this to me?
2. ***The fairness test:*** Is this fair to everybody who might be affected by my actions?
3. ***The what-if-everybody-did-this test:*** Would I want everyone to do this (lie, cheat, steal, litter the school, etc.)? Would I want to live in that kind of world?
4. ***The truth test:*** Does this action represent the whole truth and nothing but the truth?
5. ***The parents test:*** How would my parents feel if they found out I did this? What advice would they give me if I asked them if I should do it?
6. ***The religion test:*** If I have religious beliefs, how do they apply to this action? What would a respected member of my religion advise? Are there any religious texts that I could draw on for guidance?
7. ***The conscience test:*** Does this go against my conscience? Will I feel guilty afterwards?
8. ***The consequences test:*** Might this action have bad consequences, such as damage to relationships or loss of self-respect, now or in the future? Might I come to regret doing this?
9. ***The front-page test:*** How would I feel if my action were reported on the front page of my hometown paper?

Young people won't, of course, apply all these tests to every moral decision they make. But even if they apply one of them, they'll make a better decision than if they acted on impulse or without considered judgment.

Teach a Problem-Solving Process

In addition to the nine ethical tests, there's a problem-solving process we can teach young people to use when they're faced with a difficult moral situation where, even after applying the ethical tests, the best course of action isn't immediately clear. For example, some students at school are picking on another kid, but you're afraid that if you tell an adult, it might just get worse for the victim and maybe the bullies will turn on you. Or, you're in a conversation where some people are using slurs to refer to particular students—how should you respond? With these and other difficult moral challenges, the following steps can aid decision-making:

1. ***Consider alternatives.*** What are different ways of trying to deal with this problem?
2. ***Weigh consequences.*** What are the likely good and bad results of the different alternatives for the people who would be affected, including myself?
3. ***Identify the moral values.*** What moral values are involved?
4. ***Seek advice.*** Who could I ask for help in deciding what to do in this situation?
5. ***Make a decision.*** Which course of action does the best job of respecting the important moral values and producing good consequences?

Conduct Moral Dilemma Discussions

In their 2005 report *What Works in Character Education,* Berkowitz and Bier state:

> Moral dilemma discussion has been studied for over three decades, and numerous meta-analyses of close to 100 studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in promoting the development of moral reasoning. When students engage in guided peer discussions of moral dilemmas, they show accelerated development in moral reasoning capacities.[36]

Dilemma discussions engage students in considering or debating different ways to solve difficult, often complex moral problems. These might be interpersonal dilemmas (e.g., "Your best friend, in danger of failing a course, asks to copy your homework, which violates your school's honor code. What should you do?" Or, "Your friends have developed a pattern of drinking and driving, which really concerns you. How can you handle this?"); historical dilemmas (e.g., "Should the United States have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan?"); or one of the many social dilemmas that are often hotly contested in the public arena ("Did the U.S. have sufficient grounds to justify a pre-emptive war in Iraq?"; "Who is responsible for—and who should be punished for—the abuse of prisoners in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay?"; "Should the law protect a woman's right to abortion as a reproductive freedom that involves an intimate personal moral decision about one's life, or should the law, as a matter of justice, extend equal protection of the right to live to human beings not yet born?"; "Who should have the right to decide whether to remove a feeding tube from a patient who is severely impaired but not terminally ill?").

When students engage in facilitated peer discussions of moral dilemmas, they show accelerated development of moral reasoning.

Research shows a positive correlation between the development of moral reasoning and more moral behavior such as less cheating and less substance abuse.[37] Since moral dilemma discussions have the potential to bring about advances in moral reasoning, we do well to consider what makes for the effective use of this tool. We can draw on the research for guidance:

◆ **Socratic questioning develops students' moral reasoning.** In a year-long study of 32 high school social studies courses, the teacher's use of Socratic questioning to draw out and challenge students' moral reasoning was the only teacher behavior differentiating those classes that showed significant moral reasoning development from those that did not.[38] (See **box** on page 142 for sample Socratic questions that stimulate moral discussion.)

◆ **Adult leadership matters.** Dilemma discussions led by adults produced three times as much moral reasoning development as ones in which the adult was largely passive.[39]

No one has a right to do what is wrong.
—Abraham Lincoln

◆ **Skill training helps.** Moral dilemma discussion is more effective when students are coached to develop the skills necessary for competent moral problem-solving, such as role-taking and logic for determining valid and invalid arguments.[40]

Socratic Questions That Develop Moral Reasoning

1. Why do you think that—what is your reasoning?
2. Can you paraphrase _____'s reasoning?
3. Who would like to support or challenge what _____ just said?
4. Would your reasoning change depending on the role you occupied in this dilemma? If so, why?
5. What are the moral issues involved in this dilemma?
6. What are possible solutions—and the best reasons for each?
7. What are the consequences of the different solutions?
8. What moral principle should guide the resolution of this problem?
9. What solution is most just and caring toward all the people affected?

Should the U.S. Have Dropped the Atomic Bomb?

At one of the schools we visited, a history teacher presented the dilemma of whether President Truman should have dropped the atomic bomb in World War II (see box at right). This teacher used a moral dilemma discussion format in which he asked for a show of hands regarding how the dilemma should be solved and then formed small groups of students who took the same position. Each group had the task of examining and ranking various reasons provided for the course of action they favored.

As the small groups discussed, the teacher moved among them, listening and occasionally asking a clarifying question. After 10-15 minutes, the teacher brought the groups together to report their rankings and to debate the merits of the conflicting positions on this moral dilemma.

What follows is an excerpt from the discussion when the teacher brought the two sides of the debate together.

President Truman and the Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb

Early in World War II, a group of scientists began to work on plans to develop an atomic bomb. In 1945, they reported to President Truman that they had perfected a bomb with such terrible power that just one could wipe out an entire city. Some of the scientists urged President Truman to drop the bomb on a Japanese city as a means of ending the war.

Below are four reasons that support dropping the bomb and four reasons against it. Read them over and decide what you think President Truman should have done.

We will then divide the class into groups according to whether people think Truman should or should not have dropped the bomb. Each group will then discuss all four reasons given for their position and rank them from strongest to weakest. Then the whole class will meet to discuss the dilemma.

Reasons to Drop the Bomb

A. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor without giving the United States any warning. We should treat them just as they treated us.

B. All lives, American and Japanese, are of equal worth. Dropping the bomb will kill a lot of people, but all together, it will kill fewer people than if we invade Japan.

C. A good president must care about the suffering of American soldiers. The President should try to do whatever is possible to bring the war to a quick end.

D. The war threatens the stability of the entire American society. To preserve society and protect the public welfare, we must win the war.

Reasons Not to Drop the Bomb

A. The United States believes in the sanctity of human life. Destroying human life by dropping the atomic bomb will undermine Americans' respect for human life.

B. Dropping the bomb would be a cruel and wicked act because it would kill so many civilians. How could we live with our consciences?

C. If we drop a bomb on the Japanese, the next people who develop a bomb will have a good reason to drop it on us.

D. Life is a universal right which must be respected by all people. Dropping the bomb on Japanese civilians is a violation of this basic human right.

Teacher: Let's hear first from a group that supports the decision to drop the bomb. How did you rank the reasons?

Girl (pro-bombing group): We ranked them B, D, C, and A. We thought B was the best reason because it treats all lives as being of equal worth and serves the welfare of the most people by ending the war sooner.

Boy: It would reduce all casualties, military and civilian—if dropping the bomb would in fact end the war.

Girl (anti-bombing group): But you're introducing a new weapon into war—how do you know the Japanese or some other country won't use this weapon later? We ranked our reasons against dropping the bomb D, C, B, and A.

Girl: Another objection we had is that you are targeting civilians directly.

Boy: But in Israel, they bomb terrorist targets even though they know civilians will be killed. In bombing Hiroshima, I don't think we were *trying* to kill civilians—it just couldn't be avoided.

Teacher: Actually, as a point of historical fact, Hiroshima was not a military target.

Boy (anti-bombing group): In warfare, there are rules, in a moral sense. Armies go after armies. You don't go after non-combatants—you don't target civilians.

Teacher: Another relevant historical fact is there were international treaties at the time spelling out the rules of war. So one question is, should the United States have followed those rules or not?

Girl: Life and death don't have rules. You can break rules to save lives.

Girl: Look, here's the point that's being missed: To save some lives, you're taking a short cut; you're killing innocent civilians. That changes war.

Teacher: So, you're saying that the goal of saving lives doesn't justify the means—taking the lives of civilians?

Girl: Yes.

Boy: But if we had to invade Japan, we may have ended up killing *more* civilians.

Boy: But there's a difference between killing innocent people accidentally and killing them *intentionally.*

Teachers who conduct moral dilemma discussions should keep in mind the skills needed. In the preceding discussion, for example, the teacher interjected relevant facts, asked probing questions, and paraphrased students' reasoning. Ideally, teachers should get training in these skills.

The teacher should also point out to students that although arguments can be made on both sides of a dilemma, that does not mean "there is no right or wrong" or that all arguments are equally valid. Poorly handled, dilemma discussions can lead some students to think that morality is just a matter of opinion. Finally, teachers should challenge students to apply the reasoning they are developing in dilemma discussions to everyday situations they encounter. In the fall 2004 issue of the *Journal of Research in Character Education,* James Leming and Diane Yendol-Hoppey report findings on dilemma-centered curricula indicating the need to encourage students to apply their best ethical reasoning to their own behavior.[41]

One source of ethical dilemmas is the Institute for Global Ethics (**www.globalethics.org**), which offers a dilemma-centered curriculum; another is Virtue in Action (**www.virtueinaction.org**), which provides lesson plans based on selected moral problems in current events.

Outcome 4: Ethical Thinker

Promising Practice 5:

Use writing and guided discussion to teach the value of a virtue.

Moral discernment includes understanding what good character is—and why the virtues that make up good character are important. With regard to moral character, no virtue is more important than honesty. And in today's world, no ethical virtue is in greater jeopardy.

With cheating on the rise in schools and society, how can a teacher take proactive steps to help students *value* honesty as important in school and in life—and be motivated from within to acquire and practice this virtue? If individ-

ual teachers work to create a culture of integrity in their classrooms, honor codes will be more successful in creating a schoolwide culture of integrity.

Former high school history teacher Hal Urban, in his article, "Honesty: Why It's Still the Best Policy,"[42] explains how he tried to develop his students' intrinsic motivation to be honest. He says: "I wanted my students to realize that when we choose to be honest—or dishonest—something happens inside of us. *It affects the kind of person we are becoming.*" To help them see why this is true, he began by asking them to write thoughtful answers to a series of questions about honesty (see box).

Questions About Honesty

1. A prospective employer or college writes to one of your teachers for a recommendation. The writer says, "We know this student has good grades. What about his/her character?" What would you want the teacher to say about your character?
2. Is "Everybody's doing it" a valid reason to do something dishonest?
3. Is cheating in any of the following circumstances less wrong than cheating in the others: (a) school, (b) business, (c) income taxes, (d) athletic event, (e) job or college application? Explain.
4. How do you gain the trust of another person? How do you destroy it?
5. What are some of the consequences of being dishonest?
6. What are some of the rewards of being honest?
7. Do you see any threats to our present society from dishonesty? Explain.

Next, students shared their answers in small groups, followed by reporting out and whole-group discussion. Discussion typically identified the following "costs of dishonesty":

1. **Dishonesty turns us into phonies.**
2. **Dishonesty always carries a cost, internal if not external.**
3. **Dishonesty often can't be hidden because our deceptions eventually catch up with us.**
4. **Dishonesty ruins relationships because it destroys trust.**
5. **Dishonesty prevents our fulfillment because it undermines our self-respect.**

Class discussion also typically identified the following rewards of honesty:

1. **Honesty brings peace of mind.**
2. **Honesty builds our character and reputation.**
3. **Honesty strengthens our relationships.**
4. **Honesty is good for our mental health because it frees us from guilt and worry and builds our self-respect.**
5. **Honesty enables us to be authentic—true to ourselves.**

Following discussion, Urban asked his students to write again on the initial questions about honesty, and compare their two sets of responses. He comments:

As a class, we discussed how their answers may have changed and why. This activity helped them see that honesty is a choice, one that matters. They had a better grasp of why honesty is essential if they want to have self-respect and fulfilling relationships—now and throughout their lives.

Outcome 4: Ethical Thinker

Promising Practice 6:
Teach ethical wisdom through character quotations.

Speak not a word by which anyone could be wounded.

—Hindu proverb

Happiness begins where selfishness ends.

—John Wooden

The final forming of our character lies in our own hands.

—Anne Frank

In becoming integrated ethical thinkers, young people don't have to start with a blank slate. They can gain moral discernment from, and form their consciences around, the wisdom of the ages. We can find that wisdom expressed in pithy proverbs or astute observations by historical and contemporary figures. Teachers of all subjects and all levels have found

> If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember what you said.
>
> —Mark Twain

character quotations to be a practitioner-friendly entry point for integrating character into their classrooms.

Quotations are effective for several reasons:

- **They are memorable.**
- **They state a timeless truth about the human condition.**
- **They are multicultural—expressing truths that transcend societal differences.**
- **They provoke thought—leading us to ponder why the quote is true and how we might apply it in our own lives.**
- **They offer insights into character.**

Research shows quotations have the power to become motivating principles in the lives of the young.[43] One university student reported that the maxim, "A stitch in time saves nine," had been a guiding principle since his childhood, helping him remain focused on his goals.

In becoming ethical thinkers, young people can build on the wisdom of the ages.

In one high school we visited, a health teacher, recently voted Teacher of the Year by students, said he always opens class with a warm-up activity and closes with a cool-down activity that includes the homework and "the quote of the day" on the overhead. The day we observed, the quote was:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of society but the people themselves. If we think they are not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.

—Thomas Jefferson

He commented: "Sometimes the daily quote is directly related to the lesson, sometimes not. But either way, students often find it the most valuable part of the class. I ask them to keep a running list of the quotes in the back of their notebooks, so they have them all in one place."

In addition to the daily quotes, there were several posters of quotations around his room, such as this one:

What is popular is not always right. What is right is not always popular.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

In another school, a music teacher said he posts a different character quotation each week—right under the classroom clock.

I usually don't say anything about it, but the kids notice it—everybody looks at the clock. This week's quote is, "A liar is not believed even when he tells the truth." Sometimes I'll hear them talking about it: "What does that mean?"

I also look for the teachable moment. One day, some kids were fooling around and I said, "You know, when I give you something to do, it's important for you to be working on that even if I'm not looking at you. Later in life, when you have a job, you won't always have somebody looking over your shoulder, but you still need to be doing your job—or you may find that you don't have a job. It's important to practice this now, so that when you're an adult, you'll have this character trait."

A girl said, "Hey, that was the quote last week!" The quote that week had been, "Character is what you do when nobody's looking." I was pleased she made the connection.

"When I take a quote down from under the clock," he said, "I put it up in the back of the room. That way, they'll still get to see it and think about it."

Some teachers post a series of quotes—one each day on the same virtue—and add a reflection question for journaling or discussion and/or an action assignment that challenges students to put the quote's insight into practice. For example, if the virtue were gratitude, the quote might be:

We never appreciate the value of the water until the well runs dry.

—Ben Franklin

Reflection question:

What are some things or people in your life that you take for granted?

Action assignment:

Each day this week, thank someone for something you are grateful for—or write a note to someone expressing your appreciation.

When students are challenged to act on the virtue

Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.

—C.S. Lewis

expressed by a quote, wise words can become transformative. The book, *Character Quotations* is a source of quotes, reflection questions, and action assignments developed for elementary and middle school use but that can be adapted for use at the high school level.[44]

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[38] For a summary of these and other findings, see T. Lickona, "What does moral psychology have to say to the teacher of ethics?", in Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok (Eds.), *Ethics teaching in higher education* (New York: Plenum Press, 1980).

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[40] D.K. Lapsley and D. Narvaez. "Character education" in W. Damon & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology,* Vol. 4, (New York: Wiley, in press).

[41] J.S. Leming & D. Yendol-Hoppey, "Experiencing character education: Student and teacher voices," *Journal of Research in Character Education,* 2004, 2, 1, 1-18.

[42] H. Urban, "Honesty: Why It's Still the Best Policy," *The Fourth and Fifth Rs* (Spring 1999), 4.

[43] A. D. Prahlad, "No guts, no glory: Proverbs, values, and image among Anglo-American university students," *Southern Folklore,* 1994, 51, 285-298.

[44] T. Lickona & M. Davidson, *Character quotations.* (San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing, 2004), **www.KaganOnline.com**

Outcome 5:
Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent

A Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent . . .

- Respects the rights and dignity of all persons
- Understands that respect includes the right of conscience to disagree respectfully with others' beliefs or behaviors
- Possesses a strong sense of personal efficacy and responsibility to do what's right
- Takes responsibility for mistakes
- Accepts responsibility for setting a good example and being a positive influence
- Develops and exercises capacity for moral leadership.

Respect is one of the hardest character traits to teach. Many high school students do not respect themselves, others, or the environment. Many have learned to disrespect other cultures from their parents.

—A High School Girl

The Freshman Mentoring Program at my high school had the greatest impact on the development of my moral character. Upperclassmen took time out of their schedules to help us adjust to high school. Because I was shown this respect by them, I wanted to pass it on to my fellow students, so I became a Freshman Mentor.

—A High School Boy

In his book *Moral Courage*, Rushworth Kidder, director of the Institute for Global Ethics, opens with a story about a prestigious private boys school that was ranked first in a nationwide preseason lacrosse poll—but then cancelled its entire upcoming lacrosse schedule.[1]

The reason? Earlier that spring, a 16-year-old member of the lacrosse team had a sexual encounter with a 15-year-old girl from another private school and, without her knowledge, videotaped the whole thing. He later invited his teammates to see a "game tape" and instead showed them the sex video. None objected; they all watched.

Kidder asks the reader to consider how to handle a popular and successful team, marred by a moral collapse of this gravity. The headmaster's course was clear. Propelled by a deep concern for the young woman and the terrible injustice done to her, and by an equally deep concern for the members of his school community, he acted swiftly: The boy who made the video was expelled. The thirty varsity players who watched the video were suspended for three days and required to meet with the school's chaplain and psychologist for individual counseling. And the varsity lacrosse season was cancelled. The headmaster's actions disappointed some parents, students, alumni, and lacrosse fans. But not long after, the school found itself swamped with letters of praise and an increase in applications.

In Chapter 1, we cited "values in action" as one concise definition of character. That definition goes to the heart of Outcome 5, Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent, and to the example that Kidder provides. It's not enough just to think about or care about values; we must put those values into action.

In the previous outcome, Ethical Thinker, our focus was on developing the components of integrated ethical thinking—moral discernment, conscience, moral identity, and moral competence. In Outcome 5, Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent, our focus is developing a strong sense of moral agency that leads to consistent moral action.

Moral agency is the power to act—with respect and responsibility.

The dictionary defines agency as "the power to act." Moral agency, as we view it, includes two basic kinds of moral action: respect and responsibility. Both are foundational for moral character.

Respect means showing regard for the intrinsic worth of someone or something. This includes respect for self, other people, property, animals, and the environment that sustains all life. Respect is, to a large extent, a restraining virtue; it keeps us from violating—from

To see what is right and not do it is cowardice.

—Confucius

devaluing, demeaning, damaging, or destroying—that which we ought to value and honor. A deep respect for all human beings, for example, would lead us to take care never to intentionally act in a way that violates another person's dignity, rights, or best interest.

Responsibility is the active side of our morality. It goes beyond respect; it literally means "ability to respond." Responsibility defines our positive obligations. It leads us to fulfill our commitments and to intervene when necessary to stand up for what is right and correct what is wrong. Whereas respect says, "Don't hurt," responsibility says, "Do help—even when helping carries a cost."

In a person of character, these two sides of moral agency are linked. If I have a deep respect for the dignity and rights of all people, for example, that attitude will often motivate me to take responsible action when I see someone's rights or welfare being violated.

A U.S. Secret Service poll found that two-thirds of school shooters felt bullied or threatened by peers.

The State of Respect

In its 10-year survey of middle and high school youth, the National Center for Student Aspirations finds that only 35% "agree" or "strongly agree" that "students show respect for each other."[2] A 2000 study of school shootings by the U.S. Secret Service found that two-thirds of the shooters had felt bullied or threatened by other students.[3] In the March 21, 2005 school shooting at Minnesota's Red Lake High School—the nation's deadliest school attack since the 1999 slayings at Columbine High School—the shooter was described as someone who showed many signs of disturbance and was teased by schoolmates about his weight and his father's suicide in a shoot-out with police.[4]

In a 2002 Public Agenda poll, nearly 8 in 10 adults (79%) said "the lack of respect and courtesy is a serious problem in our society." Seventy-four percent said that Americans used to treat each other with more respect in the past. Only 21% thought that current concerns about a lack of respect are simply nostalgia for a past that never existed.[55]

The Meanings of Respect

In moral development, respect is the base on which other ethical virtues build. In his book *Character Building*, British educator David Isaacs writes that there are three kinds of respect for persons that we must foster in our young and in all people:

1. A general respect that we owe to every human being without exception—a respect for every individual's inherent worth, rights, and human dignity. Such respect is not "earned" in the way that admiration or esteem is; we deserve such respect simply by virtue of being human. We are obliged to treat all persons, including the weak and vulnerable and those who may not seem "useful" to society, with this kind of basic respect. No life has more or less value than any other.

2. The special respect that we owe to persons because of the role or position they occupy. Parents, teachers, and public officials, for example, deserve this respect because of the special authority and responsibility they have for the welfare of others. This is the sort of respect people are referring to when they say things such as, "I don't agree with the President, but I respect the office."

3. Respect as an inner attitude, not just external behavior. We are not being truly respectful toward other persons if we are inwardly contemptuous of them, even if we do not show that attitude by our actions. To respect others is to look for the best in them, just as we want them to look for the best in us.[6]

The Demands of Responsibility

Whereas respect restrains us from doing harm, responsibility motivates us to do good. The responsibility side of moral agency inspires ethical intervention. Responsibility is at the core of moral courage. Edmund Burke was speaking about this aspect of moral agency when he said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." A responsible moral agent realizes that there are no innocent bystanders.

A responsible moral agent realizes that there are no innocent bystanders.

Testimony to the truth of Burke's statement comes from past historical horrors such as the Nazi holocaust. The Third Reich of Nazi Germany systematically and ruthlessly murdered 11,000,000 civilians, including six million Jews. Although the vast majority of people did nothing to help those who were being persecuted by the Nazis, others had the compassion and courage to risk their lives to help those in danger. An examination of their motives helps us to better understand the nature of moral agency.

In 1988, in *The Altruistic Personality*, researchers Samuel and Pearl Oliner reported their research on 406 rescuers who had helped to save Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.[7] For purposes of comparison, they also interviewed 126 nonrescuers. The Oliners found three kinds of "moral catalysts," sometimes operating in combination, that moved people to rescue.

For the majority of rescuers (52%), a *norm-centered motive*—allegiance to the pro-social moral code of their social group—led to their first helping act. For example, the wife of a German minister initially took Jews into her home because her church was engaged in rescue activity.

For more than a third of the rescuers (37%), *an empathic orientation*—a response of the heart to people in pain—motivated their first helping act. For some of these individuals, merely knowing that others were suffering was enough to motivate action; for others, a direct encounter with a person in distress led to helping.

For a small minority of rescuers (11%), the first helping act was motivated by a *belief in universal ethical principles of justice or caring*. For example, a high school mathematics teacher was deeply involved in saving children—hiding them in various schools. She had not directly witnessed the mistreatment of Jews. Asked why she helped them, she responded simply: "All men are born free and equal by right."

These three moral orientations—acting according to the norms of one's group, having empathy for those in distress, and adhering to universal ethical principles—were three different paths to the virtuous act of rescuing. What they have in common, the Oliners concluded, is the *capacity for extensive relationships*—a feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others, including those outside one's immediate family and community circle. This kind of feeling of responsibility appears to be a central component of moral agency.

Recent examples of what happens when this "extensive" sense of responsibility is missing come from genocides in Rwanda and the Sudan, corporate scandals where nobody blew the whistle, incidents where citizens have witnessed someone's being attacked and didn't even summon police, and the various forms of bullying that plague so many schools. In one high school hazing incident, varsity football players at a summer training camp watched as other players used various objects to repeatedly sodomize a freshman boy. In these and other cases where bystanders have been passive or done too little too late, it's sometimes because their consciences weren't formed properly—they didn't feel responsible to act—but other times because they failed to act on what their consciences told them.

The psychologist Dan Lapsley elaborates on the sense of moral agency that overcomes passivity and motivates responsible moral action:

> When our rational understanding of morality is integrated with our character (strong will or agency), we should feel a sense of ownership over our actions, a sense of mastery over the moral demands that we place upon ourselves, and, consequently, a sense of moral accountability toward ourselves and others."[8]

3 Promising Practices for Developing a Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent

1. Develop rules with students.
2. Use discipline as an opportunity for character development.
3. Use the academic curriculum to develop moral agency.

Outcome 5: Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent

Promising Practice 1: *Develop rules with students.*

Students should see the rules that govern the life of their classrooms and school as being important expressions of respect and responsibility. One way to help them develop that understanding and a greater commitment to honoring rules is to involve them in their construction.

Students should see rules as expressions of respect and responsibility.

With that goal in mind, one history teacher, at the beginning of the school year, puts his students in groups of six and gives them the following worksheet to complete:

> I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
>
> —Edward Everett Hale

IF WE MADE THE RULES

Students would not be allowed to . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Students would be encouraged to . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The groups then report out—first the things students would not be allowed to do, and then the things they would be encouraged to do. The teacher keeps a running list on the board. In the "not allowed" category, students typically list things such as "litter," "come late," "put down others," "interrupt teaching," and "dominate conversation."

In the "would be encouraged" category, they list things such as "follow the Golden Rule," "take good notes," "come to class prepared," "ask questions," "keep the class clean," and "help each other learn."

After students share their lists, the teacher adds his ideas. Then he makes a composite list from all his classes, gives every student a copy, and says, "You own them, you honor them."

A veteran teacher who recently began having students participate in developing the classroom rules testified to its transformative effect on her teaching.

I call it the Respect Contract.[9] I've found it liberating. Before, I used to be up here, and they were down there. I was so preoccupied with maintaining my position of authority. With the Respect Contract, I can be accountable to the same standards as my students. It's convinced me that academic education is secondary to building character. If you build character, everything else will fall into place. They'll want to come to class; they'll want to work. I used to send kids to the office every day. I haven't written a discipline referral in three years.

The principal at this teacher's school said, "Some teachers don't do this [have the students help make the rules] because it makes them feel vulnerable. But the faculty in our school who take this approach don't make discipline referrals. And they aren't burned out by the end of the year."

"I haven't written a discipline referral in three years."

The Compact for Excellence

A practice that we have developed and pilot-tested effectively with several middle schools is the "Compact for Excellence." Consistent with this report's emphasis on performance character and moral character, the Compact includes both academic and behavioral expectations. The teacher initiates a conversation that goes like this:

Think of a classroom that you really liked. Did the students goof off, or did they work hard and learn a lot? Did they act disrespectfully toward the teacher and each other, or did they treat the teacher and each other with respect?

In surveys, students say they like and respect teachers who have *high expectations for learning* and *high expectations for behavior*. Students also say they *don't* like teachers who don't teach well or who allow students to get away with bad behavior.

Effective classrooms, in short, are ones in which both the students and the teacher:

1. Do their best work—work of excellence of which they can be proud.
2. Treat others with respect and care—so that every member of the learning community is glad to be there.

These are the two parts of a Compact for Excellence: do your best work, and be your best in relationships with other people. The next question: What rules do we need that will help us achieve these two goals? Since the word "compact" means agreement, we're going to develop these rules together.

Then the teacher puts students in small groups, gives each group two sheets of butcher paper, and asks them to work together to generate:

Rules for Doing Our Best Work

1.
2.
3.
4.

Rules for Treating Each Other With Respect and Care

1.
2.
3.
4.

Small groups then post their two sets of nominated rules. The teacher guides the whole group in coming up with a two-part Compact for Excellence that is a best blend of the suggestions of the different groups. Students then copy these over into a final Compact that all are invited to sign.

In one middle school classroom in suburban Chicago, the student-generated Compact for Excellence reads as follows:

Rules for Doing Our Best Work

1. Be prepared and work cooperatively.
2. Turn in work on time.
3. Work hard.
4. Have a positive attitude.

Rules for Treating Others with Respect and Care

1. Listen when the teacher or others are talking.
2. Follow the Golden Rule.
3. Use good manners.
4. Help each other.

Weekly goals for this class are set around their Compact. For example, when student work was not being turned in on time, students set goals to reduce the total amount of late work and then monitored their progress toward the realization of their goals, reflecting together on four questions:

1. **What helped us to get our work done?**
2. **What prevented us from completing our work?**
3. **What do we need to do differently next week?**
4. **How can we support each other?**

Establish Rules About Language

Language is an index of civilization. It impacts others. It can affirm and inspire, or disturb and denigrate. In a 1999 Zogby Poll of New York State teachers, a majority said that students' use of profane language in school had become a serious behavior problem. Both school staff and students who may be troubled by this trend often have a passive attitude: "That's just the way kids talk these days." But with this issue, as with any moral problem, the responsibility of an ethical learning community is to foster moral agency—the conviction that people, individually and collectively, can make a positive difference no matter what the challenge.

Language is an index of civilization.

A collaborative approach to rule-setting is one way to proactively address the language challenge. In his book, *Powerful Words, Positive Results*[10], former high school history teacher Hal Urban says he would get students to think about their use of language by writing questions on the board (see box). These questions then served as a springboard for class discussion.

Questions About Language

1. Would you think differently of me if I constantly used swear words?
2. Why are some persons offended by swear words?
3. Are people who use foul language in public polite or rude?
4. What do you reveal about yourself when you swear a lot?

Urban says:

What really helped them were their own answers to the last question, "What do you reveal about yourself when you swear a lot?" People who swear a lot, they realize, may

come across as angry, uneducated, rude, inconsiderate, having a limited vocabulary, or trying to be cool. Even kids who admitted to swearing a lot said this exercise got them to think about what they were conveying by their language.

Once a teacher has gotten students to be more reflective about language, the next question is:

Given what we've just said about language and its effects, what agreement should we have about the use of language in our class?

One high school class, for example, agreed that because some people are offended by profanity, it did not show respect for others and should therefore be prohibited in their class. They also agreed on a consequence: If you used foul language, you had to come up with respectful "replacement words."

In another school, the administration charged the student council with the task of addressing parent and student complaints about "bad language" in the building. The council conducted a survey of staff and students to assess their perceptions of language use in the school and undertook a campaign to raise everyone's consciousness about their own use of language. A subsequent survey found that, on the whole, school members felt the level of inappropriate language had declined.

Outcome 5: Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent

Promising Practice 2:

Use discipline as an opportunity for character development.

When students do something wrong, how do teachers and other school authorities respond? Do they discipline in a way that develops students' respect and responsibility—including their respect for rules and the rights of others, their capacity to take perspective, their willingness to admit mistakes and make restitution, and their ability to solve problems and make better choices in the future?

> *"No one has the right to violate another's right to learn."*

How adults handle discipline makes all the difference in whether young people grow in these important areas. Discipline must be more than crowd control. It must, of course, address negative behavior and maintain the order essential for teaching and learning. But it must also, at the same time, develop character.

These two goals are related; growth in character contributes to greater maturity of behavior. The 2005 book, *Developing Self-Discipline and Preventing and Correcting Misbehavior,* by psychologist and educator George Bear reports research showing that discipline practices that include an effort to develop moral understanding, social skills, and self-discipline are more effective in fostering rule-following behavior and personal responsibility than practices based only on external controls.[11]

Classroom Discipline Practices That Foster Character Development

There is more than one way to implement character-based classroom management. As we just saw in Promising Practice 1, some teachers involve students in helping to create classroom rules and consequences. Other teachers, equally committed to character development, reserve the right to set and enforce the rules and consequences. However, they take pains to do that in a way that develops students' moral understanding, fosters mutual respect, and motivates students to behave in a respectful and responsible manner.

> *"I treat all of my students as individuals."*

For example, one award-winning high school teacher spells out his behavioral expectations in his syllabus, which he reviews with classes on Day 1 (see **box** on page 153). He makes an effort to foster an ethic of mutual respect and a sense of collective responsibility—both essential aspects of moral agency.

Once a teacher has established classroom rules—whether through collaborative rule-making or by simply presenting and explaining the behavioral expectations—the next question is how to hold students accountable to the rules. We put that question to a focus group of teachers in a large, multi-ethnic school that had received a national award for excellence in character education.

One teacher said he always was careful to discipline respectfully, in a way that did not embarrass students:

I interact as privately as possible. That's the most powerful way, the kindest way. I don't have set consequences. I see all my students as individuals, so I treat them that way. I usually begin, "Do you know why I want to talk with you?" Sometimes they say, "Yes." Sometimes they say, "I have no idea"—in which case I explain.

One Teacher's Syllabus (abridged)

My Expectations. It is my opinion that education need not be boring. I plan to give my very best to make this class interesting and stimulating, and therefore expect nothing less than your best efforts in return. Such effort includes excellent attendance, preparation for class, listening to and following directions, class participation, and completing assigned work on time.

Please remember that this is your room and your class. The behavior and participation of each person will shape the type of learning that will occur. Since one person's behavior affects everyone else, I request that everyone in the class be responsible for classroom management.

What Are Your Rights in This Classroom? As a student in this course, you have a right to learn without distraction. No one has the right to violate another person's right to learn. PLEASE show consideration to others.

What Are My Rights? As the instructor of this course, I have a right and responsibility to teach. This is my job. No one has the right to violate my right to do my job.

To ensure that our rights are protected and upheld, the following laws have been established for this classroom:

The Law: To Be Followed Without Exception

1. Be on time, prepared, and ready to work from the beginning to the end of the class. (Let me dismiss the class.)
2. Please raise your hand when you wish to speak and wait to be called upon.
3. Please listen with all your heart and soul. I will do the same.
4. Please treat others as you wish to be treated.

I very much enjoy relating to people on a mutual respect level. It has been my experience that human interaction can be tremendously rewarding when such respect exists. I will always extend this consideration to you, and ask only that you return this in kind. Thank you.[12]

A second teacher said that in talking to students about appropriate behavior, she tries to make a connection to the workplace:

> Do kids like it when they have to take off their hat? Of course not. I explain the reason. "Yes, you have rights, but wearing your hat in class isn't one of them." I relate it to the workplace. I point out that in that environment, as in school, there are standards for dress and conduct that they must accommodate to.

A third teacher focuses on helping students take responsibility for the choices they make:

> If I find a student cheating, for example, I give them a zero and a note that says, "Please see me." When we meet, I say, "There are choices in life. Your choices have consequences; you can't turn back the clock. Because you chose to cheat, there will be these consequences . . . " But then we talk about honesty. I want them to know that when they cheat, it breaks trust—it damages our relationship. I also show them a bulletin board where I have honor codes posted from different colleges and universities where you can get expelled for cheating. I want them to know that academic integrity is taken very seriously, not just here, but at many other places as well.

"I tell students, 'Your choices have consequences.'"

Create a Visual Environment That Cues Positive Behavior

At another high school, we interviewed an award-winning teacher who uses colored signs posted around the room to cue appropriate behavior and to remind students of the rules they've developed in order to have a "positive, productive, and caring class." On one wall, the signs included:

No Put-Downs/Compliments Spoken Here

No One Ever Went Wrong By Being Polite

Positive Attitude

Respect for Others

Hard Work

The Golden Rule Rules

This teacher commented, "If a student forgets a rule, I just knock on one of my signs or go over to that person's desk. That almost always takes care of it. If it doesn't, I'll see the student after class or after school."

Discipline Referrals

The teachers we spoke with said they send students to the office only as a last resort. When a discipline referral is necessary, they said its effectiveness depends on how the school administration handles it. In a large school known for its orderly and productive environment, a veteran teacher said:

I don't often write up kids, but recently I wrote up five who had not been coming to class. Now they are all coming, thanks to how our administrators handle this kind of situation. The immediate message to parents is, "Your child cannot come back to school until we address this problem together." The parent is there the next day.

Require Students to Think Deeply About Their Behavior

A high school that is the recipient of multiple awards calls its behavior management system its Success Code. When a student is referred for problem behavior, there is a 4-step process (see box).

One School's Disciplinary Process

1. A student sent to the office completes a form (a) describing what happened, first from his/her viewpoint and then from the teacher's viewpoint; (b) relating the student's behavior to one of the school's eight Essential Learner Behaviors; and (c) planning what the student will do the next time.
2. The student discusses the completed form with the principal or assistant principal.
3. The student decides what restitution he or she will carry out.
4. The parent(s) or guardian(s) are notified. (This might be the first step, depending on the offense.)

The principal explained:

We want kids to really *think* about their behavior. That's why our form asks them to tell what happened from two viewpoints: theirs and the teacher's. Then they must choose one of our eight "Essential Learner Behaviors"—problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, self-discipline, social cooperation, citizenship, concern for the environment, and wellness—that they believe is relevant to the action that got them in trouble. The form asks them to explain: "How did you *not* use that learner behavior when you did what you did? What do you plan to do differently the next time?"

The word gets around school about "the form." One boy said, "It's not a good idea to get in trouble around here because you really have to analyze what you did."

> *"It's not a good idea to get in trouble around here because you really have to analyze what you did."*

Once the form is completed, the student discusses it with either the principal or assistant principal. "The conversation is often the richest part," the principal said. "There's always a reason for what kids do; it helps to know the reason. For example, there might be something going on at home that we should know about."

Require Restitution

The conversation about the form concludes with a discussion of what the student will do to make restitution.

We ask them, "What do *you* think you need to do to make restitution—to make things better? What fits?" This year we had a boy pop off at a park official at his service-learning site because he felt the official was rude to him. He was written up. For his restitution, he wrote a letter of apology to the official and also apologized to him personally. This was hard, hard, hard for this kid to do. The park director said, "Having him come in here like a man and apologize made all the difference in our letting him come back."

In the view of this principal, requiring restitution develops personal responsibility in students because they must do something positive to set things right. "We talk a lot in education about teaching kids to take responsibility for their actions. But just sending them to detention doesn't develop responsibility. Restitution, on the other hand, teaches them that when you do something wrong, you should do something right to make up for it. Sometimes an apology is sufficient restitution, but often we ask students to do more—to think about what other positive actions they might take to make up for what they did."

At another high school that included restitution in its approach to discipline, a teacher commented on its importance in teaching responsibility for one's actions:

It's one thing to admit you did something; it's another thing to make the situation better. Kids would often rather get a consequence than do restitution. I've had some say, "Just give me a consequence." I say, "Nope, I'm not going to give you a consequence. You created the problem—what are you going to do to fix it? Think about it, and come back tomorrow." They do.

Partner With Parents

For the school with the Success Code, the final step is notifying parents. The principal explained:

With a discipline referral, we notify the parents even if it's a relatively minor matter. Our approach is not, "You're a terrible parent," but, "Your kid just made a mistake. We need your help to get the same message across."

Parents want to be in the loop, and we want them to know what's going on in school. Parents don't like surprises. They don't want to find out after 10 weeks that their kid has bad grades or has been written up five times. Keeping them informed builds a lot of trust.

"Parents want to be in the loop."

Besides keeping parents in the loop about what's happening at school, the school can encourage parents to provide at home the structure and discipline that all young people need. Parents would do well to consider the words of a boy on our Student Leaders Panel:

I have friends whose parents try to be their best friend rather than their parent. When this happens, there are no boundaries set, and their lives start spinning out of control. When adolescents have structure, it allows them to grow in a constructive way.

Use the PELC to Monitor Discipline

Discipline—and how it can be used to build character—is an excellent topic for discussion in the Professional Ethical Learning Community (**Chapter 4**). If teachers are on the same page in their approach to discipline, the positive impact on student character and conduct will be magnified.

One high school described how it used advisories to address character development and what school data showed about discipline:

Our advisories meet for 20 minutes every day. Within every advisory, kids sign our honor code at the start of each school year, renewing their pledge to show respect for self, others, and property. Each year in advisory we do a common book project, choosing something with a strong character theme. This year we're reading Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation.*

Every month the Character Education Committee shares data with the whole faculty on the number of schoolwide discipline problems. One month last year we had a jump in discipline problems, particularly respect and attitude issues. Kids were cursing under their breath when a teacher corrected them, for example.

We discussed this issue in faculty meeting: Why is this happening? What's our role as teachers? How are we modeling respect—or not modeling it? What character lessons could we develop for advisory that would hit this issue?

This school also felt that its daily advisories gave them a "rapid response system" that enabled them to nip discipline problems in the bud.

Last year a student alerted a teacher to a food fight that a group of kids were planning. The next day all the advisories discussed this: What are the consequences of a food fight? Who does it affect? Most kids said, "We love the custodial staff here. It's not fair that they should have to clean up the mess from a food fight." It never happened.

Discipline is an excellent topic for the PELC.

Justice Committee

Schools that wish to use discipline as an opportunity to foster moral agency are also wise to consider structures that enable students to play an active role in the disciplinary process. At one school, a girl described how her high school gives students this kind of responsible role through its Justice Committee:

Five students from each grade level make up the Justice Committee. We deal with everyday discipline problems. If a student comes repeatedly late to class or is disrespectful to another student or a teacher, he or she can be brought by the teacher or another student to the Justice Committee.

There is then a hearing which three members of the Justice Committee and the involved students/teachers attend. The hearing mediates consequences that both parties agree on. This kind of disciplinary process, I believe, has a great influence on the development of students' moral character

because being mediated by peers holds a huge power in the life of an adolescent.

"Discipline by a peer-run Justice Committee has a huge impact on an adolescent."

Involving students in the disciplinary process also has the benefit of fostering the ethic of collective responsibility—a vital part of moral agency and one of the essential ingredients of an ethical learning community.

A System of Earned Privileges

One large high school we visited made effective use of a system of earned privileges as a way to promote respectful and responsible behavior. A boy there said:

Because we have to earn privileges, such as parking on campus, it means more to us when we have them. It causes students to take more responsibility for their actions. I found this to be the biggest difference between my high school and other high schools I visited. Those schools often felt more like jails than schools. Give students the opportunity to perform morally and see what they can do.

The Quality of Our Relationships

Finally, with discipline, as with all aspects of teaching, we do well to remember the foundational importance of the relationship between the adult and the student. Said one teacher:

"Tell me your dreams, and I'll help you realize them."

Your leverage in disciplining comes from the quality of your relationship. If kids know you care about them, it makes a huge difference. The most valuable thing I learned about discipline came from my principal when I taught junior high. He would say to students, "I'm here to help you realize your dreams. Tell me what your dreams are, and I'll help you realize them." That's the most powerful thing I've ever heard anyone say to kids, in school or in the workplace.

Outcome 5: Respectful and Responsible Moral Agent

Promising Practice 3: *Use the academic curriculum to develop moral agency.*

How can the academic curriculum be used to develop moral agency, in particular moral courage and the sense of responsibility to intervene in the face of injustice? *Facing History and Ourselves* (www.facing.org) is an example of an academic curriculum that develops this aspect of moral agency. *Facing History* is one of the 32 programs identified as having research validation by the report *What Works in Character Education.*[133]

Used at the middle and high school levels, *Facing History* is an 8-week unit that examines the Nazi Holocaust, the Turkish persecution of the Armenians, and other large-scale violations of human rights. Students view films; engage in class discussions; hear guest speakers, including survivors of the Holocaust, the Armenian persecution, or the Cambodian genocide; examine historical documents; and discuss readings that address issues of power, morality, justice, and caring for others.

In studying the Holocaust, for example, students investigate questions such as:

- **How did individuals decide to support or oppose the Nazi regime?**
- **What were the motivations of those who decided to help the persecuted minorities and of those who remained silent?**
- **How did leaders of foreign nations respond to reports of Nazi persecution of minorities?**

In Andrew Garrod's edited collection of essays, *Learning for Life: Moral Education Theory and Practice*, Margot Stern Strom, Martin Sleeper, and Mary Johnson explain the vision of history that inspires the *Facing History* curriculum:

Facing History has revived the time-honored tradition of history as a moral science, which goes back to antiquity and

We acquire the virtues by exercising them. It is by doing just acts that we become just, by performing acts of self-control that we become temperate, and by doing courageous acts that we become courageous.

—Aristotle

peaked in the 18th-century works of Edward Gibbon and David Hume. From the perspective of these historians, history is a branch of moral philosophy, and its lessons serve as guidelines for prudent thinking and moral behavior. [History] can help members of the general public think critically about social and political issues and to reflect on their moral values and behavior.

This broader definition of history has particular attraction to adolescents. Such students are likely to be struggling with issues of trust, loyalty, and responsibility as individuals within groups. They are beginning to see themselves as unique individuals who are, at the same time, desperately needing to belong. In their [social studies] curriculum, they need to engage in moral reasoning in order to become aware of their own development.[14]

Facing History students showed improved moral reasoning and reduced racist attitudes.

A Harvard University evaluation of *Facing History and Ourselves* reported:

Students' moral reasoning scores significantly increased. Program students showed increased relationship maturity, decreased fighting, and reduced racist attitudes.[15]

Facing History students also keep journals during the eight weeks of the unit. Their entries reflect the curriculum's impact on their character. One girl wrote:

I'm glad this unit was taught to us, and especially to me. At the beginning, I have to admit I was prejudiced against Jews and was glad they were killed. I know this is awful, especially if that is your religion. Then you and the class discussions proved to me I was wrong. Jewish is just like me and other people.

Teachers testify that years after the *Facing History* unit, students come back and say that it changed them as persons. Some students, after examining prejudice in their own lives, wanted to know what they could do to help prevent prejudice and improve society.

That led *Facing History* creators to design a curriculum sequel, *Choosing to Participate*, that not only examines moral agency in history but challenges students to develop their own moral agency by getting involved. The curriculum examines all the ways that people historically have participated—through human service, politics, social activism, and other voluntary activity—in creating a society that seeks justice and dignity for all its members.

We visited one award-winning high school in which all freshmen take a year-long course that combines *Facing History, Choosing to Participate*, and a service-learning experience that requires students to plan and carry out a social action project in their school or community.

The Giraffe Heroes Project

For the past two decades, examples of moral courage and compassion have come in abundance from the Langley, Washington-based Giraffe Heroes Project (**www.giraffe.org**). This project is dedicated to finding and honoring "human giraffes"—people sticking out their necks for the common good.

Co-directors Ann Medlock and John Graham have created a character education curriculum around these everyday heroes. Students read giraffe stories, find and tell stories about giraffes in their own school or community, and then are challenged to become giraffes themselves by sticking their necks out to make a difference. Sample Giraffe stories:

Julie Leirich is a checkout clerk in a Los Angeles supermarket. She saw that the market threw away a lot of good food—and that there were a lot of hungry people on the streets. She stuck out her neck and started taking that food to the homeless. When she admitted what she was doing, her boss didn't fire her—he gave her more food. Customers who heard about Julie's efforts volunteered to help. Today Julie and her fellow volunteers distribute six tons of food a month to the hungry and homeless in Los Angeles.

British doctor Alice Stewart has quietly done a lifetime of painstaking research on the effects of radiation. One of her many discoveries was that a single X-ray of a fetus could double the risk of childhood cancer. She has ruffled a lot fo feathers in medicine and industry, but thanks to her, thousands of children's lives have been spared. She continues her research on public health hazards.[16]

Over the past 20 years, the Giraffe Heroes Project has built a bank of more than a thousand stories of giraffes of all ages. See **www.giraffe.org**.

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

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Outcome 6:
Self-Disciplined Person

A self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle . . .

- Demonstrates self-control across a wide range of situations
- Pursues physical, emotional, and mental health
- Makes responsible personal choices that contribute to ongoing self-development, a healthy lifestyle, and a positive future.

In the now famous "marshmallow test" conducted by Walter Mischel and colleagues at Stanford University, Mischel offered 4-year-old children a proposal: If they could delay eating one marshmallow until he ran "an errand," he would give them two marshmallows when he returned. If they decided they couldn't wait, they could eat the marshmallow immediately, but that would be the only one they would get.

Some 4-year-olds devoured the marshmallow within seconds after the experimenter left. Others, however, waited the 15-20 minutes for his return and earned the second marshmallow. They used a variety of self-control strategies to manage this feat: covering their eyes, resting their heads in their arms, talking or singing to themselves, playing games with their hands, and even trying to go to sleep.

Performance on the "marshmallow test" at age 4 predicted important adolescent outcomes.

The study tracked its subjects and compared the "grabbers" with the "waiters" when they were about to graduate from high school. The ability to delay gratification on the marshmallow test at age four predicted a number of important social and academic outcomes. Those who had demonstrated high self-control at four were, as teenagers:

- better able to make plans and follow through on them
- more likely to embrace challenges and persevere in the face of difficulty
- more self-confident, self-reliant, and dependable
- better able to delay gratification in pursuit of goals
- better able to cope with stress
- more eager to learn and better able to concentrate
- more academically competent. (On average, their SAT scores were more than 100 points higher than those of the children who grabbed the marshmallows.)[1]

Remarkably, self-control as measured by the marshmallow test was more than twice as powerful as IQ at age 4 in predicting adolescent SAT scores. Other research has also shown childhood impulse control to be a stronger predictor of juvenile delinquency than IQ.[2]

Mischel concluded: The ability to regulate an impulse in the pursuit of a goal is a "meta-ability," determining how well or how poorly we use our other capacities.

Self-Control and Quality of Life

As Mischel's experiment demonstrates, Outcome 6, Self-Disciplined Person, is necessary in order to realize our true human potential—mentally, physically, emotionally, and morally.

Self-discipline forms the backbone of both excellence and ethics. What frequently separates a great athlete, musician, or artist from an average or not-so-good one? The ability to sacrifice, delay gratification, and discipline the self in pursuit of a goal. What frequently separates a great parent, spouse, or community member from an average or not-so-good one? The ability to sacrifice, delay gratification, and discipline the self in pursuit of a goal.

Aristotle ranked temperance high on his list of virtues.

Through history, self-discipline—the control of our appetites, impulses, and passions—has been considered a mark of good character. In his book *The Moral Sense*, political scientist James Q. Wilson notes that Aristotle placed temperance high on his list of virtues and devoted a full chapter to it in *Nichomachean Ethics*.[3] Aristotle ranked temperance along with justice and courage as states of character that are always and everywhere required of anyone we would call good. Wilson comments:

Either we rule our desires, or our desires rule us.

—Proverb

It is a remarkable characteristic of human society that most of the things that are best for us—that is, most likely to produce genuine and enduring happiness—require us to forgo some immediate pleasure. Success at an occupation requires study now; success at music requires practice now; success at romantic love requires courtship now; a reputation for honesty requires forgoing temptations now; the respect and affection of our grown children requires long hours and much effort devoted to their growing years.[4]

Cultivating self-disciplined persons who pursue healthy lifestyles has the potential to generate a far-reaching return on investment for schools, families, and communities. The return isn't simply financial in nature, although it certainly has that potential. The return is realized in a higher quality of life.

The return on efforts to develop self-discipline is a higher quality of life.

The High Costs of the Lack of Self-Control

Regulation of our natural human appetites—our desire for food, drink, sex, and leisure—is clearly a pre-eminent character challenge. The virtue of self-discipline is arguably unsurpassed in its contribution to the quality of life for individuals and society as a whole.

A Child Trends Research Brief observes:

Many of the most common causes of illness and death in the United States are influenced by behaviors such as tobacco use, physical activity, and diet.[5]

Just consider the sheer number of legal and social services dealing with our health: laws regarding drugs, alcohol, and tobacco; institutions treating disorders relating to eating, gambling, alcohol, and drugs; health care systems stretched to the max as they attempt to respond to all manner of health problems, many of which are directly or indirectly caused by lack of self-discipline.

Moreover, no adolescent outcome is of more urgent concern to parents and the wider community than developing self-disciplined youth who refrain from risky behavior. Unhealthy risk-taking by teens—involvement in sex, drugs, drinking, drinking and driving, and the like—can carry immediate and life-altering costs for young people and high costs for the families and communities in which they live. Speaking at a Safe and Drug Free Schools Conference, substance abuse prevention specialist Beverly Watts Davis told her audience:

Illegal drug use by youth and adults is a factor affecting whether businesses remain in, leave, or come to a community. Drugs lead to an increase in crime, which leads to an increase in insurance rates, which tends to drive out or keep away businesses.[6]

No community is immune from these problems. Laura De Haan and Rikki Trageton, writing in the journal *Adolescent and Family Health*, point out, "It was once believed that living in a rural area would protect adolescents from the risks associated with adolescent drug and alcohol use." In fact, the gap in drug and alcohol usage rates for rural and urban adolescents is now almost non-existent.[7]

Teen use of alcohol is linked to a variety of harmful outcomes. According to the federal survey, *Monitoring the Future,* 58% of high school seniors say they have been drunk at least once; one in three teens say they binge-drink (five or more drinks within a few hours) at least once a month.[8] Among junior high and high school students who are current drinkers, nearly four in ten exhibit serious behavior problems. According to the National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse, alcohol is frequently a facilitator of teen sexual activity.[9] Nearly 60% of high school dropouts began drinking by age 15. Drinking problems that start in adolescence often continue into adulthood. About 20 million American adults have an alcohol disorder, resulting in an estimated annual workplace productivity loss of $90 billion.[10]

Among teens who are current drinkers, nearly four in ten exhibit serious behavior problems.

Self-discipline by adolescents in the sexual domain can help to prevent a host of life-changing consequences. Approximately one in four sexually active teens gets an STD every year; nearly half of all new HIV infections occur in young people under 25. Four in ten girls become pregnant at least once before age 20.[11] Only 41% of girls who have children before 18 graduate from high school. Virtually all of the increase in child poverty between 1980 and 1996 was related to the increase in nonmarital childbearing. Nearly 80% of fathers of children born to teen mothers do not marry the mothers and pay an average of only $800 annually in child support (often because they are poor themselves). Although births to adolescents declined during the 1990s, the U. S. still has the highest rates of teen pregnancy, teen births, and teen abortions in the industrialized world.[12]

Preventing Problems vs. Promoting the Positive

The Child Trends Research Brief, *Preventing Problems vs. Promoting the Positive: What Do We Want for Our Children?*, asks us to consider: What is our primary focus in our families and schools? Are we merely trying to prevent problems in our children, or are we also working to promote their healthy development?[13] Child Trends notes that for most parents and educators, helping youth to avoid drugs, violence, and crime is not enough; they also want to promote young people's optimal development by cultivating the habits and skills that lead to positive relationships and authentic happiness.

In spite of our positive aspirations for youth, however, too often we focus our research, programs, and media attention on acute problems facing youth, without developing a holistic vision. A holistic vision offers this integrating insight: *Problem behaviors such as premature sexual activity, drug use, tobacco use, and obesity have a common root—the absence of self-discipline—and a shared antidote, namely, the development of self-discipline.*

By emphasizing personal responsibility for self-discipline we don't mean to deny the power of the surrounding culture to assist, or detract from, the development of self-discipline. A community—be it a classroom, team, club, or support group—that embodies a culture of self-discipline can have a great impact on an individual person's development and practice of self-discipline. But ultimately, the development of self-discipline is an "inside job." A self-disciplined person, by definition, is dedicated to the regulation of self, even in the face of contrary external pressures or a lack of support.

Ultimately, the development of self-discipline is an "inside job."

Helping our young become self-disciplined persons who pursue a healthy lifestyle also means taking a life-course perspective as parents and educators. We must resist the temptation to "handle" adolescent issues such as sex, drugs, and drinking in a way that fails to fully prepare young people for the life-course challenges they will inevitably face. Unfortunately, many adults take a "kids will be kids" approach to adolescence, as if self-indulgent habits formed by teens have no future effects on their conscience and habits as adults. Said one father who exemplified this attitude: "My daughter is 16. When kids get to be that age, I just assume they're going to be drinking, doing drugs, and having sex."

When we take a "kids will be kids" approach, however, we get an "adults will be kids" society. We get adults with the habits they formed as kids, since adolescents' positive and negative behaviors tend to carry over into adulthood."[14] Moreover, we delay the development of critically important adult behaviors—sacrifice, postponing gratification, and moderation in the pursuit of pleasure—needed for a self-disciplined, productive, and fulfilling life.

When we take a "kids will be kids" approach to adolescent problems, we get a society of adults who have not grown up.

4 Promising Practices for Developing a Self-Disciplined Person

1. Use advisories, wellness programs, and other schoolwide strategies to promote a balanced, self-disciplined lifestyle.
2. Approach sex education holistically, as an opportunity to develop good character and a future orientation.
3. Implement a community-wide approach to building developmental assets.
4. Partner with parents to discourage substance abuse.

Outcome 6: Self-Disciplined Person

Promising Practice 1:

Use advisories, wellness programs, and other schoolwide strategies to promote a balanced, self-disciplined lifestyle.

Advisories that provide quality mentoring and positive peer relations foster the sense of attachment, or connectedness, that every student needs. What is particularly relevant to Outcome 6 is that this connectedness provides a support system in which students are more likely to develop self-discipline and pursue a healthy lifestyle. For example, research finds that students who experience school connectedness are significantly less likely to:

- **engage in substance abuse**

- **exhibit emotional distress**
- **demonstrate violent or deviant behavior**
- **experience suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide**
- **become pregnant.**[15]

Advisories create the connectedness that helps to foster a healthy lifestyle.

Moreover, when the connectedness created by advisories is *combined* with a curriculum designed to develop character—including self-discipline and a healthy lifestyle—the positive impact of advisories is likely to be even greater. In our site visits and review of the literature, we found examples of advisories that combined the power of connectedness with the power of a well-crafted curriculum.

A Freshman Advisory Program

Although many schools have advisories during all four years, freshman year is arguably the most critical year to have a strong advisory program. As one high school principal put it: "Freshmen are still very much figuring things out. They're more malleable than they will be later on."

One large and diverse high school (with 2,200 students speaking a total of 57 languages) began its Freshman Advisory Program six years ago because of its concern that many freshmen (37%) were failing at least one of their first-semester courses and a significant number (28%) participated in no extracurricular activities. The box at right describes the steps in this school's development of its new advisory program.[16] Note the way in which the advisory curriculum is organized around three themes: attachment, achievement, and the awareness and skills needed for healthy decision-making.

Strong advisory programs combine the power of connectedness with the power of a well-designed curriculum.

This school reports that the percentage of freshmen failing a course has declined from 37% in the first semester of the 2002-03 school year (prior to advisories) to 23% in the first semester of 2004-05. The change in student participation in extracurricular activities has been smaller but in the right direction: up to 78%, compared to 72% before the advisories.

Developing a Freshman Advisory Program: One School's Story

1. The principal appointed a school social worker to serve as the Freshman Advisory Program coordinator and to provide leadership for developing the program's curriculum.
2. The social worker assembled a planning team of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors that met for two years to research the literature on advisories and design the school's program.
3. The planning team chose "Doing well and being well" as the slogan for Freshman Advisory to convey a dual focus on academics and social development.
4. Advisory sessions were scheduled to meet once a week, replacing the weekly freshman study hall.
5. Each advisory is made up of 30 freshmen, 5 upperclass student mentors, and 1 supervisory teacher. The supervisory teachers do advisory in lieu of other supervisory duties such as cafeteria monitoring. They are responsible for order and discipline and guide their student mentors much as they would a student teacher. They meet with their mentor teams twice a month to review mentors' lesson plans and suggest instructional techniques.
6. The curriculum centers on three themes:
   - *Attachment.* Mentors lead their advisory group members in team-building activities, help them get connected with school clubs and other resources, and supervise their service-learning projects.
   - *Achievement.* Mentors teach study skills, time management and stress management skills, and strategies for reading, note taking, and test taking. Every four weeks, the advisory program coordinator gives the supervising teachers a detailed report on each student member's academic standing.
   - *Awareness.* Mentors help students develop the self-awareness and skills to make healthy life decisions. School counselors also participate in advisory sessions to discuss such issues as depression, substance abuse, dating violence, and the influence of the media on gender image and self-concept.

A 4-Year Advisory Program

We visited an award-winning high school whose advisory program spanned all four years. This school's advisories:

- **are aimed at helping students set short and long-term educational goals and develop a healthy self-concept and positive life skills**
- **each have 25 students, a mix of all four grade levels**
- **meet once a week for 45 minutes**
- **include a faculty supervisor but are led by seniors**
- **every year focus on a different theme, chosen by the students**
- **are continually modified on the basis of student responses to an end-of-the-year survey that asks, "What did you most like about advisory this year?" "What suggestions do you have that would make advisory a worthwhile program for you?"**

A school counselor explained how advisory members take responsibility for researching topics and teaching their peers:

> We typically divide the yearly theme into five subtopics and each advisory into groups of five students. Each group of five takes a different subtopic— such as eating disorders, sexual assault, alcohol abuse, or drug dependency—and makes a short video on that issue, interviewing students, parents, teachers, alums, and often community professionals. Along with the video, they create an informational brochure on their topic that is distributed to students and staff. Each group then presents its video and brochure to its advisory and leads the discussion of that issue.

"We also do a lot with personal survivor stories," the counselor said. "These are personal testimonies, often written by former students, dealing with a range of topics such as sexual assault, domestic violence, drug and alcohol problems, and friendship issues." (For an example, see the box below.)

One purpose of the survivor stories is to foster a strong sense of collective responsibility, including the belief that a true friend doesn't just stand by and watch while someone she or he cares about makes destructive decisions. This is a character theme that advisories would do well to emphasize. In an ethical learning community, valuing self-

What Are a Friend's Responsibilities?

As a little girl, I had seen the pain of living with an alcoholic parent, but in high school I told myself I could handle drugs. Though I denied it, I was walking down the same path as my father, whom I had despised for so long. As I got deeper into drugs, I was losing my best friend, and I was losing myself. I was lying constantly and putting my friends in terrible positions by asking them to lie for me.

I was fortunate to have a friend who cared enough about me to do the one thing that no one else cared enough to do. She got me help. It takes tremendous strength to disregard the repercussions of telling on a friend, especially if it means you might lose that friendship in the process. When my counselor and best friend confronted me, I was shocked, then scared, then livid. I felt hurt and betrayed. Eventually I felt relieved that I had been pushed into a position where I couldn't lie anymore.

Even though I was relieved, however, I wouldn't talk to my friend for months. But she never stopped approaching me, never stopped asking me how I was doing even if I ignored her. The people I had partied with just disappeared.

Finally, I gained enough inner strength to realize what she had done for me. I am so thankful I had a friend who believed in *me*—not the party girl—and did not take the easy way out. She loved me. She cared enough to save me when I couldn't save myself. Real friends won't let you jeopardize your life. Real friends will be honest with you.

I finally gained the strength to have a real friendship. I hope that someday I can give to another person what Carolyn gave to me.

—AN ALUM

Questions for writing and discussion:

1. What are your reactions to this story?
2. What are our responsibilities when we see a friend struggling with alcohol, drugs, an eating disorder, or some other self-destructive behavior?
3. What would you be willing to do for a friend in need? What are the difficulties in trying to help a friend or family member in this kind of situation?
4. If you knew a friend was struggling with alcohol, drugs, or some other serious problem, how would you approach them?

discipline and a healthy lifestyle means not only leading that kind of life yourself, but also trying to be a positive influence on others.

Valuing self-discipline means not only leading that kind of life yourself but also trying to be a positive influence on others.

Many young people, to their deep regret, learn too late that real caring sometimes requires care-frontation. Some see their friends killed in car accidents where drinking was involved—and later wish they had done something to try to prevent it. Others see friends suffer from poor decisions in relationships. The story on page 163 shows the power of care-frontation, which is often needed in our efforts to help one another become self-disciplined persons who pursue a healthy lifestyle.

> We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.
>
> —John Dryden

Fitness for Learning, Fitness for Life

According to Child Trends: "Insufficient physical activity and poor nutrition combine to comprise the second leading preventable cause of death in America. Lack of exercise and poor diet play roles in obesity, coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers." Child Trends reports that, in spite of this knowledge, "a third of high school students fail to meet current public health recommendations of three or more sessions a week of continuous, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity."[17]

John Allegrante, president of the National Center for Health Education and co-editor of the book *Derryberry's Educating for Health*, reports the following in an *Education Week* essay titled "Unfit to Learn":

- **Between 1991 and 1995, the percentage of students attending daily physical education classes dropped from 42% to 25%.**
- **A California Department of Education study reported that students in grades 5-9 who met physical fitness standards in three or more areas were superior to less fit students in math and reading.**[18]

A Wellness Program

We visited a National School of Character that has responded to the challenges posed by the facts cited above. A year ago, this school replaced its old physical education and health education classes with a new Wellness Workshop designed to help students form and sustain habits of healthy living. The premise of the new approach: If we expect youth to make a commitment to physical fitness in their adult lives, they must begin to make that commitment now.

The Wellness Workshop isn't tied to a class period; rather students have to do 40 hours of wellness activities over the course of the semester. The school's wellness coordinator explained:

Because this is a lifelong skill, kids need to learn now how to fit wellness into their lives. The wellness class requires them to do that.

We do meet as a class twice a week for the first six weeks; then we turn them loose. In our class sessions, we begin with the question, "What does it mean to be healthy? Mentally healthy? Physically healthy? Emotionally Healthy? Socially healthy?

They each do a family history, interviewing various family members. This makes it up close and personal. One boy came back and said, "My dad died of a heart attack at 38. That scares me."

One high school requires a Wellness Workshop so that students learn how to fit wellness into their lives.

The rest of the Wellness Workshop involves these steps:

1. **Students set three goals for physical health and three goals for mental/emotional/social health. These must be specific goals on which they can make measurable progress.**
2. **Students develop a plan—what exercise they'll do, what kind of meals they'll eat, and so on—for how they are going to work on their wellness goals.**
3. **Fitness tests are provided at the beginning of the semester and along the way. A computer program charts the results so that students can see their gains. Students share their personal profiles in order to motivate each other.**
4. **During the semester, students are asked to reflect on how well they are following their plan. What's working? What isn't?**

5. On the basis of their self-assessment, students develop another plan for the next semester.

Says the instructor: "By the end of the first semester, some have worked wellness into their lifestyles, but others have not. We want everyone to learn from their experience, make adjustments, and keep trying."

At another school we visited, all students take a fitness class, and all school members—staff and students—do fitness activities for the last 20 minutes of the school day. Some can be found playing basketball, some working out in the weight room, some doing other forms of exercise. Said a girl at this school: "My overall self-discipline has definitely benefited from our school's strong emphasis on exercise and pursuing a healthy lifestyle."

"Doing School": Self-Discipline Run Amuck

One benefit of a schoolwide course such as the Wellness Workshop is that it helps students develop a vision of, and commitment to, a lifestyle that balances work with physical, mental, and emotional health. Unless self-discipline is anchored in that kind of commitment to a balanced lifestyle, it can easily run amuck, especially in today's highly competitive environment.

In her book, *"Doing School": How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students*, educator Denise Pope describes students who have plenty of self-discipline but are not using it to pursue meaningful learning or healthy lifestyles.[19] These students, in their own words, are "doing school." Pope writes:

> They focus on managing their workloads and cutting corners. They memorize facts and figures just long enough to ace their exams and then move on to the next set of tasks. They admit to scheming, lying, and cheating to get the grades they believe they need for future success.[20]

Some call themselves "robo-students," Pope says. "They drag themselves through the school day, exhausted and living in a constant state of stress. Some sacrifice sleep, healthy eating, and exercise to pursue high grade-point averages. Others suffer from anxiety and depression." Pope concludes: "Now more than ever before, pressure for high achievement in school has become a significant risk factor for adolescent mental and physical health."[21]

One honor student interviewed in Pope's study was taking several advanced placement classes and was involved in several school clubs. She also played field hockey and badminton and performed in the school band. She described her life:

> I sometimes have two or three days where I get two hours of sleep per night. I see lots of my friends burned out. Some people see health and happiness as more important than grades and college; I don't.[22]

"Pressure for high achievement has become a significant risk factor for adolescent physical and mental health."

The Stressed Out Students (SOS) Project

The Stressed Out Students (SOS) project at Stanford University's School of Education seeks to address the "doing school" syndrome. Directed by Denise Pope, the SOS project has worked with high schools to implement various strategies aimed at reducing student stress. (See box.)

Stressed Out Students (SOS) Project: 5 Strategies for Reducing Stress

1. *Collaborate with students and parents.* Survey students and parents about issues related to academic stress, including student workload, homework time, co-curricular activities, sleep habits, course expectations, and college admissions. Use this information to determine the degree of the problem, make changes, and assess progress.
2. *Improve the use of time.* Consider block scheduling as a way of reducing the number of classes. Create schoolwide test and assignment calendars so that students don't have multiple tests or major projects due on the same day. Examine the purpose of homework; emphasize quality rather than quantity.
3. *Develop mental health initiatives.* Offer classes or workshops on time management and stress reduction.
4. *Redefine success.* Consider not ranking students by GPA or naming a valedictorian. Give awards—e.g., for character and community service—that recognize moral excellence as well as intellectual excellence.
5. *Raise parents' awareness.* Offer parent education evenings to address the pressures that well-meaning families sometimes place on their children. Explain that college should not be considered a status symbol but should represent a best fit between the student and the school.[23]

Outcome 6: Self-Disciplined Person

Promising Practice 2:

Approach sex education holistically, as an opportunity to develop good character and a future orientation.

Sex is an issue that is too often approached only with a "preventing problems" mindset and not with a "promoting the positive" mindset. Sexual desires, like all human desires, provide an opportunity for the development of character. Because sex education in the schools is often controversial, we can miss seeing this area as a developmental opportunity for adolescents, one with far-reaching implications for society.

Sexual desires, like all human desires, present an opportunity for the development of character.

If we are to foster good dialogue about this important topic, we must begin by recognizing that although sex is natural and good, not all sex is good. Sex can express and deepen faithful love, but sex can also be used to betray, demean, or exploit others. Sex can bring the joy of a new life into a family where parents are committed to love and raise the child, but sex can also create a life that ends in abortion or comes into a world where the adults are not prepared to provide the nurturing that is every child's birthright.

Dr. John Diggs, a member of our Experts Panel and an African-American physician who works with teens to help them exercise sexual self-discipline, pulls no punches in challenging us to face some hard truths about the disruptive power of sex outside a truly committed relationship, historically known as marriage. Focusing on the especially high costs for minorities, Diggs writes:

> If men do not, by marriage, demonstrate full commitment to their children and to the women who bear them, those men tend toward irresponsibility in all areas of life. About 70 percent of the nation's black babies are born to unmarried mothers. Statistics are less severe but similar for some other ethnic minorities. Women and children without committed men are statistically more likely to suffer a whole series of ravages, from physical and sexual abuse to illness and poverty.

"The economic impact of sexual irresponsibility," Diggs concludes, "is staggering."

> Children of unmarried parents are much more likely to grow up in poverty. Skills are not passed on to progeny by the absentee parent. Money is dissipated by individual desires rather than pooled for the family good. Grandparents often have to step in and act as parents.
>
> In the end, unrestrained sex does more damage to the status of minorities than any disease you can name. Marriage alone is not a magic cure for all these problems, but disrespect for marriage is guaranteed disaster.[24]

Stern words, but hardly novel insights. Across cultures, throughout history, the norm has been to treat sex as a serious matter, requiring prudent moral boundaries and social institutions such as marriage that channel this powerful drive in ways that benefit, rather than hurt, the individual, family, and society.

Educating for Character in the Sexual Domain

Because sex has such profound personal and societal consequences, ethical sexuality—disciplining one's sexual desires and acting with genuine respect for oneself and others—must be considered an important part of good character.[25] Sex education must therefore be character education. It must, as Kevin Ryan, founding director of Boston University's Center for Ethics and Character points out, teach students that learning to bring self-discipline to their sexuality is a means of developing their character—and preparing themselves for a deep, loving relationship as an adult.

Ethical sexuality—including respect for self and others—is part of good character.

Do young people see the connection between character and sex, between disciplining their sexual desires and achieving happiness now and in their adult lives? If many of them do not, it may be because we have not helped them frame the issue in this way. We don't help them develop a long-range vision. They miss out on the message that self-discipline in the sexual domain can be a powerful lifelong asset.

This isn't to say that the immediate risks of sex aren't important or that we don't need to educate our kids about them. In her 2004 book, *Epidemic: How Teen Sex Is Killing Our Kids*, American Academy of Pediatrics fellow

Dr. Meg Meeker describes STDs as a "silent epidemic" that strikes 8,000 teens every day.[26] Both sexes are at risk, but Meeker and other medical authorities point to the especially high costs for girls—particularly reproductive health consequences such as infertility and cervical cancer. (A helpful educational resource providing the latest research on health risks from STDs—risks that are not eliminated by condoms—is the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, www.medinstitute.org).

For some teens, a healthy fear of getting pregnant or suffering serious health consequences from an STD can be a motive for sexual self-discipline, but we need to go deeper. Fear is rarely as dependable and powerful a motivator as the pursuit of something desirable. What is needed is an approach to sexuality education that puts character front and center, and presents it to students as a reliable pathway to highly desirable life goals—self-respect, happiness (including sexual self-fulfillment), healthy marriages and families, economic stability, and so on.

Young people must come to see sexual self-discipline as a means of preparing themselves for a deep, loving relationship as an adult.

The Character Assets That Support Sexual Self-Discipline

If adolescents are to exercise sexual self-respect and self-discipline in a culture often hostile to sexual restraint, both young men and young women need to be able to draw on a number of important character assets:

1. **The ethical components—moral discernment, conscience, moral identity, and moral competence—that are part of Outcome 4, being an ethical thinker, including:**
   - **self-knowledge, such as reflecting on one's own character as it applies to sexual attitudes and behavior (e.g., "Do I put pressure on other people?" "Do I respect their values?")**
   - **wise judgment regarding sexual situations (for example, how to avoid temptation)**
   - **an understanding of romance and courtship (both of which involve sexual restraint) and the ethical relationship between sex and love (true love wants what is best for the other person and doesn't put him or her at risk)**
   - **a future orientation, including an appreciation of the rewards—physical, emotional, and economic—of waiting to have sex, and a vision of the responsibilities of marriage and parenting**
   - **strong moral and/or religious convictions about the rightness of waiting**
2. **Other strengths of character—especially self-discipline in the face of sexual temptations and pressures, but also being a socially and emotionally skilled person (able, for example, to develop close relationships that don't involve sex)) and being a respectful and responsible moral agent (having the self-respect that motivates modesty; a deep respect for the rights, dignity, welfare, and happiness of another person; the courage to stand up for deeply held beliefs; and the humility and determination to start over if one has made sexual mistakes in the past).**
3. **Ethical support systems that help a young person make and live out the commitment to wait—ideally, support from one's family, faith community, school, and friends.**

All of these character assets work together to support a self-disciplined sexual lifestyle. Let's look now at strategies for developing these assets.

Develop Internal Convictions and a Peer Culture That Support Sexual Self-Control

Dr. Stan Weed, a psychologist who directs the Salt Lake City Institute for Research and Evaluation, is the author of a study, "Predicting and Changing Teenage Sexual Activity Rates."[27] Weed found that the strongest predictor of a young person's remaining abstinent through the high school years was his or her score on a Sexual Values Scale. (If teens agreed with statements such as "There are lots of advantages to saving sex for marriage" and disagreed with statements such as "It's natural to have sex with someone you like," they were much less likely to get sexually involved.) But a second strong predictor of remaining abstinent was having at least one friend who had made the same commitment. We should therefore do everything we can to help young people develop both of these assets: strong internal convictions that support sexual self-control and peer support for that value.

A youth development program that fosters both of these assets is Best Friends (www.bestfriendsfoundation.org), originally designed to help girls in grades 5 through 12 postpone sexual involvement and reject drug and alcohol

use. (A Best Men curriculum has since been implemented for boys.) Girls in grades 5-9 complete a curriculum; in grades 10-12 they participate in a Best Friends support group. Best Friends was initially piloted in Washington, D.C. and later replicated in more than a dozen other urban areas. The program set out to do what many educators considered nearly impossible: get inner-city girls not to have sex with their boyfriends despite strong pressures from their peer culture that encouraged early sexual activity and childbearing.

Girls in Best Friends pledge to stay away from sex, drugs, and drinking through their school years. The value of an education is emphasized; participants learn to set and pursue educational goals. They also take classes that teach them how to avoid drugs, stay fit, say no to their boyfriends, practice modesty, and distinguish a good friend from a not-so-good friend. They do community service together. They develop bonds, a positive identity, and habits of sexual self-discipline—all with the support of a peer culture developed around these shared goals.

Girls in Best Friends were more than six times less likely to have sex than non-participating peers.

Research reported in a 2005 issue of *Adolescent and Family Health* finds that junior high school girls in the Best Friends program, compared to non-participating peers in the D.C. public schools, are:

- **more than six times less likely to have sex**
- **two times less likely to use alcohol**
- **eight times less likely to use drugs**
- **more than two times less likely to smoke.**[28]

An evaluation of Best Men by an independent research group found that eighth-grade boys participating in the program, compared to their non-participating peers, were:

- **33% less likely to use drugs**
- **22% less likely to use alcohol**
- **20% less likely to have sex.**[29]

These programs, representative of many abstinence and character education curricula that begin in middle school, point to the importance of not waiting until the high school years to foster internal convictions and peer norms that support sexual self-discipline. But even at the high school level, we should view the peer sexual culture as something that is malleable, open to being influenced in a positive direction by a well-designed intervention. (See the Peers Project, **www.peersproject.org**, which has high school-age peer mentors teach a character development and abstinence curriculum to students ages 12-18.)

Consider the Emotional Dimensions of Sexuality

The emotional dimensions of sex are what make it distinctively human. A character-centered approach to human sexuality will help young people understand why sex is most emotionally safe and fulfilling within a truly committed love relationship and why it is emotionally risky outside one.

The emotional dimensions of sex are what make it distinctively human.

Young people need help in naming and appreciating the various negative psychological consequences that can come from temporary, uncommitted sexual relationships. One effective way to convey these consequences is through true stories from the lives of teens. Said one veteran health educator: "A lot of kids will turn you off when you talk about pregnancy and disease, but they respond to stories of the heart."

The box on page 169 describes five emotional dangers of premature sexual involvement. For adolescents, understanding these psychological consequences can help to motivate sexual self-discipline—both to avoid getting hurt and to avoid hurting someone else. (For a fuller treatment of this subject, see the Fall 2007 issue of *The Fourth and Fifth Rs,* "10 Emotional Dangers of Premature Sexual Involvement," in the 4th & 5th Rs Archives section of our website, **www.cortland.edu/character**.)

Our most powerful sex organ is our brain.

—Molly Kelly

The Neglected Heart: 5 Emotional Dangers of Premature Sexual Involvement

1. *Worry about pregnancy and disease.* Sexually active teens have to worry about the possibility of pregnancy or contracting an STD. One high school girl told the school nurse: "I see some of my friends buying pregnancy tests. They are so worried and distracted every month, afraid they might be pregnant. It's a relief to me to be a virgin."

2. *Regret and self-recrimination.* Sandy, a 9th-grader, was excited when a senior asked her out. After several weeks, he asked her to have sex. She didn't want to lose him, so she gave in. A week later, he dropped her. "He said I wasn't good enough," Sandy says. "I know he didn't love me. I feel so stupid."

   Says a 26-year-old husband: "I wish someone had been preaching abstinence in my ear when I was in high school. That's when my sexual activity started. I don't even want to think about my college years. I wish I had saved this for my wife."

3. *Guilt.* Guilt is a special form of regret—a strong sense of having done something morally wrong. A 16-year-old boy in California said he stopped having sex with girls when he saw and felt guilty about the pain he was causing: "You see them crying and confused. They say they love you, but you don't love them."

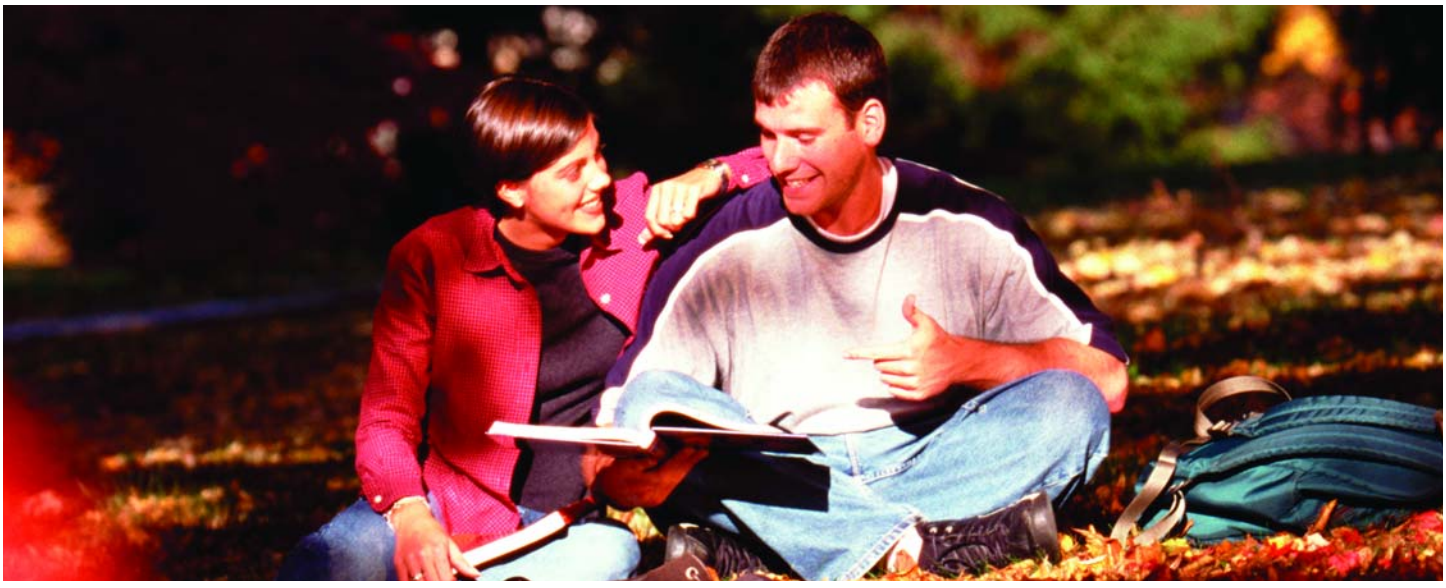
4. *Ruined relationships.* Says a 20-year-old college student: "I lost my virginity when I was 15. My boyfriend and I thought we loved each other. But once we began having sex, it completely destroyed any love we had. I felt he was no longer interested in spending time with me—he was interested in spending time with my body."

5. *Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence.* Many persons suffer a loss of self-esteem after they find out they have a sexually transmitted disease. According to the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, more than 80% of people with an STD say they feel "less desirable sexually."[30] Many worry about how the STD will affect their prospects for marriage.

   Young people who feel used or betrayed after the break-up of a sexual relationship may suffer a loss of self-confidence and difficulty trusting in future relationships. Says Brian, a college senior: "I first had intercourse with my girlfriend when we were 15. I loved her very much, and one night she asked if we could go all the way. A few days later, she broke up with me. It was the most painful time of my life. In college I've had mostly one-night stands. I'm afraid of falling in love."

Questions for writing and discussion:

- Why does sexual involvement have emotional consequences?
- Are these emotional consequences different for men and women? If so, how and why?
- In what kind of relationship is sex most emotionally safe and fulfilling? Why?



The Rewards of Waiting

1. Waiting will make your dating relationships better. You'll spend more time getting to know each other.
2. Waiting will help you find the right mate (someone who values you for the person you are).
3. Waiting will increase your self-respect.
4. Waiting will gain the respect of others.
5. Waiting teaches you to respect others (you'll never tempt or pressure anyone).
6. Waiting takes the pressure off you.
7. Waiting means a clear conscience (no guilt) and peace of mind (no conflicts, no regrets).
8. Waiting means a better sexual relationship in marriage (free of comparisons, based on trust). By waiting, you're being faithful to your spouse even before you meet him or her.
9. By practicing the virtues involved in waiting—such as faithfulness, good judgment, self-control, modesty, and genuine respect for self and others—you're developing the kind of character that will make you a good marriage partner and that will attract a *person of character*—the kind of person you'd like to marry and would like to be the father or mother of your children.

Develop A Future Orientation

It's not enough just to encourage teens to "wait." They want to know what they're waiting for. To get out of high school? To turn a certain age? Until they feel "ready"? Or until they're in a mature, committed relationship where sex makes sense because it expresses and deepens that genuine commitment? The power to resist the sexual temptation of the moment comes from having a vision of important future goals and how waiting for sex will help to achieve them.

In her book *The Power of Abstinence*, Kristine Napier names eight short-term and long-term rewards of waiting[31]; a ninth comes from Dr. Janet Smith, formerly of the University of Dallas. (See box above.)

One of the strongest ways to cultivate a future orientation in adolescents is to encourage them to consider marriage as an important life goal. Teachers and parents seeking to do that can find help from Rutgers University's National Marriage Project. (See the box below for five items from the Project's research-based pamphlet, "Ten Things Teens Should Know About Marriage.")

The book *Cultivating Heart and Character: Educating for Life's Most Essential Goals*, by Tony Devine and colleagues, includes several chapters on preparing young people for healthy marriages and families and helping them to place sex in that context.[32] The Dibble Institute's Relationship Skills for Teens (**www.dibbleinstitute.org**) offers curricula, pamphlets, and activity books for developing "relationship smarts" and "marriage smarts." *Hungry Hearts,* a report from the Institute for American Values (**www.americanvalues.org**), uses five criteria to evaluate 10 leading marriage and relationship curricula in use in U.S. schools.[33]

5 Things Teens Should Know About Marriage (abridged)

The social science research on which these suggestions are based can be found at the website of the National Marriage Project, http://marriage.rutgers.edu.

1. *Consider making marriage a top goal for your life.* Married people are healthier, wealthier, and happier than people who just live together or stay single.
2. *Learn relationship skills.* Take advantage of any relationship and marriage education courses offered by your school, religious group, or other community group.
3. *Marry in your 20s or older.* People who get married in their teens are two to three times more likely to get divorced than people who get married in their 20s or older.
4. *Wait to have a child until after you are married and at least 20 years old.* The children of unwed parents face greater risks for problems of all kinds, including depression and mental illness, school dropout, teen pregnancy, crime, poverty, substance abuse, and suicide.
5. *Think twice before you decide to live with someone outside of marriage.* Contrary to popular belief, living together before marriage is linked to a less satisfying marriage and a higher divorce risk. And the more partners you live with, the more likely you are to divorce when you do marry.

Oral Sex

Even if we succeed in helping teens decide not to have sexual intercourse, there's another challenge: Many young people (about half of teenage boys, according to one survey[34]) are engaging in oral sex—and often don't consider it real "sex." The box below offers some ways we can help students think more deeply about this issue:

Straight Talk About Oral Sex

1. Oral sex is a sexual act. In the words of one high school boy, "That's why they call it oral *sex*."
2. No guy who truly respects or cares about a girl would ask her to do this.
3. Nearly all of the sexually transmitted diseases can be passed on through oral sex. Doctors report seeing an increase of oral herpes among teens.
3. If you engage in oral sex, especially if you're a girl, you are in danger of experiencing the same emotional hurts—low self-esteem, feeling used, feeling degraded—that can follow uncommitted sexual intercourse. Therapists report seeing increasing numbers of girls who have had oral sex and feel emotional distress and a loss of self-esteem after the experience.[35] Girls sometimes initiate oral sex because they think they can give a guy what he wants while avoiding pregnancy, but they discover later on that oral sex actually *reduces* intimacy.
4. If you're a guy and are getting girls to do this, even if they seem willing, you are exploiting the girl (*Would you want somebody doing this to your sister? To your future wife?*), not respecting either her sexuality or your own (*Is this something you'd be proud to tell the person you marry? Something you'd want her to be doing with some other guy?*), and deforming your character by becoming the kind of person who manipulates others.

Use a Character-Centered Text That Supports Sexual Self-Discipline

In their high school text, *Sex and Character*, Deborah Cole and Maureen Duran take a character-centered approach to all aspects of sexuality and romantic relationships.[36] (Sample chapter titles: "Sex, Love, and Character," "Character and Dating," "Character and Marriage.") After they lay out the many benefits of waiting to have sex, the authors offer a character self-inventory that invites students to "examine your character and level of sexual maturity." Ten questions are provided for each of six virtues: honesty, respect, courage, self-discipline, responsibility, and kindness. The accompanying box gives sample items for two of these virtues, respect and self-discipline.

A Sex and Character Self-Inventory

(Answer "always," "sometimes," or "never.")

Respect

- Would you respect your partner's wishes not to have sex?
- Is it all right to pressure someone to have sex?
- Would you try to get someone drunk in order to have sex?
- Would you dress provocatively to get dates?
- Would you make fun of friends if they wanted to practice abstinence?

Self-Discipline

- If sexually aroused, do you pressure your date into having sex?
- Can you turn down sex?
- Do you avoid drinking on a date?
- Do you look at pornographic material?
- Are you willing to wait until marriage to have sex?[37]

Once students have done this kind of self-assessment, they can set goals for character areas where they want to grow.

Like *Sex and Character*, the book *The Art of Loving Well* challenges students to think about romance, love, marriage, family, and their relationship to character. Developed by Boston University's Loving Well Project (**www.bu.edu/education/lovingwell**), *The Art of Loving Well* is an anthology of time-honored literary classics and high-quality adolescent literature including short stories, essays, poems, and drama. A program evaluation found that students who experienced this literature-based approach, compared to non-participating peers, were more likely to agree with statements supporting the value of abstinence.

For a comprehensive directory of wait-until-marriage curricula, books, and speakers, see the website of the Abstinence Clearinghouse (**www.abstinence.net**). Onalee McGraw's *Teaching the Whole Person about Love, Sex, and Marriage* offers a holistic, character-centered vision of human sexuality, including a helpful analysis of the philosophical and psychological theories that have influenced differing approaches to sex education (**www.EGIonline.org**).[38]

Making a Fresh Start

In all of these approaches, sensitive teachers keep in mind those students who have already gotten involved in sexual activity. The clear message to them should be: *You can't change the past, but you can choose the future.*

Teens who have made sexual mistakes need to know they can choose a different future.

Project Reality's curriculum, *A.C. Green's Game Plan* (**www.ProjectReality.org**), offers teens clear steps for making a "game plan" for handling sexual pressures—and for getting back in the game if they've made mistakes. Teens who have been sexually involved may think "it's too late for me"; they need to hear stories of young people who have made a fresh start.

Homosexuality

Said one health teacher: "If we talk about waiting until marriage, aren't we just talking to the heterosexual kids? What about gay kids?"

Within sex education, the subject of homosexuality is perhaps the most controversial of all. As with all controversial issues, schools must be sensitive to the conflicting values present among students, faculty, parents, and the wider community. We think the school is on solid ethical ground—and is modeling good character—if it engages students in seeking to develop knowledge of the relevant facts about this issue. Here are three important ones:

1. **Many persons, including high school students, have suffered harassment and even violence because of what they experience as a homosexual or bisexual orientation. If we care about character, we must treat all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, with justice, love, and respect.**
2. **There are risks of prematurely concluding that one has a homosexual or bisexual orientation. Several studies have found a higher risk of attempted suicide among teens who self-identify as homosexual or bisexual. However, for each year's delay in bisexual or homosexual self-identification, the likelihood of a suicide attempt diminishes significantly.[39]**
3. **Regardless of whether a homosexual disposition is influenced by genetic factors, environmental factors, personal choice, or a combination of these (and scientists debate this issue), we should challenge all young persons, regardless of sexual orientation, to practice abstinence in order to avoid the risks of uncommitted sexual activity. The medical risks of homosexual activity are even greater than those of heterosexual activity. Sexually active homosexual males, for example, have been found to be at greater risk for HIV, hepatitis, gonorrhea, sexually spread anal cancer, and gastrointestinal infections.[40]**

Finally, the school should ask parents, who are their children's most important sex educators, to emphasize the value of waiting. The school should share with parents what the research shows. The box below lists the family factors, along with school and individual factors, that are associated with the delay of sexual intercourse.

Factors Associated With the Delay of Sex

Family Factors

1. High level of parent-adolescent connectedness
2. Parent disapproval of adolescent's being sexually active
3. Parent disapproval of adolescent's using contraception

School Factors

1. High level of school connectedness
2. Enrollment at a parochial school or a school with a high daily attendance rate

Individual Factors

1. Pledge to remain a virgin
2. Importance ascribed to religion/prayer
3. High grade-point average

—National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health[41]

In *The Courage to Be Chaste*, the priest-psychologist Benedict Groeschel writes, "Sexual self-control is often the weakest link in an individual's self-control system."[42] This is not true only with respect to youth; adults also often suffer from the lack of self-discipline in this important area of their lives.

Benjamin Franklin, one of America's most admired citizens, had 13 virtues that he sought to develop throughout his life. Chastity was one of them. Some have argued that he never quite mastered it, but he believed in its importance and strove to improve in this area.

Young people need to know that sexual self-discipline can be very challenging but very rewarding.

Unfortunately, youth see many adults who are not even trying to achieve self-discipline in the sexual domain of their lives. Young persons should not see adults' shortcomings as a license to repeat those same errors in their own lives. Instead, they need our help in reflecting on the pain caused by those errors and in finding the pathways to avoid making those mistakes themselves as they seek to build a positive future.

About sex, our core message to young people must be this: Self-discipline in the sexual domain of your life can be very challenging but very rewarding—to you, to those you love and those that love you, and to society in general.

Outcome 6: Self-Disciplined Person

Promising Practice 3:

Implement a community-wide approach to building developmental assets.

Because unhealthy adolescent behavior impacts the welfare of the wider community as well as the lives of individual teens, many communities have taken steps to maximize the likelihood that young people will develop the self-discipline to make positive choices rather than negative ones.

Over the past 30 years, the work of the Minneapolis-based Search Institute (www.search-institute.org) has been a leading example of a community-wide approach. The Search Institute names 40 "developmental assets." Twenty of these are "external assets," positive experiences young people receive from their environment. Twenty are "internal assets," inner strengths of the young person, including many that relate to self-discipline.

The external assets are divided into four categories: (1) *support* (including family love, other supportive adult relationships, and a caring school climate); (2) *empowerment* (safety and having useful roles in the community); (3) *boundaries and expectations* (including clear family rules, positive adult role models, and positive peer influence); and (4) *constructive use of time* (including involvement in creative activities, youth programs, and a religious community).

The internal assets are also grouped into four categories: (1) *commitment to learning* (school engagement, achievement motivation); (2) *positive values* (caring, integrity, social justice, and the belief that it is important not to be sexually active or use alcohol or other drugs); (3) *social competencies* (including decision-making and conflict resolution skills); and (4) *positive identity* (including a positive view of one's future).

The Search Institute's research has shown that young people differ greatly in the extent to which they possess these developmental assets. For example, one study of more than 99,000 youth in grades 6-12 from 213 cities and towns across America revealed the following distribution:

- **20% of youth reported 0-10 assets**
- **42% reported 11-20 assets**
- **30% reported 21-30 assets**
- **8% reported 31-40 assets.**

The incidence of adolescent risk behavior varies dramatically as a function of how many assets a young person reports. In a 1998 research article for *Applied Developmental Science*, Search researchers documented that low (0-10) asset youth are more likely than high (31-40) asset youth to:

- **use alcohol (53% vs. 3%)**
- **smoke tobacco (45% vs. 1%)**
- **have used illicit drugs at least 3 or more times in the past year (45% vs. 1%)**
- **have had sexual intercourse at least 3 or more times (42% vs. 1%)**
- **report frequent depression or to have made a suicide attempt (40% vs. 4%)**
- **engage in at least 3 acts of violence in the past year (61% vs. 6%)**

- **experience school problems (43% vs. 2%)**
- **gamble (34% vs. 6%)**
- **drink and drive (42% vs. 4%).**

Risk behavior and thriving both vary dramatically as a function of how many developmental assets a young person possesses.

The same study revealed a strong relationship between developmental assets and adolescent thriving. *High*-asset youth are more likely than *low*-asset youth to:

- **get mostly As in school (53% vs. 7%)**
- **value cultural diversity (87% vs. 34%)**
- **help friends and neighbors at least one hour a week (96% vs. 6%)**
- **delay gratification by saving money (72% vs. 27%)**
- **resist doing dangerous things (43% vs. 6%)**
- **overcome adversity and not give up when things get tough (86% vs. 57%)**
- **be a leader in a group or organization during the past year (87% vs. 48%).**[44]

Search has helped communities across the nation implement five action strategies (see box) designed to involve all community members in building the 40 developmental assets. One mayor we interviewed described his community's efforts to take seriously recommendation #2, "Mobilize young people by listening to their input." He said:

As part of our community-wide character initiative, we created a Teen Council that meets monthly with our City Council. We told teens that we wanted their ideas about how to improve our community. We also established a Town Meeting for Teens. At one of their first meetings, they pointed out that we had no teen center. So we worked with them to get a grant to turn an old airport terminal into a youth center. We also gave them the responsibility of supervising the behavior of the kids who use this facility.

Great Places to Learn: How Asset-Building Schools Help Students Succeed is a guide to developing Search's 40 assets in schools and communities.[45]

5 Community-Wide Strategies for Building Developmental Assets

1. Engage adults from all walks of life in asset-building relationships with children and teens.
2. Mobilize young people by listening to their input and involving them in decision-making.
3. Activate all community sectors—schools, faith groups, businesses, youth, and human service organizations—to create an asset-building culture.
4. Invigorate school and community youth programs by making them more asset-focused.
5. Influence civic decisions to leverage financial, media, and policy resources that develop asset-rich communities.

One community created a Teen Council that gives monthly input to the City Council.

Outcome 6: Self-Disciplined Person

Promising Practice 4:

Partner with parents to discourage substance abuse.

No area of self-discipline requires greater community collaboration—especially home-school cooperation—than the challenge of teens' substance abuse, especially with regard to alcohol. As noted in Chapter 3, a National Institutes of Health study found that *40% of youth who are drinking by age 15 become alcoholics at some point in their lives.*[46] Clearly, self-discipline in the regulation of alcohol is critically important.

At any given high school when we ask students, "What percentage of students here drink?" they typically answer: "About half." "Where do they drink?" "At a party in somebody's house." "Where are the parents?" "Not home. Sometimes they're away for the weekend." "What do you do the next weekend?" "Move the party. There's always an empty house." Of course, parent-less houses aren't the only place where youth drink, but many do drink there. And unsupervised adolescent parties are a recipe for trouble, sometimes disaster.

In one small community we visited, the parents of a high school junior left an empty house for the weekend. There was a party, with drinking. At 3:00 a.m., a 15-year-old girl, who had fallen asleep on the sofa after several beers, woke up to find a boy having sex with her. She eventually mustered the courage to tell her parents what happened and with their support, pressed charges.

Said a high school principal:

We have our SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), our peer counseling program, special speakers at assemblies, and a health curriculum on drugs and alcohol. But we cannot do this job alone. In a survey of our students, 59% said they most often do their drinking at parties. Nearly half said their parents allowed them to drink at home.

Research finds that school-based curricula alone do not diminish student drinking. Schools must partner with parents.

Research finds that even the most sophisticated school-based health curricula, by themselves, do not significantly diminish student drinking.[47] It is critical that parents be proactive in this area and set clear expectations for their children and in that way support schools in their efforts to prevent teen substance abuse.

> No one is free who is not master of himself.
>
> —Epictetus

Parents Directory

In some communities, the school and parents have partnered to discourage student drinking by publishing an annual directory of parents who pledge not to allow alcohol and other drugs to be available to youth in their homes. One comprehensive high school (2,600 students) we visited publishes this kind of Parents Directory, providing the names and contact information for parents who sign the pledge (see box).

Says the principal: "If your child is invited to a party, you can simply look up the family in the Directory to see if those parents have signed the pledge. If they have, the message is 'please call' to call to verify that the gathering will be drug and alcohol-free."

Parents Directory Pledge

I pledge to other parents of students in our high school that I will do my utmost to ensure that alcohol and other drugs will not be available at any social gatherings of youths in my home. Furthermore, I want other parents, whenever their child is coming to my home for a social gathering, to *call me* to confirm that I will be home to follow through on this pledge. I do not want alcoholic beverages or drugs served to my underage children. I want to be informed if my children are seen intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

Parent's Signature_____

The distinguished sociologist James Coleman observed that most parents today no longer know the parents of their children's friends. Mobility and other conditions of modern life have made it more difficult to form a cohesive community that supports school norms. The Parents Directory is one step toward recreating such a community—and a strong partnership with the school.

This isn't to say that making a Parents Directory work effectively is without challenges. One recent high school graduate in another community told us:

We have a Safe Homes book, but some parents sign the pledge because of social pressure and then don't abide by it. Kids learn pretty fast where you can get away with drinking, regardless of whether that home is listed in the book.

The Parents Directory helps to create a cohesive community that supports school norms.

As with any practice, a Parents Directory needs monitoring in order to detect—and then address—problems like the one cited by this girl. The professional ethical learning community can take the lead in working with parents to create a survey aimed at bringing problem areas to light.

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Outcome 7:
Contributing Community Member and Democratic Citizen

A CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY MEMBER AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZEN . . .

- Contributes to family, classroom, school, and community
- Demonstrates civic virtues and skills needed for participation in democratic processes
- Appreciates the nation's democratic heritage and democratic values
- Demonstrates awareness of interdependence and a sense of responsibility to humanity.

Character education requires far more than helping individuals embrace proper values or make moral choices for their personal lives. It must also enable participation in a democratic public life that encourages citizens to collectively shape a common, public good.

—Jeannie Oakes

I always tell my students, "If I see you in the grocery store five years from now, I will measure my success not by whether you can tell me Alexander Hamilton's financial plan, but by whether you voted."

—A history teacher

The past several years have seen a series of educational reports calling for the renewal of the schools' civic mission. In 2000, the National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools—a panel of teachers, university scholars, and representatives of civic education organizations brought together by the Education Commission of the States (**www.ecs.org**)—issued *Every Student a Citizen: Creating the Democratic Self.* It laid down this challenge:

More and more Americans seem to be disengaging from even the most fundamental acts of citizenship, such as voting and keeping informed about public issues. These disconnects emerge in sharper, more painful relief among the nation's youth . . .

Young Americans need an invitation to something better and higher. The purpose of school is not merely to provide the next generation with the tools they need to make a living, but also to help them discover the personal and collective means—the perspectives, strength of character, and values—they will need to sustain our civilization. Young people need help in moving toward a higher regard for democratic institutions and a greater willingness to be involved in them.[1]

Educating for citizenship is a moral enterprise that must help students develop a "democratic self."

"Educating for citizenship," the report went on to say, "is a moral enterprise," one which must help students acquire a "democratic self," a "civic self-understanding." In the view of the National Study Group, when we have a democratic self, we:

1. **see ourselves as members of a public, a community that shares a heritage and hopes**
2. **realize our personal stake in public deliberation and decision-making**
3. **acquire and practice civic skills, including the ability to find out the facts about a public issue, to participate thoughtfully in public deliberations, and to make ethical judgments about what is good for the whole.**[2]

Every Student a Citizen urged schools to take bold steps to develop the democratic self in staff, students, parents, and the wider community (see **box** on page 178). These recommendations support and extend the practices we presented in Chapter 3, The Ethical Learning Community, under **Principle 3**, "Have a Voice, Take a Stand."

Every Student a Citizen was followed in 2003 by The Civic

The fundamental reason for public schooling is democracy. Education for democratic citizenship should be active, engaging students in real tasks, often of their choosing, from which they learn a variety of skills.

—George Wood

Developing the Democratic Self: What Schools and School Districts Can Do

1. Assess the moral and democratic environment of the school; align policies and practices with a coherent moral structure valued by all personnel.
2. Involve community groups in creating democratic learning opportunities in all schools.
3. Make it possible for students to participate in decision-making activities and governance.
4. Have regular school visits by locally elected and appointed officials and state legislators to provide a venue for discussing political issues.
5. Provide professional development opportunities that integrate democratic citizenship education throughout the curriculum. When possible, include parents, so as to strengthen their status as their children's role models for civic involvement.
6. Create on school boards at least two student positions with full participation.
7. Expose students to stories of how ordinary citizens have created real and lasting social change.[3]

Mission of Schools, a report of more than 50 scholars and educators issued by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).[4] CIRCLE's report concluded that "younger generations are avoiding political involvement in historically unprecedented ways." Summarizing its findings, one of its authors wrote:

> A majority of young Americans do not vote or work to influence public policy in any way. This is not to say that young people do not care about their country. They are volunteering in their communities at rates far greater than those of older generations. However, they do not get involved in our democratic institutions because they see their actions as pointless.[5]

A majority of young people do not get involved in our democratic institutions because they see their actions as pointless.

The CIRCLE report recommended:

- **increasing the quantity and the quality of students' academic study of civics, history, and government**
- **incorporating discussions of current events into the classroom, especially those that young people view as relevant to their lives**
- **engaging students in school governance and providing opportunities for young people to participate in community activities they care about—in ways that reinforce the civics lessons taught in classrooms.**[6]

CIRCLE's report launched "The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools" (www.civicmissionofschools.org/campaign), dedicated to making civic learning more dynamic and giving students practical experiences in democratic citizenship. Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Education recast its character education initiative as "Character Education and Civic Engagement" (www.cetac.org). A fall 2004 Wingspread Conference brought together leaders from character education, civic education, service-learning, and social-emotional learning and produced the vision statement, "Pathways to Civic Character," calling for efforts to promote synergy among these four fields around a common interest in "civic character."[7]

Fortunately, there is already some evidence of the fruit these like-minded reports could bear if their recommendations were widely implemented. A *Child Trends Research Brief* states:

> Adolescents who are involved in civic affairs have been found to have better work ethics as adults, be more likely to vote, and have more responsibility. As teens, they are less likely to become pregnant or use drugs, and they tend to do better in school.[8]

Civic Character is the Foundation of Democracy

Civic character is of great importance, but it is not the whole of character. We see it as part of Outcome 7, one of eight necessary strengths of character. Civic character is the part of character we need to be good citizens of a democratic society.

In turn, we see other strengths of character as being necessary for the development of civic character. Becoming a person of civic character, for example, requires the development of ethical thinking, moral agency, and a battery of social and emotional skills.

The current call for civic character echoes the mandate given long ago by the American Founders. They argued that educating for civic virtue is essential for a healthy democracy. Democracy, the Founders reasoned, requires two things working together: (1) *democratic structures* (such

as a constitution that protects human rights, free elections, structures for making and enforcing laws, and a system of checks and balances); and (2) *virtuous citizens*. If individual citizens lack virtue, democratic institutions are undermined. For example, laws can be passed, but if citizens cheat and steal whenever they think they can get away with it, or turn to violence to solve their conflicts, the rule of law is undermined.

Citizenship is Global

Outcome 7 asserts that we are citizens not only of our society, but also of the world.

This means, first of all, having a sense of responsibility that extends to all humanity.

This is collective responsibility—one of the central themes of our *Smart & Good High Schools* report—writ large. If people anywhere in the world are the victims of persecution, war, famine, disease, or natural disaster, that is my concern. We are members of a single human family. Are there limits to what an individual can do to solve the world's problems? Obviously. But each of us can do something.

In a shrinking world, our fates are increasingly linked.

Why, we might ask, should we care about suffering strangers in distant parts of the planet? First, because it's just and compassionate to do so. Second, because it is enlightened self-interest. We are interdependent; in a shrinking world, our fates are increasingly linked.

> Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty and happiness without any virtue in the people is a chimerical idea.
>
> —James Madison

Preparing Students for Citizenship in the Global Economy

We are also citizens of the world in another challenging way: We live in an increasingly globalized economy. In his article "Globalization and Education" for *Phi Delta Kappan*, the educator R.D. Nordgren reports that the literature on what students need to succeed in the new global economy identifies the following assets as crucial:

1. **the ability to work collaboratively within teams and across cultures**
2. **the ability to solve problems, including conflicts within teams**
3. **the ability to be the kind of entrepreneur who can think creatively, take risks, and initiate change**
4. **the ability to use technology to enhance personal and organizational performance.**[9]

However, Nordgren points out, to the extent that schools and classrooms run like top-down bureaucracies that foster mindless, sheep-like compliance, they will fail to foster the collaborative interaction and innovative entrepreneurial thinking that success in the intensely competitive global market demands. To prepare students for the new economy, he concludes, schools must do what today's successful business organizations do: foster highly effective teamwork, shared decision-making, and creative risk-taking.

Preparing workers for the 21st century, then, becomes another compelling rationale for creating highly collaborative, democratic schools and classrooms that involve students and staff in shared leadership and imaginative, participatory problem-solving.

To prepare students for the global economy, schools must do what successful businesses do: foster highly effective teamwork, shared decision-making, and creative risk-taking.

Citizenship Builds on Love

Outcome 7 speaks of developing young people who contribute to their families, classrooms, schools, and communities. In this sense, we are "citizens" of all the groups to which we belong. Parents, classroom teachers, coaches, youth leaders, employers, and others who work with young people all have an opportunity and a duty to help them become contributing members in every social situation.

We call special attention to families—not just the ones young people belong to now, but the ones they will someday create. Parenting is perhaps the hardest job there is and the one for which we get no formal training. The handbook, *Preparing Tomorrow's Parents: How to Bring Parenting Education for Children and Teens To Your Schools*, states what should be obvious: If we wish to build a strong society, we must prepare our young for the most important job in society—being a parent.[10]

> **The most important preventative thing we can do to raise healthy children is parenting education. It should be required in schools.**
>
> —Alvin Poussaint, M.D.

Indeed, we would argue that *being a responsible and committed parent should be considered an essential part of civic character.* Few things have greater impact on the common good. Father absence, for example, is now the leading predictor of nearly every childhood pathology.[11]

Being a responsible and committed parent should be considered part of civic character.

The good news is that efforts are under way to make preparation for parenthood a national educational priority. Prepare Tomorrow's Parents (**www.preparetomorrowsparents.org**) promotes parenting preparation for children and teens and serves as a clearinghouse for programs and instructional materials. Childbuilders (**www.childbuilders.org**) offers a curriculum that teaches preschool through high school students child development, communication skills, non-violent conflict resolution, and positive discipline skills that will enable them to build healthy relationships today and strong families tomorrow.

Finally, we help to prepare our children for parenthood—and by extension, democratic participation—when we give them real responsibilities for the welfare of other human beings. In empowering students to become contributing community members, there is no substitute for the experience of face-to-face helping relationships. In his 1979 book, *The Ecology of Human Development*, Cornell University social psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner observed:

> It is now possible for a person eighteen years of age to graduate from high school without ever having had to do a piece of work on which somebody else truly depended . . . without ever having cared for, or even held, a baby; without ever having looked after someone who was old, ill, or lonely; or without ever having comforted or assisted another human being who really needed help . . . No society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensitivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings.[12]

Bronfenbrenner's observation and the challenge it poses remain before us: As much as they need a practical education, youth today, as in all generations, need an education in love. Love provides the motivation to go beyond our self-interest.

4 Promising Practices for Developing a Contributing Community Member and Democratic Citizen

1. Study our democratic heritage.
2. Engage students in service.
3. Involve students in first-hand experiences of democracy.
4. Resolve conflicts democratically, with respect for differences of conscience.

Outcome 7: Contributing Community Member and Democratic Citizen

Promising Practice 1: *Study our democratic heritage.*

In the 2003 position paper, *Education for Democracy*, Elizabeth McPike and colleagues of the Albert Shanker Institute wrote:

> The Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski opened his 1986 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities by noting that the most famous single sentence ever written in the Western hemisphere was probably the one that announced this country's beginning: "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . ."
>
> These words continue to move the world. The political system of democracy that is built upon them is radical, recent, and rare. It is our children's inheritance. We must not think we can give it to them casually. We must embed it so deeply in their souls that no one can take it away.[13]

How can we instill in our young an appreciation of their extraordinary political heritage? The authors of *Education for Democracy* propose four essentials:

1. **A robust history/social studies curriculum**
2. **A full and honest teaching of the American story**
3. **An unvarnished account of what life has been and is like in non-democratic societies**
4. **A cultivation of the virtues essential to a healthy democracy.**[14]

Teach a Robust History Curriculum

A serious engagement with history, *Education for Democracy* argues, is essential for the nurturing of the democratic citizen. What would a robust history curriculum look like?

Education for Democracy recommends that over the course of middle school and high school, a strong history/social studies curriculum would devote at least six years to history, geography, civics, and economics, with history as the integrative core. United States History and World History, segmented by era, would each receive three years. "All the social science topics would be taught together around a unifying chronological narrative, so that each subject enlivens the other."

"We must embed our children's democratic inheritance so deeply in their souls that no one can take it away."

Why do so many students seem to forget—or never to have learned—so much of the history they are taught? *Education for Democracy* says it's because of how we teach it—"with overstuffed textbooks that lack a compelling narrative and wear down our students and teachers." Historian Wilfred McClay reminds us that memory depends on meaning:

> Memory is most powerful when it is purposeful and selective. It requires a grid, a pattern of organization, a structure within which facts arrange themselves and take on significance. We remember those things that fit a template of meaning, and point to a larger whole . . . We need to be able to identify those things that every American student needs to know, and insist upon them, while paring away vigorously at the rest.[15]

The "template of meaning" for our students, *Education for Democracy* says, must be "the unending drama of the historical struggle for democracy."

> The overarching story, in both modernized and traditional societies, is the struggle to civilize, to curb the worst impulses of human nature, and to secure freedom of conscience, speech, and assembly; consensual government; the rule of law; the right to own property and pursue opportunity; change without chaos or violence; and social justice. This ongoing, worldwide struggle is the best hope of the earth and must be the heart of a reordered curriculum for history.[16]

The template of meaning for students must be the story of the struggle for democracy.

For a detailed model curriculum, see *Educating Democracy: State Standards to Ensure a Civic Core*, prepared by Paul Gagnon for the Albert Shanker Institute.[17]

Tell the Whole Story—Our Achievements as Well as Our Failures

Education for Democracy's second essential is for students to be given a balanced account of our nation's achievements and failures. The veteran history teacher Peter Gibbon, author of *A Call to Heroism*, comments on what he has found to be a problematic tendency of recent history texts to emphasize the negative and neglect the positive:

> I taught American history for many years and from many books. There is much truth in these texts now about income inequality, environmental degradation, the horrors of immigration . . . strikes, massacres, and lynchings are vividly described. Contemporary history books cover in detail the Vietnam War and our shameful treatment of Native Americans.[18]

By comparison, Gibbon says, "little mention is made of American genius or heroism." Why is it damaging to young people to concentrate just on the dark side of American history? Gibbon's answer: It makes them ashamed of their past and pessimistic about the future. It encourages attitudes of ingratitude and self-righteousness, with every figure in history being viewed as hopelessly flawed, corrupt, or naive. It does not inspire them to believe that they can make a positive difference in the world. Many "hopelessly flawed people" have done a lot of good in the world. Our people and our government are a work in progress.

A full and fair account of American history, *Education for Democracy* asserts, would also tell students about:

> the fact that American ingenuity has given the world the electric light and the telephone, the alkaline battery, nylon, and synthetic rubber, the laser and photographic film, the

computer and the Internet, jazz, baseball, and the skyscraper . . .[19]

Most important, *Education for Democracy* says, students should learn about our nation's great moral struggles and progress—driven by the "contradiction between its practices and the principles enshrined in its Declaration of Independence." Slavery, one such contradiction, was ended at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. Students should learn that

the quest for racial equality did not end with the Civil War. They should learn of the great struggles and achievements of the modern civil rights movement, America's long overdue reckoning with the historic national shame of racial discrimination. From the accounts of these transformations—and of the individuals, the organizations, the movements that fought for them—students will recognize the genius of democracy. When people are free to dissent, to protest and publish, to join together for common cause, to hold their elected officials accountable, democracy's magnificent capacity for self-correction is manifest.

It is important that students see this, not only because it is true, but also because they will realize that change is possible and that the future is indeed in their hands.[20]

Concentrating on the dark side of our history makes students ashamed of their past and pessimistic about the future.

Teach What Life Is Like in Countries That Are Not Free

The third essential for fostering students' appreciation of their democratic heritage is to enable them to compare it with what life has been like in non-democratic societies. They will tend to take freedom and democracy for granted unless they have a meaningful reference point. *Education for Democracy* observes: "Until images of the Taliban were flashed across American television screens . . . women being clubbed for being out at the 'wrong' hour of the day . . . our children hadn't a clue that there is a world out there where the assault on human rights and dignity is commonplace."

The British historian Robert Conquest writes:

People forget what a remarkable thing it is that in our countries we have such rights and liberties. Civilizations have existed for thousands of years in which there was no trace of the mere idea of criticizing the government, of being secure from arbitrary arrest, of having a fair trial . . . of voting for one of a number of candidates for public office.[21]

Cultivate the Virtues Essential to a Healthy Democracy

The fourth essential is to foster the virtues necessary for democracy to thrive. "To choose the good," *Education for Democracy* reminds us, "one first has to discern the good." Biography and autobiography—the true stories of exceptional men and women—are rich in moral models.

To choose the good, one first has to discern the good. Heroes help us do that.

As an example, *Education for Democracy* cites Frederick Douglass' autobiographical Narrative, in which the former slave described how the act of learning to read transformed forever his sense of who he was.

The young Douglass had overheard his master say, "If a slave learns to read, it will forever unfit him to be a slave." From that moment, Douglass said he "understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom." Spurred by his conviction of the transformative power of knowledge, he taught himself to read.

With knowledge, the adolescent Douglass became increasingly obstinate. He was turned over to a man who was known as a Negro-breaker. After six months of backbreaking labor and the lash, Douglass determined not to submit to the next beating. He defended himself in a two-hour, hand-to-hand fight which the Negro-breaker was unable to win. Douglass was never whipped again. In his autobiography, Douglass wrote: "I had reached the point at which I was not afraid to die. This spirit made me a freeman in fact, though I remained a slave in form."[22]

Our nation's democratic structures are important, and our students must appreciate what an achievement and blessing they are. However, the study of exemplary individuals is needed in order to inspire youth to care about and use well the opportunities provided by democratic structures. When we get too far away from the study of great lives of civic character, civic education becomes too academic, making it unlikely that youth will make their democratic heritage a central part of their own identity.

Outcome 7: Contributing Community Member/Democratic citizen

Promising Practice 2: *Engage students in service.*

In his book *Rediscovering Hope: Our Greatest Teaching Strategy*, Richard Curwin describes an experiment with teens that was first tried in California and then spread to other areas of the country.[23] Tough adolescents from alternative schools—many of whom had been involved in gangs—were paired with seniors in geriatric nursing homes and with children in hospitals for physically disabled kids. These teens helped the elderly with their exercises, read stories to and played games with the children, and in general did what they could to be helpful.

The results, Curwin reports, were remarkable:

> For a majority of the youths in the program, significant changes in attitudes and behaviors have occurred. Having formed close attachments with the people they help, they go out of their way to listen to their problems and offer advice. Not only do these formerly difficult youths become enthusiastic about and reliable in their new roles, but many now say they want to go into a "helping profession."

If we want students to develop responsibility, we should give them responsibility.

If we want young people to develop responsibility, we should give them responsibility. Especially with students who are not succeeding in school, having an authentic responsibility for another human being has real power to transform character.

What Does the Research Show?

The many reports calling for renewal of the school's civic mission are of one voice in their endorsement of the form of service known as service-learning. A report from the National Commission on Service-Learning (**www.learningindeed.org/slcommission/**), *Learning in Deed: The Power of Service-Learning for American Schools*, defines service-learning as "a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities." That same report argues that participation in service-learning:

- **Reverses student disengagement from schooling by giving students responsibility for their own learning.**
- **Gives students a sense of the practical importance of what they are learning in school.**
- **Contributes to young people's personal development by reducing violence and sexual activity, and to their career development by increasing their sense of responsibility and workplace skills.**[24]

A decade of research documents a wide range of student gains from service-learning.

Research summarizing ten years of evidence on the impact of service-learning indicates that it helps develop students' sense of civic and social responsibility and citizenship skills, improves school climate, increases respect between teachers and students, and improves interpersonal development and ability to relate to diverse groups.[25]

The U.S. Department of Education reports studies showing that high school students engaging in service-learning, compared to those who do not, are:

- **more likely to treat each other kindly and show acceptance of cultural diversity**
- **higher in their self-esteem**
- **more likely to develop bonds with teachers and a variety of other adults**
- **less likely to be absent or tardy**
- **less likely to drop out**
- **less likely to be referred to the office for discipline problems or to experience arrest**
- **more likely to care about doing their best in school**
- **more likely to perform well on state-mandated tests.**[26]

> All service is directly or indirectly ethical activity, a reply to a moral call within, one that answers a moral need in the world.
>
> —Robert Coles

Service-learning projects, of course, vary in their contribution to developing the democratic citizen. Thomas Martin and Scott Richardson, in their essay "Making Citizens Out of Students," observe: "Too many service-learning projects often come in the form of short, one-day activities like cleaning up a park. Instead of ending a project when the park is clean, teachers should encourage students to address a public policy or community practice that would keep the park clean for the long term."[27] Students at one middle school, Martin and Richardson say, did just that.

After cleaning up the park, a 6th-grade class worked with the city council to improve park maintenance. Their efforts ensured that the park would be a clean community resource well into the future. The students also conducted an educational campaign at area schools that resulted in a significant decrease in vandalism and litter at the park. Students walked away from the experience understanding how to interact with their elected officials and shape public policy.[28]

Service-learning projects should work to influence a public policy or community practice that has long-term benefits.

Lessons from a National Service-Learning Leader School

We visited a small high school that had won a National Service-Learning Leader School award (**www.leaderschools.org**). The school's dropout rate is zero. On a recent state Assessment of Academic Skills, students had earned scores in the 97th percentile in reading, writing, and math. In addition to mastery learning, service-learning is at the core of the school's program. The box at right describes the major components of its service-learning program.

The service-learning facilitator at this school told us:

What's distinctive about our Senior Exhibition is that it must have moral content. We ask students to select a social-moral problem they care about and ask, "'What can we really do?"

Last year a group of girls did their project on "Rape and Its Cultural Roots." They were galvanized when they found out that every year more than 100,000 rapes are not prosecuted because the victims can't afford to pay the $500 for forensic processing of the DNA gathered through rape kits. The students created a press release to send to the media during Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April and lobbied state legislators and congressional leaders urging them to support the funding of DNA processing of rape kits.

Components of an Award-Winning Service-Learning Program

Wednesday service-learning. Each Wednesday morning, beginning in the freshman year, students spend two hours working at one of 40 community sites, including elementary schools, veterinary clinics, and retirement homes.

Quality control. The service-learning facilitator and ten parent volunteers visit the service-learning sites to talk with the students and supervisory personnel. Through these contacts, they identify relationship problems, lapses in student responsibility, lack of meaningful work for students, etc. This close monitoring of the sites nips problems in the bud and ensures a high level of quality in the service experience.

Global Issues course. In the fall semester of the senior year, students take a Global Issues course aimed at helping them understand the complexity of social-moral-political issues (world hunger, war, foreign aid, economic issues), consider the role of the United States in such issues, learn options for civic and political action, and apply ethical frameworks in evaluating alternative responses to these issues. During this semester, they begin to think about an issue they wish to pursue more deeply in their final semester.

Senior Seminar. In the spring semester of the senior year, students take a culminating course that has them work with an advisor, independently and as a team, doing in-depth research on a social issue of their choosing and preparing an action plan. They then implement and evaluate their action plan and present their findings in a formal public Senior Exhibition (following the format used by the Coalition of Essential Schools, www.essentialschools.org).

What Students Say About Service-Learning

We interviewed students at their Wednesday morning service-learning sites and asked them how the experience had affected them. The following responses were typical:

Girl: We work with the elderly. We're learning social skills and multi-tasking—what you need to be able to do

as adults.

Boy: I used to have anxiety about working with people. Service-learning gets you out of your school and into the real world.

Girl: I was a follower more than a leader, which I am now. The first day, when we had to lead tours [of a state park exhibit], I didn't think I could do it. My knees were shaking. Now, I'm designing tours myself.

Boy: They kicked me out of service-learning for four months of my freshman year. I did some pretty bad stuff. I had to get my act together and learn to control myself.

We also met with a focus group of the volunteer parents who helped to monitor the service-learning sites. One mother said:

It helps them find their direction in life. My son had been thinking of becoming an engineer. As a result of working in a 4th-grade classroom, he wants to be a teacher. Some kids decide that they *don't* want to be a teacher.

One mother said, "Because of service-learning, our son is no longer afraid of life."

Another mother said:

Our son has always been very introverted. Through his service-learning, he's grown tremendously in his confidence. He's much better at talking with people and speaks about how he's learned to meet people. We talk more at home. He's no longer afraid of life.

The accompanying box lists ten principles of best practice in service-learning—guidelines that help to ensure a high-quality experience.

Quality Service-Learning . . .

1. Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
2. Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experiences.
3. Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
4. Allows all participants to define their needs.
5. Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
6. Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
7. Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
8. Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
9. Ensures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved.
10. Is committed to program participation by diverse populations.[29]

Service-Learning Resources

Beland, K. (2003). *Providing opportunities for moral action, Book v, Eleven principles sourcebook: How to achieve quality character education in K-12 schools.* Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.

Billig, S. (2000). *Service-learning impacts on youth, schools and communities: Research on K-12 school-based service learning,* 1990-1999. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Boston, B. (1997). Their best selves: Building character education and service-learning together in the lives of young people. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

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National Commission on Service-Learning (1998). *Learning in deed: The power of service-learning for American schools.* Newton, MA: Education Development Center.

Tolman, J. (2003). *Character education: Providing opportunities for moral action.* Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.

Zaff, J. F. & Michelsen, E. (2002). *Encouraging civic engagement: How teens are (or are not) becoming responsible citizens.* Washington, DC: Child Trends Research.

Outcome 7: Contributing Community Member/Democratic citizen

Promising Practice 3: *Involve students in first-hand experiences of democracy.*

Just as students learn morality by living it, they learn democracy by experiencing it. In Chapter 3, The Ethical Learning Community, we described democratic classroom and schoolwide practices that enable students to "have a voice and take a stand." Here we focus on schoolwide strategies that involve students in first-hand experiences of democracy.

The First Amendment Schools Project

A major school reform effort to make democracy a living experience is the First Amendment Schools project. Jointly sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the First Amendment Center, this initiative has sought to help schools become "laboratories for democratic freedom." Charles Haynes, Senior Scholar at the First Amendment Center, says that schools involved in this project are guided by four goals:

First Amendment Schools seek to provide all members of the school community with opportunities to practice democracy.

1. **All members of the school community will have substantial opportunities to practice democracy.**
2. **Students will learn how to exercise their inalienable rights with civic responsibility.**
3. **Parents, students, educators, and community members will work together to promote a shared vision of democracy and freedom.**
4. **Civic education will be translated into civic engagement through service-learning and civic problem-solving.**[30]

As examples of what First Amendment Schools are doing to implement democratic principles, Haynes cites a high school where "students sit on all of the school committees, including the site-based governance team, and participate along with parents and staff in hiring and other major decisions," and a middle school where "students and staff resolve schoolwide issues at a weekly town meeting."[31] (See the First Amendment Center's website, **www.firstamendmentschools.org**, for descriptions of democratic education at 11 First Amendment secondary schools.)

A Just Community School

"Just community" schools, first developed by Harvard University's Lawrence Kohlberg, Clark Power, Ann Higgins, and others, have typically sought to implement democratic principles in a small school nested within the larger high school.[32] In Chapter 3 **(page 43)**, we noted research showing that students' participation in a just community school had long-term positive effects, observable ten years after graduation, on graduates' voting in elections and community service.[33]

We visited a small orthodox Jewish school that involved all 350 of its students, along with faculty and staff, in its just community. To do this, it has held a weekly Town Hall meeting since the school's founding twelve years ago.

The preamble of the school's "Just Community Constitution" sets forth its vision:

We the students, faculty, administration, and staff members of SHS, a school founded on Jewish values, in order to form a more just and caring community; provide for a mutually respectful learning environment; honor each person's dignity and worth; promote each individual's moral reasoning and ethical development; and secure democratic values of liberty, equality, and justice, do establish this Constitution for our Democratic Just Community.

The school's Constitution also spells out the "limits of the Democratic Just Community." It may not vote on matters of (1) curriculum or pedagogy, (2) Jewish law, and (3) state and federal law. The following are the nuts-and-bolts operating procedures:

1. **Each adult staff member of the school has 8 advisees. Advisories meet for 40 minutes every Tuesday and identify issues they want to bring up for whole-school community discussion.**
2. **Three advisories then come together as a "community forum" to further discuss and clarify a particular issue and make recommendations to the Town Hall Agenda Committee (11 students, 2 faculty, and one administrative advisor).**
3. **Town Hall meetings are held every Thursday from noon to 1:00 pm and are conducted by student leaders according to Robert's Rules (with occasional interventions from the principal to quiet students kibitzing on the fringes).**
4. **If the issue under discussion does not fall into any of the three areas outside Town Hall's purview, it eventually comes to a vote, with everyone—students, faculty, and staff—having one vote.**

A recent addition to the Town Hall process is that if it

> The school itself must be a morally coherent community and a microcosm of democracy.
>
> —Rosemary Salam

What Students Say About Their Just Community

Strengths

"We have a voice—we can speak our minds, with a mike, in front of the whole school."

"Most students participate—about 15 in any given meeting and, over the course of the four years, about 80%. At any given Town Hall, about 2/3 of the comments are made by students, 1/3 by teachers."

"We develop the ability to think about all sides of an issue and to speak before a large group."

"We like being part of debates where both students and teachers openly disagree with each other. We've become more comfortable disagreeing with authority."

"We've made school improvements such as passing a policy that requires teachers to do student evaluations of all courses. For a while we had some stealing—we think it was only 3 or 4 students—and after we discussed that in Town Hall, it was much less of a problem."

"Everyone—students, faculty, and administration—feels interconnected with everyone else. If any act of vandalism or stealing occurs, everyone understands how disrespectful and immoral it is, and feels responsible. Recently, someone in our school put sugar into the gasoline tank of a respected and respectful teacher. This act of vandalism was brought to our Town Hall meeting, and our moral community came together and contributed enough money to compensate for the damages."

Areas for Improvement

"We don't get to vote on enough things. They define a lot of things as related to curriculum, so we can't make decisions about them."

"There are so many things we care about that are out of our control—dress code, the breakfast menu, the sex education program. It's as if they're saying, 'You can express your opinion,' but then they stop us when we do express our opinion. We have a forum for expressing our views but it's not a true democracy."

"Some students screw around in Town Hall—talk to their friends, do homework. Only 20 to 40 students take an active part on a regular basis."

"Sometimes we talk an issue to death, like the honor code. The Agenda Committee doesn't get enough proposals."

takes up an issue outside its jurisdiction—say, something falling under curriculum/pedagogy—it can take a non-binding, straw poll vote to show "the sense of the Town Hall" on that issue. Administration and faculty will then take this into consideration in their deliberations.

"We like being part of debates where both students and teachers openly disagree with each other."

Town Hall has thus far debated and/or voted on everything from an honor code to computer lab policy, dress code, teacher course evaluation, parking lot privileges, the breakfast menu, school colors, and modifying the Jewish studies curriculum to reduce philosophy courses and expand coverage of modern Israel. We witnessed the last of these and were impressed by the vigor and the rigor of the debate, in which faculty and students took strong stands on both sides of the proposed curricular change.

We asked a focus group of this school's students what they saw as the strengths and areas for improvement in their Town Hall just community. The **box** on page 187 presents what they said.

When we shared these student comments with the school's faculty, one teacher commented:

A lot of students arrive at the school thinking it's going to be like the U.S. Congress—they'll really get to decide things. I've had a lot of discussions with them around their question, "Do we really get to decide?" I try to remind them of all the things they have decided—of the power they really do have.

Adolescents grow morally and are more likely to become active democratic citizens when they experience democratic engagement as part of their schooling.

We visited another, larger (1,300 students) high school that was in the early and difficult stages of trying to get its four-cluster direct democracy governance system off the ground. (It had just built a new high school with a large meeting space designed for the democratic cluster meetings.) Whatever the democratic governance model, watching schools' efforts to work out the philosophical limits of student decision-making and the practical challenges of running reasonably efficient meetings that keep people engaged, one thinks of Winston Churchill's famous observation, "Democracy is the worst form of government in the world—except for all the rest."

The messiness of the democratic process may be frustrating for students (and faculty), but this is, after all, the nature of the democratic government they will experience in the "real world." Any school willing to take on this challenge has to bring many virtues—patience, persistence, humility, realism, and a sense of humor among them—to the task, along with a belief in what the research shows: Adolescents grow morally and are more likely to become active democratic citizens when they experience democratic engagement as part of their formative schooling.

Outcome 7: Contributing Community Member and Democratic Citizen

Promising Practice 4:

Resolve conflicts democratically, with respect for differences of conscience.

If we keep in mind that "the students are watching," one of the most important lessons we can teach about democracy is how we model it as a total school community. This modeling is never more important than when the school is divided over a controversial issue.

One of the most important lessons a school teaches about democracy is how it deals with issues over which it is divided.

It's one thing to study controversial issues as part of academic inquiry in the classroom. It's a much tougher challenge to deal with controversy fairly and democratically when it's an emotionally felt issue in the real life of the school. That is the acid test.

Such controversies can occur around many different issues and areas of the curriculum, but no area has a higher potential for conflict than sexuality education and related school policies. In society as a whole, the most heated culture wars—about abortion, AIDS policy, sex education curricula, condoms in schools, same-sex marriage—are linked to sex. These divisive issues provide a test case of our commitment to fairness and civil, democratic discourse.

How Not to Handle Conflict

Unfortunately, it's not hard to find examples of how not to deal with school conflicts about controversial issues.

In one public high school, a proposal was brought forth to install a condom machine in the school. The faculty was deeply divided about the wisdom of such a move. Those who supported the machine's installation argued that it was needed to help prevent pregnancy and AIDS. Faculty who opposed the condom machine argued that such a move could be seen by students as sanctioning sexual activity. The school administration decided to put the issue to a vote—and the majority voted to install the machine. Those in the minority remained strongly opposed to the decision.

Seeking consensus or compromise is a better way to accommodate differences of conscience than "majority rules."

"Majority rules" in such a case amounts to an exercise of political power in which those with the most votes impose their will and ride roughshod over the values and beliefs of the minority. Obviously, voting is often a necessary democratic process in order to reach a decision. But voting works best when conflicting parties *agree* to vote and to live with the outcome. When there are deep divisions of conscience about an issue, striving for consensus, or at least compromise, is a much better decision-making process than voting—because it honors differences by seeking a resolution that incorporates conflicting perspectives to the greatest extent possible.

Honoring Diversity of Conscience: A Case Study

Some schools have grappled conscientiously with the challenge of finding a process for resolving conflicts like the one cited above, in a way that respects differences of conscience. They have done so in the belief that to do less is to fall short of the ideals of both the ethical learning community and the professional ethical learning community—and the ideal of honoring democratic principles.

One positive example comes from a Friends (Quaker) School. Mr. D., the head of the Religion and Ethics Department, said that his school had, over the past year, been engaged in constructing "a civil discourse across the culture divide on the 'diversity' issues." Most recently, he said, the school had "worked its way through a controversial student request to establish a gay/lesbian support group." He explained:

> The process we created shows competing moral cultures attempting dialogue and the positive resolution that came from this. The conventional wisdom is that a "psychological" approach to diversity—one that emphasizes inclusion, tolerance, and safety—is the only universal way to resolve these issues peacefully. People seem to be afraid that a democratic approach will polarize.
>
> In our experience, however, it's been the psychological approach that has been narrow, dismissive of moral and religious conservatives, and truly polarizing. We have succeeded here in banishing "political correctness" as the sole framework for these discussions and replaced it with a democratic framework that allows diverse moral cultures to share their testimony about what they think is best for young people and the school. This has been difficult work, not without conflict. At the same time, I think we have been successful in working through the conflict, and that all involved feel enriched by the process even if they are not fully satisfied with the outcome.

"We created a process that enabled competing moral cultures to engage in dialogue. It has been difficult but enriching work."

How did this school's process evolve?

According to school documents chronicling the steps, a number of students had approached several faculty members about beginning an organization that would provide support for homosexual/bisexual students. Students in previous years had also attempted to create such an organization but received a negative response from the Upper School Head. Some recent graduates who identified themselves as homosexual or bisexual indicated dissatisfaction with their experience at the school and convinced some faculty that there was a need for such an organization.

Two teachers then announced to colleagues their intent to create this organization. One of these same teachers, however, along with a faculty opponent of the idea, brought the proposal to a faculty-student committee, since both sides anticipated the proposal's potentially controversial nature and the need to address different constituencies' beliefs and fears.

"When we began our discussions," Mr. D. told us, "there was unanimous agreement on several things."

We agreed that the school needed to work on all issues of verbal intimidation and to raise awareness about issues of homosexuality and bisexuality so that students of either orientation do not feel marginalized or isolated. However, there was strong disagreement about the best way to achieve these goals. Some advocated a homosexual/bisexual support group to address these issues, while others felt it was better to address them through existing school structures such as discipline for verbal abuse, discussions led by the Diversity Committee, and the use of the guidance system for support.

"We began with unanimous agreement on the needs but strong disagreement about how to achieve our goals."

The next step in the process was for each side to prepare and present a paper making its case. The paper in support of a "gay/lesbian/bisexual awareness group" offered these reasons:

1. A primary goal of the group, which would include both homosexual and heterosexual students, would be to create a more accepting and understanding school community for homosexuals and heterosexuals alike.
2. Though some gay/lesbian/bisexual students do find students and faculty with whom they can speak, the existing support systems in the school do not guarantee that all such students will be able to identify and make contact with those who are accustomed to dealing with these issues and/or are sympathetic to the challenges these students face.
3. Studies demonstrate the need to provide consistent support to gay/lesbian/bisexual teens given that attempted suicide and suicide rates in these groups are higher than those of heterosexual teens.
4. Greater education will help all students develop more sensitive awareness of sexual identity and related issues.
5. Some heterosexual as well as homosexual students see the challenges that gay/lesbian/bisexual students face as important civil rights issues to which they need to give their support.
6. Denying gay/lesbian/bisexual students an equal opportunity to form an organization would constitute illegal discrimination.
7. The group would be made up of both heterosexual and homosexual students, many of whom would probably choose not even to declare their sexuality. Understanding all these diverse voices would lead to a greater sense of community in the school.

Each side in the controversy prepared a paper making its case.

The paper opposed to forming the gay/lesbian/bisexual awareness group offered these reasons:

1. Where gay/lesbian awareness or support groups have been established elsewhere, the issue of homosexuality has been politicized to conform to a political correctness that has marginalized or even silenced religiously and morally conservative voices. There have been times when conservative faculty have been labeled racist, sexist, or homophobic because they did not subscribe to the proper ideological judgment on issues of race, gender, or sexual orientation. These faculty were judged not on their actions but for not having the correct beliefs.
2. In the past, our school has discouraged the formation of "identity groups" in the belief that they tend to segregate people and hinder education that is best achieved through open dialogue among persons who hold different views.
3. Gay/lesbian support groups can have unintended consequences, such as encouraging sexual experimentation. For example, research indicates that once an adolescent male identifies himself as gay, he is likely to initiate sexual activity that involves life-threatening risks. Our school does not distribute condoms because we believe that many students may interpret this as encouraging sex, and we have had a strong policy of educating all students to practice abstinence in order to avoid the physical and psychological dangers of sexual activity. We should not be doing anything that might encourage sexual experimentation.
4. Many studies have found a significantly higher risk of attempted suicide among teens who identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual. The risk of suicide decreases, however, for each year that an adolescent delays self-identifying as homosexual or bisexual. Moreover, many students who think they are gay as teens no longer do so as young adults. We should not encourage premature closure on this issue.
5. A gay/lesbian support group also holds the danger of circumventing the role of parents in a young person's

upbringing. The school should be very careful not to supplant the primary role of parents and the moral and religious values of families in discussions of sexuality. The school's role in helping students establish their sexual identity should be questioned; what right, authority, or expertise can faculty and peers claim in this area?

6. There are important issues surrounding homosexuality that need addressing, but existing school channels—not a special awareness or support group that carries the above-mentioned disadvantages—is the more prudent and effective way to address them.

The Resolution of the Conflict

After two months of weekly meetings, a faculty-student leadership group representing both sides of this issue agreed on a compromise. It created an organization with what it hoped would be a neutral name: QUESST (Quaker Understanding and Education on Sexual Identity and Sexuality Topics). To ensure that the perspectives of both conservative and liberal students and faculty would be fairly represented in its discussions, the group's advisors were two faculty members from opposite perspectives on the issue. The group's purpose was announced to the school community as follows:

QUESST will function primarily as a discussion and awareness group on sexuality issues. It will not function as a support group for particular students or as a group that advocates a particular lifestyle or the declaration of one's sexuality. Students identified as needing individual support will be referred to an adult or counselor outside the group. The organization may eventually decide to share some of its discussions with the larger school community in order to encourage wider awareness.

Mr. D. said that conservative faculty members of QUESST were "not entirely comfortable with creating a special school organization outside existing school structures to deal with sexuality issues" but agreed that QUESST's proposed mission and the diverse faculty leadership "could function in a way that would support all students and not marginalize conservative opinion." Mr. D. said that most liberal faculty members, who had initially conceived of the organization as a support group, decided that the compromise structure "could achieve the primary goal of ensuring that homosexual/bisexual students feel safe and supported in the school community, and that supporting heterosexual students and religiously conservative students could also be achieved."

The Larger Lessons

What are the larger lessons to be drawn from this case study of a school that, in confronting a highly sensitive issue, demonstrated a true integration of excellence (in the diligence and quality of its work) and ethics (in the integrity and mutual respect of its efforts)? We think there are at least five such lessons:

Controversial issues test our character.

1. Controversial issues test our character. They do so in several ways:

- Do we have the courage to confront the controversial issue in an honest way?
- Do we have the civility to discuss this issue calmly and rationally with others who have a different point of view?
- Do we have the commitment to truth to seek out and consider the facts, even if they go against our preconceptions?
- Do we have the commitment to democratic process to ensure that all members of our school community have an equal opportunity to make their voices heard as we formulate policy about this issue?
- Do we have the patience to persevere in this process for as long as it takes to achieve a workable and just resolution?

2. Diversity must include respect for diversity of conscience. Freedom of conscience is not absolute; I may not, in the name of conscience, carry out acts of terrorism. But legitimate freedom of conscience—the exercise of which does not infringe on the rights of others or undermine the common good—is one of the hallmarks of democracy. We each have a right of conscience to disagree with what someone else may believe or wish to do. Respect for that right requires the school to take pains to honor legitimate differences of conscience when dealing with a controversial issue.

Diversity must include respect for legitimate differences of conscience.

3. When a school is dealing with a controversial issue, it must begin by publicly acknowledging its controversial nature.

Sometimes schools treat controversial issues from a single viewpoint and fail to acknowledge that different perspectives even exist, despite the fact that, in principle, the school's educational philosophy espouses considering multiple perspectives as an essential part of critical thinking.

4. The school must create time and structures that make it possible to deal adequately with the complexity of controversial issues. There is no quick fix in such matters. When adequate time is invested and the structures for discussion and decision-making are well-constructed, long-term benefits for the school community can be realized. Conversely, when enough time is not taken or structures are missing or poorly designed, a school may be negatively impacted in lasting ways.

5. In dealing with controversial issues, the school must distinguish sharply between ethical behavior and "correct attitudes." One school's mission statement says:

We seek to establish standards of behavior which honor the dignity and worth of individuals regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, age, physical or mental abilities, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic class.

The task of the ethical learning community must always be to teach and hold its members accountable to a standard of behavior—namely, respect—not to impose a particular ideological perspective.

> Conscience is the root of all true courage. If we would be brave, let us obey our conscience.
>
> —James Freeman Clarke

Endnotes

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Outcome 8:
Spiritual Person Engaged in Crafting a Life of Noble Purpose

A SPIRITUAL PERSON ENGAGED IN CRAFTING A LIFE OF NOBLE PURPOSE . . .

- Seeks a life of noble purpose
- Formulates life goals and ways to pursue them
- Considers existential questions (e.g., "What is happiness?","What is the meaning of life?","What is the purpose of *my* life?")
- Cultivates an appreciation of transcendent values such as truth, beauty, and goodness
- Pursues authentic happiness
- Possesses a rich inner life
- Pursues deep, meaningful connections—to others, nature, a higher power, and so on.

I never experienced a death close to me until two boys in our school were killed in a car accident. I was good friends with one of them. I realized I could never ask him another question, never smile at him in the hallway and have him smile back at me. This pointless loss stunned and scared me. Now, I make it my goal to constantly strive to give my life a purpose. I do this most of all by trying to reach out to other people.

—A High School Girl

What does it mean to educate the human spirit? In 1999, *Educational Leadership* devoted a full issue to that question, opening with an article by Parker Palmer titled "Evoking the Spirit in Public Education." Palmer began, "I am a Christian of the Quaker persuasion whose spiritual forebears were persecuted, imprisoned, and sometimes executed for their beliefs by officials of the established church in England. When Quakers fled to America in search of religious liberty, they met with similar treatment at the hands of Puritans." He continued:

As I explore ways to evoke the spirit in public education, I want neither to violate the separation of church and state nor to encourage people who would impose their religious beliefs on others. But I am equally passionate about not violating the deepest needs of the human soul, which education does with some regularity.

As a teacher, I have seen the price we pay for a system of education so fearful of things spiritual that it fails to address the real issues of our lives . . . The price is a school system that alienates and dulls us, that graduates young people who have had no mentoring in the questions that both enliven and vex the human spirit.[1]

"Spiritual questions, Palmer said, "are the kind that we, and our students, ask every day of our lives as we yearn to connect with the largeness of life." Questions such as:

Does my life have meaning and purpose?

Do I have gifts that the world wants and needs?

Whom and what can I trust?

How can I deal with suffering, my own and that of my family and friends?

How does one maintain hope?

What about death?[2]

"Spiritual mentoring," in Parker's view, " is not about dictating answers to the deep questions of life." Rather . . .

. . . it is about helping young people find questions that are worth asking because they are worth living. When we fail to honor the deepest questions of our lives, education remains mired in technical triviality, cultural banality, and a great sadness.[3]

When we do not honor the deepest questions of our lives, education remains mired in technical triviality, cultural banality, and a great sadness.

The Many Meanings of "Spiritual"

Why the reluctance to talk with students about the "spiritual," especially in public schools? One reason has to do with the fact that "spiritual" has many meanings and therefore the potential for confusion and controversy.

In her essay, "Many Ways of Understanding and Educating Spirit," St. Michael's College professor Aostre Johnson helps us unpack the varied meanings of spirituality. For

The unexamined life is not worth living.
—Socrates

the past several years she has been asking K-12 educators how they personally understand spirituality and how their beliefs impact their teaching.[4]

From this research, Johnson has identified eight distinct ways of understanding and fostering spirituality in education. "These perspectives," she writes, "can be seen as intertwining. While some educators embrace just one, others hold most or all."[5] To Johnson's eight we add another, "spirituality as the quest for connectedness." The box below offers a brief description of these nine distinct but complementary ways of defining spirituality.

These various categories of spirituality help educators avoid non-productive debates stemming from the unclear use of language. They enable us to articulate to ourselves, and communicate to students, colleagues, and parents, what we mean when we say that we wish to help students develop as "spiritual persons."

In our conception of Outcome 8, we emphasize spirituality as *meaning-making* and *self-reflection*, both central to crafting a life of noble purpose and pursuing authentic happiness. Some of the nine categories of spirituality we have already dealt with under other developmental out-

9 Ways of Understanding Spirituality

1. *Spirituality as meaning-making.* Seeking the meaning of life is a human activity that spans cultures and history, as well as stages of life. Teachers can invite students to ask profound questions about themselves, the nature and meaning of life, and the world around them.
2. *Spirituality as self-reflection.* Teachers can help students become more self-reflective persons by engaging them in thinking about the purpose and direction of their own lives, in making significant choices about their learning, and in setting and pursuing life goals.
3. *Spirituality as mystical knowing.* Spirit is understood as a real unseen energy or power, not fully recognized by science but known to mystics throughout history and across religions. Mystical knowing is based on a deep form of self-reflection, a meditative mode of thinking. Mystical knowing has also been called "spiritual intelligence," referring to the capacity of the mind that is the basis of all other intelligences.
4. *Spirituality as emotion.* This approach recognizes the role that deep human feelings play in the lives of human beings. These include positive emotions such as love, joy, and awe but also negative emotions such as anger, sorrow, and despair. Educators can use great literature to teach wise and powerful lessons about emotion. They can ground learning in each student's emotionally-based interests and recognize the critical role of the teacher's emotional relationship both with subject matter and with students.
5. *Spirituality as morality.* Morality is understood as a basis of spirituality in that it governs how human beings should relate to each other and the world. Educational approaches to developing morality include the study of heroic moral figures and movements, the discussion of ethical problems, the development of democratic communities, and student service.
6. *Spirituality as creativity.* This understanding emphasizes the human capacity, often seen as divinely given, to create. Teachers nurture spirituality as creativity by encouraging each student's unique creative gifts. Avenues for doing this include drama, dance, music, and the visual arts but also the creative process that underlies discovery in all disciplines.
7. *Spirituality as ecology.* Spirituality in this sense is having a deep appreciation of the holistic interdependence of all living systems. Educational approaches emphasize whole-systems thinking and our responsibilities toward the complex web of life.
8. *Spirituality as religion.* One religious approach bases spirituality in a particular religion, seeking immersion in one's faith tradition and bringing all the fruits of that to bear—silently, if one is in a public school; explicitly, if one is in a private religious school. A second approach, which can complement the first, has the goal of understanding the history, values, and significance of the various world religions—including the study of religious texts and the lives of religious leaders.[6]
9. *Spirituality as the quest for connectedness.* This understanding of spirituality asserts that human beings desire a sense of connection, to other people, their wider community, nature, history, enduring truths, a higher power—something larger than themselves. Contemporary writers such as Parker Palmer, Rachael Kessler, and others have written about spirituality in this sense and have pointed out that every academic discipline offers opportunities to meet this need for connectedness.

comes (treating morality under Ethical Thinker, for example, and emotion under Socially and Emotionally Skilled Person). Under Spiritual Person, we will also give particular attention to category 8, the deepening and living out of one's own faith (taken in the broadest sense to include both theistic and other worldviews) and learning to understand and appreciate faith perspectives different from one's own.

Why Purpose Matters

In his classic 1959 book *Man's Search for Meaning*, considered one of the most influential books of the 20th century, concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl wrote:

> Man's search for meaning is a primary force in his life . . . [There is a] will to meaning. Man is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values.[7]

Our search for meaning helps us find a purpose for our individual lives. In their 2003 article, "The Development of Purpose During Adolescence," Stanford University psychologist William Damon and colleagues note: "The field of psychology has been slow to recognize the importance of purpose for positive youth development." They point out that only recently has purpose been recognized as "a motivator of good deeds and galvanizer of character growth."[8]

Are our schools helping students develop a sense of purpose, which we believe animates and guides the development of all the other strengths of character? Or, without intending to, do we abandon our young to unexamined values—hedonism for some, frenetic achievement for others—that will not make them happy in their lives or help them become good family members, workers, and citizens who contribute to the lives of others?

"I don't want to reach the age of 60 or even 40 and have someone ask me what the meaning of life is and have to reply, 'I have no idea.'"

A few years ago the Associated Press carried a story about a 17-year-old senior in California who received double 800s on her SAT's. She was known to her high school friends as "Wonder Woman." In the course of an interview, a reporter asked her, "What is the meaning of life?" She replied, "I have no idea."[9]

One recent high school graduate, hearing the above story, had this reaction:

> I don't want to reach the age of 60 or even 40 and have someone ask me what the meaning of life is and have to reply, "I have no idea." I see so many people just going through the motions: get into a good school, so you can get into a good college, so you can get a good job, so you can get a better job, so you can get rich and die. I want more than knowledge. I want wisdom. I don't just want to exist—I want to live.[10]

Lamenting that most schools currently *don't* help students think about questions of meaning and purpose, one teacher said: "We condition students to believe that grades and test scores—not reflection on life—are the goals of education." A girl on our Student Leaders Panel spoke of her own experience:

> From the start of my freshman year, I have been thinking about how my actions and class choices will affect my chances of getting into my top choice of college. As a result, my friends and I don't take classes we are really interested in. This is only teaching us that the way to be successful in life is to focus on getting ahead and being smarter, stronger, and generally better than everyone else. No one seems to think about careers that will challenge them and keep them interested and happy at work each day. Instead, the only "good" jobs are the ones that will provide a large salary.

We condition students to believe that grades and test scores—not reflection on life—are the goals of education.

Living a Life That Matters

When we don't engage in a self-reflective search for meaning and purpose, we lack a moral and spiritual rudder. We may find ourselves doing things that do not reflect our best self—and that subvert our character development and hopes for happiness. In his book, *Liv-*

Compared with their grandparents, today's young adults have grown up with more affluence and much greater risk of depression and associated social pathology.

—David Myers[11]

ing a Life that Matters, Rabbi Harold Kushner describes how this can happen:

> Too often we compromise our integrity. We do something we really don't believe in doing, to reach some important goal, only to find out one of two frustrating things happening: Either we gain the prize and realize that it wasn't worth gaining, or we end up with neither the prize nor our integrity.
>
> Integrity means being whole, unbroken, undivided. It describes a person who has united the different parts of his or her personality, so that there is no longer a split in the soul.[12]

In his book *With Love and Prayers: A Headmaster Speaks to the Next Generation*, F. Washington Jarvis, an Episcopal priest and former headmaster of Boston's Roxbury Latin School, tells the story of a childhood friend who lacked the stabilizing integrity, or "wholeness," of which Kushner speaks. Father Jarvis writes:

> This guy had everything—good looks, a brilliant mind, a winning personality. He was a schoolboy athletic hero, went to the best college, married a gorgeous—and nice—wife, climbed speedily to the top in business, made a bundle of money, bought an estate in the suburbs, had three kids, a dog, a cat, a lawn service, and three cars. The perfect model of success. My sister had just seen him at a high school reunion. He had just up and left it all—his estate, his wife, his family, and he was talking about quitting his job.
>
> He said: "You remember what I was like as a kid. We didn't have much money. I knew what I wanted—the whole package of success. I knew I'd be happy if I realized that dream. But when I got it, it turned to dust. I just got sick of it all."[13]

Without integrity, we have a split in our souls.

Without a long-term vision of what makes life worth living, people will inevitably struggle to find meaning and purpose in their lives. Among the hundreds of conversations we had as we traveled the country visiting high schools, one of the most memorable was with a business teacher who just had left his stock market career to take up high school teaching. He said:

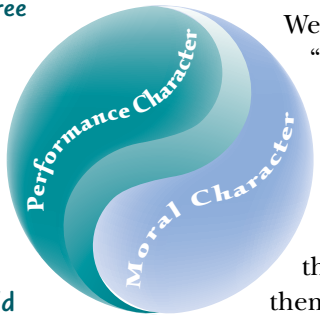
> I worked on Wall Street for 20 years. I had to get into a different environment. In my former job, I saw many people commit suicide—friends, husbands, wives, parents of children. When the stock market fell apart, their lives fell apart. They measured their worth by the money they made.

How will our high school graduates measure the worth of their lives when they are adults? How do they measure it now? Are we teaching them to think deeply about "first things"? What is happiness? What goals in life are truly worth pursuing and offer the hope of authentic happiness? Should happiness even be our goal, or is it the by-product of pursuing something deeper?

How will our graduates measure the worth of their lives?

Avoiding a Split in Our Souls

We have argued that the 8 Strengths of Character operationally define performance character and moral character. More than any other strength of character, Outcome 8, being a spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose, challenges us to strive for the *integration* of performance character and moral character, so that we lead a balanced life, a "whole" life. In such a life, we will experience a unity and harmony, not a "split in our soul."



We have described performance character as a "mastery orientation" and moral character as a "relational orientation." These two parts of character are shown in the figure of a ball (left) as two sides of character that share a common space in the middle. We view that shared space as the positive tension that holds the two parts of character together and keeps them functioning in a unified way.

This creative tension or energy that integrates the two parts of character flows, we think, from seeking to become a spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose. If we are engaged in a quest for noble purpose, we won't pursue our performance goals at the expense of others. We will seek to balance the obligation to do our work well with the obligation to do right by our relationships. We won't become the kind of spouse who is a workaholic while marriage and family life fall apart. We won't let pressures to do and to have cause us to neglect our personal spiritual development—our connection to God or whatever we may experience as the highest and deepest source of the power within us.

Seeking this kind of balance, this fullness of life, is the art of being human. To make progress in this art, whether young or old, requires a humble and steadfast willingness to regularly reflect, refocus, and recommit ourselves to living a life of noble purpose.

5 Promising Practices for Developing a Spiritual Person

1. Engage students in reflecting on existential questions.
2. Have students write about their lives, including their "laws of life."
3. Ask students to develop a personal mission statement.
4. Have students formulate and pursue meaningful life goals.
5. Engage students in the study of religion and in developing their faith in something larger than themselves.

Seeking a balanced life is the art of being human.

Outcome 8: Spiritual Person

Promising Practice 1:

Engage students in reflecting on existential questions.

In his book *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma*, Warren Nord, Director of the Program in the Humanities and Human Values at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, asserts that in matters of the spirit, something is amiss in society as a whole.

We modern-day Americans have a spiritual problem. There is something fundamentally wrong with our culture. We who have succeeded so brilliantly in matters of economics, science, and technology have been less successful in matters of the heart and soul. This is evident in our entertainment and our politics; in our preoccupation with sex and violence; in the ways we do our jobs and in the failure of our relationships; in our boredom and unhappiness in this, the richest of all societies.[14]

Clearly, families and religious institutions have a major responsibility for addressing the cultural problems of "heart and soul" that Nord identifies. But in her book *The Soul of Education*, Rachael Kessler argues that the school also has a role to play in spiritual development, especially by helping students find connection with each other around things that matter.

"Students of all ages bring their souls to school," Kessler points out. "The spirit will suffer if it is not nourished."[15]

Kessler defines "soul" to mean "inner life—the depth dimension of human experience."[16] We can help students develop a rich inner life, she believes, by engaging them in reflecting thoughtfully on existential questions—questions that explore the meaning, purpose, and complexities of their lives. "The teenage years," she observes, "are a time when the most important questions can fester in loneliness—or with support, inspire a journey toward wisdom and connection."[17]

"Personal Mysteries"

"To find out what is on students' minds," Kessler says, "we do something radical: We ask them." After about 4-6 weeks of establishing trust and community with a group, Kessler asks students to write anonymously about their "personal mysteries."

Please write about what you wonder about when you cannot sleep at night or when you're walking to the school bus, or when you're jogging on the track. What do you worry about? Or feel curious about? Or feel afraid or excited about? What are your questions about yourselves, about others, about life itself?[18]

"To find out what's on students' minds, we do something radical: We ask them."

"We never ask students to speak aloud about their private mysteries," Kessler says. "Only if this process is *completely anonymous* are students safe. Only then will we hear the truth."[19] In a subsequent class, the questions are read aloud.

We read them in a ceremonial way with honor and respect. When their questions are read back in their entirety, students are stunned . . . They always express relief that they are not alone.[20]

Each of us is engaged in a lifelong search for a life worth living.

—F. Washington Jarvis

"From the inner city, from small towns, and from affluent suburbs," Kessler says, "I have collected thousands of questions from students in 7th through 12th grades." Here is just a sampling of questions from high school students:

Why am I so angry?
Why do I feel scared and confused about becoming an adult?
What does it mean to accept that this is my life and I have responsibility for it?
Why do some people hate other people?
Who do people do drugs?
What is our purpose in life?
Why is there so much suffering in the world?
Do things happen for a reason?
Why do people commit suicide even when things seem to be going all right?
What is the thread of humanity that connects all of us?
Will I ever find true love?

In a "Senior Passageways" course, seniors are asked to explore together questions such as:

What do you know about your life purpose or destiny? What have been the clues? If you don't know, how does that feel?

However you define the word "spirit," tell us a story about a time when your spirit was nourished.

How can we understand our yearnings for intimacy—with family, friends, romantic relationships? How has our culture confused sexuality with intimacy? How do we set goals and boundaries to create what will really nourish us?[21]

Having discussions like these obviously requires a competent leader and a high level of safety and trust. Some adults will be able to create that in a classroom, others in an advisory, others in a special setting such as a retreat. Some teachers may prefer not to conduct group sharing on such matters but to have students reflect on existential questions in a more private way, such as through journaling or essay-writing. Whatever the venue, the need is for young people to reflect on and communicate about things that matter.

> **If you can't ask the big questions, it's like you're building something without a foundation.**
>
> —A High School Boy

"The vacuum of spiritual guidance and fulfillment in adolescents' lives," Kessler concludes, "often leads to despair and alienation. Only recently are policymakers and social scientists beginning to see that this absence of meaning is a critical variable in violent and self-destructive behavior in our youth."[22] But "when guided to find constructive ways to express their spiritual longings, young people can find purpose in life, do better in school, strengthen ties to family and friends, and approach adult life with vitality and vision."[23]

> *"When guided to find constructive ways to express their spiritual longings, young people can find purpose in life and approach adult life with vitality and vision."*

Outcome 8: Spiritual Person

Promising Practice 2:

Have students write about their lives, including their "laws of life."

In his book, *Zen and the Art of Public School Teaching*, high school teacher John Perricone says that he has the following dialogue with his juniors and seniors at the beginning of a course[24]:

"May I ask how many of you in this room are over 16 years of age? (Some hands go up.) Legally, you don't have to be here. May I ask why you are here? Why are you getting an education?"

"So I can get a good job some day."

"And why would you want a good job?"

"So I can make money."

"Stay with me now. And why do you want to make money?"

"So I can live—like, duh."

"And this is where we always end up in this questioning, ladies and gentlemen, and it's at this point I will ask all of you—and you don't have to answer out loud: What do you live for? What do you personally live for?" (Silence in the room)

"What do I live for?" someone eventually says. "I guess I live for what everyone else is living for . . . I guess I just want to be happy."

"Exactly. Isn't that the universal human quest? I mean, I'm 45 years old, and in my entire life I've never met anyone who has said, 'There are a lot of things I want in life, but I definitely don't want to be happy.'"

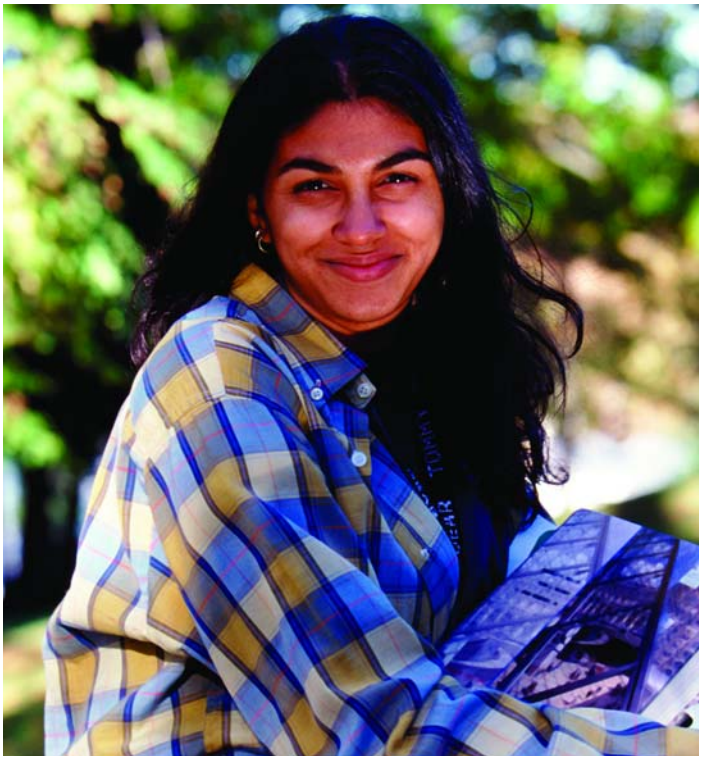
Mr. Perricone then asks students, "How does one attain happiness?" He reads a passage from a book, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough,* that concludes:

You don't become happy by pursuing happiness. You become happy by living a life that means something.[25]

We become happy by living a life that means something.

"You don't have to agree with the author," Mr. Perricone continues, "but suppose for a minute that he's on to something. How could you go about trying to lead a life that means something?" Then he gives students an in-class writing assignment, "An Analysis of My Life" (see box at right).

Most students, it's fair to say, have never been asked to reflect on questions such as these. Doing so is clearly an exercise in coming to grips with what they've done with their life so far and what they hope to do with the rest of it. Mr. Perricone finds that even though it's a stretch for many, students typically enjoy the challenge of this assignment and say it really gets them to think about their lives.



An Analysis of My Life

1. Are you generally satisfied with what you have done so far in your life? Explain.
2. Have you accomplished more or less than you expected to after having reached this point in your life?
3. Are there any obstacles that you feel have interfered with your personal growth? If so, what are they? What, if anything, do you feel you can do to overcome these obstacles?
4. Who, or what, has had the greatest influence in helping you develop as a person?
5. If there is one thing you could erase or subtract from your history, what would it be?
6. If you could add one thing to your past, what would it be?
7. What is the most valuable lesson or piece of wisdom that you feel you have learned in life thus far?
8. If there was one thing that you could be guaranteed to accomplish before you die, what would it be?
9. Look at those goals you have planned for your future. Are you presently doing something to actively pursue those goals? Explain.
10. Do you have a philosophy of life that you try to live by? If so, please share it here.
11. After you die, what would you like remembered about you? What would you like your epitaph to say?
12. As a result of this experience, I have learned . . .

—John Perricone,
Zen and the Art of Public School Teaching[26]

Laws of Life Essay Contest

When students answer questions like those in the "Analysis of My Life"—especially when they write about their philosophy of life—they begin to clarify the personal code or belief system that guides them. Nancy Sizer, author of *Crossing the Stage: Redesigning Senior Year*,[27] argues that it is critically important for adolescents to articulate such a

code.[28] In the absence of an articulated code, they are easily pushed about by forces such as the peer group and popular culture. In order to be less susceptible to such influences, young people need to make explicit their own foundational values, or "laws of life."

Launched in 1987 by Sir John Templeton, the Laws of Life Essay Contest provides a structured opportunity for youth to describe their moral code and the experiences that have helped to shape it.[29] (See box.)

Laws of Life Essay Contest

1. Choose one "law of life"—a character trait, value, or principle that you think is essential to a successful life.
2. Write an essay of any length based on that law. Many of the most successful essays focus on one clear personal example or several historical examples.
3. Your entry will be judged on its ability to move the reader. Choose examples, phrases, and words that best communicate the importance of your law in a successful life.

Speaking of his Laws of Life experience, a 17- year-old student from New York City said:

Before I participated in the contest, I never really thought about what I stand for. Writing the essay was really challenging, because I had to be honest. No excuses. Putting my values down on paper really made me take a good hard look at myself. This is an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life.[30]

One boy said, "Putting my values down on paper made me take a hard look at myself."

The Laws of Life Essay Contest has spread across the United States and around the world, with more than 50 countries now participating. The contest is supported by school sponsorships and community-based organizations such as the Optimists Club, Rotary International, and Boy Scouts. Most recently, the Character Counts! Coalition has offered an adaptation of the program called Foundations For Life.[31] This version asks students to write an essay about a particular maxim or proverb and ties the exercise to the school curriculum (reading, critical thinking, and composition). Schools sponsoring either version of the contest have found that the topic itself and the chance to win public recognition help to motivate students to engage in writing—something they must do to meet many high school standards.

Research by Maurice Elias and his colleagues has begun to explore the power of this reflective writing for urban, literacy-challenged, high-risk youth. Elias's work is investigating how to increase the likelihood that youth will utilize their laws of life more consistently.[32]

The box on page 201 presents a winning Laws of Life essay (slightly abridged) by a 17-year-old boy who writes about his journey of self-discovery and his commitment to begin living life to the fullest. As he tells his story, one feels him confronting, perhaps for the first time, his real self—and the person he would like to become.

According to one principal, "The Laws of Life Essay Contest is probably the best tool we have for helping kids reflect inward on their character."

Challenging Boys to Look Inward: What Does it Mean to Be a Man?

Both genders participate in the Laws of Life Essay Contest, but the sponsors say that more than two-thirds of the first-place winners are girls.[34] That may indicate that there's a greater ability or willingness on the part of girls to find and express their laws of life. However, the need for boys to do so is obviously just as great.

In the book, *Season of Life*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jeffrey Marx tells the story of collegiate and professional football player Joe Ehrmann and his ongoing work to develop character in the young men he works with as an assistant football coach at Maryland's Gilman High School. Ehrmann reflects on what it means to be a man, and the false notions of masculinity that many young men are given by popular culture, the media, and frequently their fathers and brothers. Ehrmann identifies a threefold progression of false masculinity: "from ball field, to bedroom, to billfold."[35] He describes these three components of false masculinity as follows:

1. Athletic ability (ball field). Early on, boys learn that being a great athlete trumps just about every other activity in establishing the male pecking order.

2. Sexual conquest (bedroom). As athletic prowess is established, sexual conquest becomes the distinguishing mark of manhood. Those "who can manipulate and use girls for their own egos, for their own gratification are pointed to as what it means to be a man."

The Epiphany (abridged)
By Arliss Feathergill

I used to be a jerk, one of the biggest in the world. I hated everyone. I didn't care about your race or religion or your sexuality. All you had to do was be human, and you were a target of my hate.

My few friends were ones of convenience; they were the same as I was. Our greatest aspiration in life was to get even with the entire human race for what we felt were great offenses committed against us.

The worst thing was that I was proud of myself. I was proud of the hate. I was proud of the negative attention I received from everyone.

On June 11, 1998, my mother and I took a trip out west to visit an old friend in Seattle. I still wore my deep scowl even though I was glad to see my good friend Steve after all these years. My mother traveled down the coast, and I stayed with Steve for ten days.

During those ten days, I watched Steve simply live his life. He had friends, money, and a permanent smile on his face. And a small part of me wished I could have that, too.

Then something happened that changed everything. I remember the exact moment. I was sitting on the porch of his apartment. I was watching him as he waved to every passing car, knowing who was inside and commenting on them as they waved back. Seeing him sit there happy and friendly, I suddenly realized . . . I was an a—hole.

That realization took less than one second, but it felt like an eternity. In that one second, my entire life changed. All the sounds around me were drowned out by the tumultuous thoughts inside. My body was filled with a searing pain brought on by a terrible shame.

That night when Steve went to bed, I sat up and pondered what had happened to me earlier. I did something I had not done in three long tortuous years . . . I cried. My body shook with convulsions as I shed tears of shame and sadness. I cried until no more tears would come.

That night I decided I would bury my former self and emerge as someone new, someone who led a life of good. That morning I began my journey of redemption.

It has been almost two years since that day, and it has not been an easy road. In the months following that night, I spent time erasing my old life. I threw away material possessions. I ended friendships. I slowly erased who I had been inside and began starting over.

Although I still don't believe I am truly as good a person as I could be, I am far better off than I was. I do not hate anyone. There are people I don't like, but I have come to accept and respect anyone who accepts and respects my and other people's rights to our own beliefs. I now have friends and a broad smile, which I nearly always keep. I spend a lot of my time trying to make others smile and laugh, and am oftentimes successful.

The road of redemption and repentance is harsh. But if you find yourself in the situation I was in, it is well worth it. I hope that what I write here helps just one person learn from my mistakes.[33]

3. Economic success (billfold). This comes later in life, when "being a man" is judged by how much you make or by the title you have at work.[36]

Ehrmann elaborates:

> As a young boy, I'm going to compare my athletic ability to yours and compete for whatever attention that brings. When I get older, I'm going to compare my girlfriend to yours and compete for whatever status I can acquire by being with the prettiest or the coolest or the best girl I can get. Ultimately, as adults, we compare bank accounts and job titles, houses and cars, and we compete for the amount of security and power that those represent. We will even compare our children and compete for some sense of fatherhood and significance attached to their achievements.[37]

The three-fold progression of false masculinity: from ball field to bedroom to billfold.

This straight-shooting assessment of masculinity may not characterize every young man, but most of us would agree that it fits many in today's culture. That this is how the culture tends to shape males' understanding of masculinity is all the more reason to have young men reflect on their laws of life. The "Season of Life" philosophy argues that "being a man means emphasizing relationships and having a cause bigger than yourself." We think having boys first read portions or all of *Season of Life*, then write about their laws of life, would be a good way to help them

think more deeply about what it means to be a man and about the kind of man they want to become.

Outcome 8: Spiritual Person

Promising Practice 3:

Ask students to develop a mission statement.

In his best-selling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey writes, "The most effective way to begin with the end in mind is to develop a personal mission statement. It focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based." Research shows that successful organizations have mission statements that influence the culture of the organization and the character of its members.[38] Personal mission statements can help each of us make the most of our lives.

Research shows that successful organizations have mission statements.

Leadership for Life

In one of our site visits, we had an opportunity to watch a teacher work with students to help them craft a mission statement. The course was "Leadership for Life," an elective for juniors and seniors.

Mrs. A. asked students to begin work on their mission statement during week six of class. To set the stage, she showed a clip from the Tom Cruise film, "Jerry Maguire." Maguire, a sports agent who begins to question his own integrity and the integrity of his profession as a whole, has a nightmare in which he is drowning. He wakes up and asks himself, "What am I, just another shark in a suit?"

That morning, he sits down and writes his mission statement, a pledge to care about other people. He puts his manifesto announcing the new person he intends to be in the mailboxes of his colleagues at work. At first Maguire is deeply satisfied with his principled stance, but then, as he realizes that he has made public his deepest private convictions, he begins to panic. His colleagues publicly applaud his principled statement, but are privately cynical. Ultimately, Maguire loses his job as his colleagues use his statement to undermine his credibility.

Mrs. A. reviewed the highlights of the clip to make sure students had picked up on the key points: "Any of you ever feel as if you were drowning, even though you weren't in water? What is he feeling in that scene? . . . When we take a stand to do the right thing, how does the world often react?" She then handed out the assignment, "Personal Mission Statement," and went over the directions (see box).

Writing Your Mission Statement

1. What kind of person do I want to be (with regard to character, not career)?
2. What do I want to do (with regard to contributions and achievements, not career)?
3. What unchanging values or principles will be the basis for my being and doing?
4. Imagine you are at your own funeral. What do you want people to be saying about you?
5. Make a list of "commandments" you believe in and will follow in your life. Incorporate these into your mission statement.

Next, she handed out three examples of mission statements, including one by a high school junior (see box).

Finally, to set a high standard of excellence, Mrs. A. read this excerpt from Covey's book:

A mission statement is not something you write overnight.

My Mission Statement (17-year-old boy)

- Have confidence in yourself and others.
- Be kind, courteous, and respectful to all people.
- Set reachable goals; never lose sight of them.
- Never take the simple things in life for granted.
- Appreciate other people's differences.
- Ask questions.
- Remember that before you can change someone else, you must first change yourself.
- Speak with your actions.
- Make time to help the less fortunate and those who are having a bad day.
- Read this mission statement every day.[39]

It takes deep introspection, careful analysis, thoughtful expression, and often many rewrites to produce it in final form. It may take several weeks or even months before you feel it is a complete and concise expression of your innermost values and directions.[40]

> *"A mission statement takes deep introspection and many rewrites to produce it in final form."*

In keeping with Covey's exhortation, Mrs. A's students submitted the first drafts of their Personal Mission Statements for teacher and peer feedback but then continued to refine them all semester.

Outcome 8: Spiritual Person

Promising Practice 4:

Have students formulate and pursue meaningful life goals.

Cultivating Heart and Character by Tony Devine and colleagues reports research indicating that cultures around the world affirm three life goals as sources of authentic happiness:

1. **maturity of character—becoming the best person we can be**
2. **loving relationships, such as marriage, family, and close friendships**
3. **contributing to society—making a positive difference in the lives of others.**[41]

We should share this research with our students. Then, within these three broad life goals, we can challenge them to formulate and pursue the particular goals that will give their individual lives meaning and direction.

Lewis Terman's research found that intellectually gifted high school students who learned to set and pursue goals went on to achieve much higher levels of success than equally gifted students who did not learn to set goals.[42] One history teacher said, "If I were granted one wish for improving education in this country, it would be to include instruction in goal-setting in every school."[43] To teach goal-setting in his classes, this teacher gave his students an assignment called "100 Goals" (see box).

Says one of this teacher's former students who is now a pre-med student at U.C. Santa Barbara:

100 Goals

1. Write at least 100 goals, more if you wish.
2. Divide them into categories. You can choose your own categories based on your interests. Here are some you might want to consider; I encourage you to add some of your own:
   - education
   - career
   - family
   - learning
   - service to others
   - fun/adventure
   - creating/making/building
   - self-improvement
   - things you'd like to own
   - reading
   - U.S. travel
   - foreign travel
   - personal improvement
   - spiritual growth
   - major accomplishments.
3. After you write the 100 goals, select the *10 that are the most important to you*. Write them in any order. Then write a paragraph on your #1 goal. Explain why it is so important to you.
4. This assignment will be a significant part of your second quarter grade. You have two choices:
   - Treat this as just another stupid school assignment that has to be done; or
   - Treat it as if you're writing a preliminary blueprint for the rest of your life. Write out a life plan that will keep you from becoming one of those "nice dead people" who go through the motions of living but never really *live*.
5. If you do decide to take this assignment seriously, remember: THINK IN TERMS OF POSSIBILITIES, NOT LIMITATIONS.

> Born originals, how comes it to pass that we die copies?
>
> —Edward Young

I still have my goals posted, and I look at them every day, just like Mr. U. encouraged us to do. One of my goals was to run the 100-meter hurdles in 18 seconds. I really didn't think I could do it, but every day Mr. U. encouraged me and asked about my progress. And I finally did make my goal.

> *"I've had students write to me 10 or 15 years after graduation, saying, 'If you didn't have us do this assignment, I never would have even dreamed of most of these goals—let alone achieved them.'"*

This teacher comments: "I've had students write to me 10 or 15 years after graduation, sending me their list of 100 goals with the ones checked off that they've already achieved. They say, 'If you didn't have us do this assignment, I never would have even dreamed of most of these goals—let alone achieved them.'"

Outcome 8: Spiritual Person

Promising Practice 5:

Engage students in the study of religion and in developing their faith in something larger than themselves.

Public opinion polls consistently find that religion is an important force in the lives of adult Americans and that the majority profess a belief in God.[44] University of North Carolina religion scholar Warren Nord observes:

Religion is often more important in defining people's identities and values than race, class, and gender. Religion continues to shape a good deal of our thinking about war and peace, politics and justice, good and evil, morality and sexuality, physical nature and human nature. And yet we leave religious voices out of the curricular discussion of these subjects. This is a scandal.[45]

> *"Religion is often more important in defining people's identities and values than race, class, and gender."*

Many, if not most people, cite their religious faith as their primary reference point in making moral decisions and the major source of moral motivation for the work and service they do. In *Bowling Alone,* Harvard professor of public policy Robert Putnam notes that "religiosity rivals education as a powerful correlate of most forms of civic engagement . . . [and] is an especially strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy."[46]

The report, *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths,* identified "faith communities and religious institutions" as one of the nation's most important "seedbeds of civic virtue."[47]

The Role of Religion in Youth Character Development

What does the research say about religion's role in young people's character development—both its contribution to altruistic behavior and its protection against anti-social and risk behavior? A Child Trends Research Brief, *Religious Involvement and Children's Well-Being: What Research Tells Us (and What It Doesn't),* reports that higher levels of religiosity in teens are linked to:

- **higher levels of altruistic attitudes and behaviors**
- **lower levels of theft, vandalism, and violence**
- **lower levels of drug and alcohol use**
- **lower levels of sexual activity.**[48]

> *Higher religiosity in teens is associated with higher levels of altruism and lower levels of anti-social and risk behavior.*

The State of Religiosity Among Teens

Granted that religion makes a positive contribution to civic virtue and to individual character, what is the current state of religiosity among American teens? The 2005 book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers,* reports research finding that:

- Large numbers of U.S. teens say that religious faith is important in their lives, both in shaping daily life and in making major life decisions. About half indicated that faith is "very" or "extremely important" in their lives. (Only 8% said faith was not important at all.)
- 40% of U.S. teens report attending religious services once a week or more; 19% report attending one to three times per month; 22% report attending a few or many times a year; 18% report never attending religious services.

"Fortunately," Haynes continues, "there is another alternative that is consistent with the First Amendment and broadly supported by many educational and religious groups." He points out that the core of this alternative has been articulated in *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy,* a statement of principles issued by 24 national organizations. Principle IV of this consensual document states:

> Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.[51]

A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools goes on to address 18 commonly asked questions about what teachers and students may and may not do with respect to religion in the public school. The box on page 207 gives, in abridged form, the document's answers to seven questions.

Five Specific Things We Can Do

What follows are five specific things we believe public as well as religious schools can do to help youth understand the contribution of religion to our culture and the role of religion in character development, while honoring the First Amendment and the spirit of the guidelines quoted on page 207:

1. **Help students recognize the role religion has played in our moral beginnings as a nation (for example, the Declaration of Independence asserts that we are "endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights").**
2. **Help students recognize that our country's major social reform movements—from the abolition of slavery to the civil rights movement—have been inspired by a religious vision that life is sacred, that we are all equal in the sight of God, and that we are children of a common creator who calls us to live in harmony and justice.**
3. **Help students recognize the role of religious motivation in the lives of individuals, both in history and current times (in many texts, figures such as Mother Teresa are described with no mention of their religious motivation).**
4. **Encourage students to develop a vision of life that addresses ultimate questions about the meaning of life, human destiny, and so on. (What is the wisdom of the ages with regard to such questions? What have noted thinkers, religious and non-religious, had to say?)**
5. **Encourage students to make use of all their intellectual and cultural resources, including their faith traditions, when they consider social issues (e.g., our obligation to the poor; see box on page 208) and make personal moral decisions (e.g., whether to have sex before marriage).**

> We're poorly prepared to comprehend a world that is aflame with faith. College students frequently know little about religion in the United States, much less about religion in the world. High school graduates, who overwhelmingly constitute the military in the United States, know almost nothing about Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, or those branches of Christianity they do not practice themselves. And yet they have been asked to fight wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq over the past 15 years in which religion has stood at the very center of each conflict.
>
> —Jon Butler

Fairness to Persons of No Faith

"Atheism is the deepest difference of all," said Mynga Futrell, a spokesperson for the organization Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in Teaching About Religion and a participant in a 2003 forum, *Teaching About Religion in Public Schools: Where Do We Go From Here?*[54] "Many people feel it's okay to be prejudiced against atheists."

> *"Many people feel it's okay to be prejudiced against atheists."*

Futrell pointed out that there are more people who have no religious faith than is commonly supposed. When The American Religious Identification Survey recently asked

A Teacher's Guide to Religion in Public Schools (Sample Questions and Answers, Abridged)

1. *Is it constitutional to teach about religion?*

Yes. In the 1960's school prayer cases (that prompted rulings against state-sponsored school prayer and Bible reading), the U.S. Supreme Court indicated that public school education may include teaching about religion.

2. *Why should study about religion be included in the curriculum?*

Religion in the Public School Curriculum, issued by a coalition of 17 major religious and educational organizations, states: "Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant."

3. *How should I teach about religion?*

The guidelines set forth in *Religion in the Public School Curriculum* state:

- The school's approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
- The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.
- The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
- Classroom discussions concerning religion must be conducted in an environment that is free of advocacy on the part of the teacher. Students may express their own religious views as long as such expression is germane to discussion.

4. *Which religions should be taught, and how much should be said?*

The social studies, literature, and the arts all offer opportunities for the inclusion of study about religions. The academic needs of a given course determine which religions are studied. In a U.S. history curriculum, for example, some faith communities may be given more time than others but only because of their predominant influence on the development of American history. In world history, a variety of faiths are studied in each region of the world in order to understand the various civilizations and cultures that have shaped history and society.

Fair and balanced study about religion on the secondary level includes critical thinking about historical events. Religious beliefs have been at the heart of some of the best and some of the worst developments in human history. The full historical record (and various interpretations of it) should be available for analysis and discussion.

5. *May I invite guest speakers to help with study about religion?*

If a guest speaker is invited, care should be taken to find someone with the academic background necessary for an objective and scholarly discussion of the religion being studied. Religious leaders in the community may also be a resource. Be certain, however, that any guest speaker understands the First Amendment guidelines for teaching about religion in public education.

6. *How should I respond if students ask about my religious beliefs?*

The teacher may answer at most with a brief statement of personal belief—but may not turn the question into an opportunity to proselytize for or against religion.

7. *May students express religious views in their assignments?*

"Religious Expression in Public Schools," published by the U.S. Department of Education, states: "Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free of discrimination . . . Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards."[52]

Resources for Teaching About Religion

Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education www.csee.org

First Amendment Center Online www.firstamendmentcenter.org

Haynes, C. (1990). *Religion in American history: What to teach and how.* Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center.

Haynes, C. & Thomas, O. (1994). *Finding common ground: A First Amendment guide to religion and public education.* Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center.

Nord, W. & Haynes, C. (1998). *Taking religion seriously across the curriculum.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Religious Studies in Secondary Schools www.rsiss.net

What is Our Obligation to the Poor?

"As you did it to one of these least ones, you did it to me."

—Matthew, 25:40

All men are responsible for one another.

—Talmud

Nearly half the 6 billion people in the world are poor. There are three degrees of poverty. "Extreme poverty," defined by the World Bank as getting by on less than $1 a day, means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to get health care, lack safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for their children and perhaps lack rudimentary shelter—a roof to keep the rain out of the hut—and basic articles of clothing, like shoes. We can describe extreme poverty as "the poverty that kills."

"Moderate poverty," defined as living on $1 to $2 a day, refers to conditions in which basic needs are met, but just barely. Being in "relative poverty," defined by a household income level below a given proportion of the national average, means lacking things that the middle class takes for granted.

The total number of people living in extreme poverty, the World Bank estimates, is 1.1 billion. Much of the one-sixth of humanity in extreme poverty suffers the ravages of AIDS, drought, isolation, and civil wars, and is thereby trapped in a vicious cycle of deprivation and death.

Yet our generation, in the U.S. and abroad, can choose to end extreme poverty by the year 2025 . . . The end of poverty will require a global network of cooperation . . . The costs of action are a tiny fraction of the costs of inaction . . . The richest and most powerful country, long the leader and inspiration in democratic ideals, is currently barely participating in global efforts to end poverty . . . It is time to honor the commitment to give 0.7% of our national income to these crucial goals.

—Jeffery Sachs, economist,
The End of Poverty[53]

respondents, "What is your religious preference, if any?", the count of those who identified themselves as "atheist" or "agnostic" surpassed the combined count of Hindus and Buddhists. Adding the atheists and agnostics together with those uninterested in religion, the total came in third after Catholics and Baptists. Futrell comments:

Are we going to teach kids that there are nice, functioning atheists? If not, are we indirectly suggesting that in order to be moral, you have to be religious? Educators have a responsibility to be neutral.[55]

Clearly, in educating about religion and its potential contribution to character development and the common good, we need to be clear: One does not have to be religious to be ethical, and being religious is no guarantee of being an ethical person. Just as those who have a religious worldview want to have their views understood, so, too, those who base their worldview on non-religious beliefs and values have an equal right to be understood. A truly democratic commitment to diversity will take pains to be fair toward all perspectives.

Whether or not young people come from backgrounds of faith, we want them to develop faith in something larger than themselves.

Whether or not young people come from backgrounds of religious faith, we want to challenge them to develop faith in something larger than themselves. Happiness, as nearly all systems of spiritual thought recognize, requires transcendence—finding ourselves by finding something bigger and higher than ourselves.

Sharing Our Quest for a Life of Purpose

In challenging students to craft a life of noble purpose, we should remember to share our own stories. We con-

Don't blame poverty on God. People are poor because others do not share.

—Mother Teresa

clude Outcome 8 with one such story that a principal has shared with his school community and fellow educators. It reminds us that a life of noble purpose does not require good fortune; it is often forged on the anvil of adversity. And it reminds us that when we lead a life of noble purpose, we can leave a lasting legacy to others.

Overcoming Adversity to Craft a Life of Noble Purpose

What kind of legacy do we wish to leave our children—through our families, communities, and schools? The "legacy question" was the focus of Jeff Eben, award-winning principal of Clovis East High School, when he spoke to more than 3,000 teachers and administrators in Fresno, California. An atmosphere of expectation filled the room as he took the mike and maneuvered his wheelchair to the edge of the stage. He began:

I did all the good stuff in high school. When I was 16, I was quarterback for the football team, president of my junior class, and had a 3.8 GPA. Life was good. But on October 2, 1977, my life changed forever.

I went water skiing for the first time. I took one lesson, but when I saw the other guys doing tricks—up on one ski and so on—I wanted to do that. So the next time out, I got up on one ski. The boat accelerated to 40 miles per hour. When it went into a turn, I lost control.

I fell face forward. The lake had gotten shallow in that part, with rocks just under the surface. I hit one rock head on—then another, then another. It opened up a huge gash on the top of my head, broke my neck in three places, and left me paralyzed from the waist down. Life as I knew it had ended.

In the hospital, Jeff Eben sank into a deep depression. But every day his football coach, Jack Bohan, came to see him.

Coach Bohan was a very busy man. Besides coaching football and teaching high school English, he had a family of his own. But he came to see me every day without fail, even on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. He never missed. And every time he came, he would ask me the same question: "How many wins you have today?"

The first time he asked that, I said, "Well, let's see—I've got metal screws in the sides of my head, 48 stitches on the top of my head, and the doctors say I'll never walk again. I guess I can't think of any wins I've had today."

"But those guys don't know you," he said. "You're not gonna let the no-hopes win, are you?"

No-hopes? I didn't know what he meant. I didn't even think that was good English. But whenever he came to see me, he'd ask the same question.

"How many wins you have today?"

"None."

"Wrong. Your parents were here today. I'm here now. You didn't die. Those are all wins."

So I started to humor him. One day I said, "I didn't pee in my pants today—I guess that's a win."

"ALL RIGHT," he shouted, "YOU DIDN'T PEE IN YOUR PANTS!! That's a win!" I thought he was nuts.

But gradually, so I'd have something to tell him, I began looking for wins. I'd say to myself as I'd go through a day, "That's a win. That's a win. That's another win . . ." And when I told Coach my wins for the day, he'd celebrate and made a big deal about it.

By the time I left the hospital six months later, it was all about wins. I knew that somehow, I was going to get my piece of the American dream.

Recently, I spoke at Coach Bohan's retirement dinner. How do you thank somebody for giving you your life back? He helped me to believe that no matter how dire the trouble you're in, you can have hope—and if you have that, nobody can take it away. Hope is enough; hope will sustain you. That was his legacy to me.

Jeff Eben paused. There weren't a lot of dry eyes in the room. He left his audience with this challenge:

What is the legacy you want to leave your students? When I had the chance to become a high school principal a few years ago, that's the question I asked myself. What would give our kids a foundation on which to build their lives? What would they always remember?

I decided I would propose, as our school motto, "Feel the love." People said, "You can't be serious. You can't get away with that in a high school." Well, that's our motto. And now at graduation, when the kids give speeches, they talk about the love at our school.

We have a huge responsibility as educators. There are a lot of good teachers and administrators out there. But are you willing to be great? To do that, you have to give kids a part of yourself—a legacy that will last a lifetime.

> The more we forget ourselves—by giving ourselves to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human we are and the more we actualize ourselves.
>
> —Viktor Frankl

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[17] Kessler, 5.

[18] Kessler, 11.

[19] Kessler, 11.

[20] Kessler, 13.

[21] Kessler, 142.

[22] Kessler, xi.

[23] Kessler, x.

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[28] Personal correspondence.

[29] The Laws of Life Essay Contest is a program of the John Templeton Foundation, which provides the major financial support of the Smart & Good High Schools research.

[30] *Teachers guide: Laws of life essay contest,* John Templeton Foundation, **www.lawsoflife.org**, 6.

[31] **www.ffl-essays.org**

[32] For more information contact the John Templeton Foundation, **http://templeton.org/**

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[44] See, for example, U.S. News/PBS's Religion & Ethics Newsweekly Poll, as reported by J.L. Sheler, "Faith in America," *U.S. News & World Report* (May 6, 2002), 40-49.

[45] W. Nord, quoted in *Teaching about religion in public schools: Where do we go from here?* Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the First Amendment Center, **www.pewforum.org** (2003), 10.

[46] R.D. Putnam, *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 67.

[47] The Council on a Civil Society, *A call to civil society: Why democracy needs moral truths.* (New York: Institute for American Values, 1998).

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[50] C. Haynes, *A teacher's guide to religion in the public schools.* (Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center, 1999), 1, **www.freedomforum.org**

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[54] *Teaching about religion in public schools.*

CHAPTER 6

Commonly Asked Questions about Smart & Good High Schools

How does the Smart & Good High Schools model help us meet the challenges of No Child Left Behind?

In several ways. First, if you want kids to achieve, they have to be *motivated* to achieve. As Ron Berger says, you can test kids till the cows come home, but you won't get anywhere unless you can get them to care.

What motivates students to care are teachers and peers who care about them and *show* that by pushing them to do their best work. That, plus the actual experience of *doing excellent work.* When students find they can do quality work, it changes them. They have a new self-image—and they want the experience of excellence again.

Second, the research tells us that achievement is a function of effort, not just talent. That's true in school, and it's true throughout life. Look around; who succeeds? Lots of people have ability; it's what they make of their ability that matters. That's determined by our performance character—our work ethic. That's what studies of talented teenagers tell us; those adolescents with a strong work ethic develop their talent to a higher level than equally gifted peers who lack a strong work ethic. If we can teach kids good work habits, how to get the most out of their ability, we'll see the payoff in greater learning, higher test scores, and more fulfilled, productive lives.

Achievement is a function of effort, not just talent. Effort is a function of performance character.

Third, look at schools that are working well. Where are students—regardless of socioeconomic level—doing quality work, testing well, going to college, or getting decent jobs after graduation? In schools that are essentially putting into practice the principles of a Smart & Good High School—schools where there's a strong professional ethical learning community, where faculty and staff work together closely to help kids do their best work and be the best persons they can be in all areas of their lives.

Finally, there's published research showing that implementation of quality character education is connected to increases in academic achievement. Check out the fall, 2003 issue of the new *Journal of Research in Character Education* (**www.infoagepub.com**). It contains a comprehensive literature review by Jack Benninga and colleagues reporting the research on the relationship between academic performance and implementation of high-quality character education. At every developmental level—elementary, middle school, and high school— students who experienced quality character education programs outperformed comparison groups not only on measures of social behavior but also on measures of academic learning. So there's an emerging body of hard evidence that we'll get an academic payoff when we invest in developing character as the foundation for excellence and ethics.

Research shows a positive relationship between implementation of quality character education and academic achievement.

I'm a principal of a high school. What would you recommend as the first thing to do if I wanted to implement your model?

There are two things we think are helpful in getting started: study and alignment. Study what the report contains, and as you do, align it with your existing needs and school improvement initiatives. Consider, How can the big ideas and promising practices in *Smart & Good High Schools* meet needs your school has already identified and extend school improvement initiatives you already have under way?

This study and alignment process should, ideally, involve all four groups that make up the ethical learning community: staff, students, parents, and the wider community. As we stress in the report, if we want students to develop the

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

—LAO-TZU

eight strengths of character, we need all four of those groups working together to promote those outcomes.

But it starts with staff. There are different ways to try to get staff on board, but here's one scenario: First, share the *Smart & Good High Schools* report with your leadership team. Ask them, How does it align with our school improvement initiatives?

Second step, meet with faculty leaders, including union leaders—who can help rather than hinder progress if they're approached in a positive way. Summarize the report for them, and give them a copy of the full report, highlighting what you think may be of greatest interest and relevance. Ask this group of leaders to work with administration in jointly presenting the key ideas to the full faculty and staff.

In that presentation, keep the focus on alignment: What do we see as our needs and current school improvement priorities, and how can *Smart & Good High Schools* help us with that? To begin to answer that question, you could put people in groups of four and give them two sheets: one summarizing Smart & Good ideas and practices; the other a worksheet, with one column titled "Current Needs and Initiatives" and a second column titled, "Smart & Good ideas and practices that could help us with our current needs and initiatives."

To get started, study the report and align it with your current needs and school improvement initiatives.

Then set up a Smart & Good High Schools Study Group made up of a cross-section of staff, to spend the next few months examining the report in depth and identifying further points of alignment. Alternatively, use the full faculty as your study group and take the first 15-20 minutes of each faculty meeting to discuss the various sections of the report— looking at connections with existing needs and school improvement initiatives.

Next, identify a couple of priorities for the current school year—such as improving freshman academic performance or creating Critical Friends Groups to strengthen staff collaboration—and generate a list of proposed action steps related to those priorities.

Then repeat this study and alignment process with student leaders, parent leaders, and community leaders.

We don't think it works to try to impose this or any reform model—or even to try to "sell it" to others. People have two feelings about change: If it's their idea, they like it; if it's somebody else's idea being imposed on them, they tend to resist it. The challenge with all change is to develop shared ownership. That's needed to sustain change in the long run. The process we've just laid out is one way to try to achieve shared ownership.

The challenge with all change is to develop shared ownership.

What if you don't have a principal who's behind this?

Leadership obviously matters. The research shows that. Experience confirms that. If you don't have a principal or head who's out front leading this kind of school reform, what are your options—other than throwing up your hands?

One is to share the report with your school leader and ask if you could have time at an upcoming faculty meeting for people to read and discuss parts of it. Is there anything in here that would improve our lives and help students perform better? What's aligned with our needs and current initiatives?

A second option is to find at least one colleague who could be a support system for you. Somebody you can talk to over coffee about these ideas. Somebody who's willing to try out some of the practices and then compare experiences.

A third option is to sit down with student leaders and discuss parts of the report with them—perhaps the section on how to increase student voice in the school. Ask if they'd like your help in putting together a proposal and meeting with the principal to discuss it.

A fourth option is to say, "Hey, maybe there's nobody else here who's got the time or interest to try these ideas, but I'm going to do some things in my own sphere of influence as a teacher, a coach, a counselor." One person can make a difference in a student, a classroom, or a team. We all know the Power of One from first-hand experience. Somebody made a difference for us.

He who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who pronounces decisions.

—Abraham Lincoln

How does the Smart & Good High Schools model compare to other reform models?

We think it's both similar and different. Many of the themes highlighted in reports such as *Breaking Ranks II*—collaborative leadership, small learning communities, personalization of the learning environment, a rigorous curriculum, assessment—are ones you'll find in *Smart & Good High Schools*.

What's different about *Smart & Good High Schools*, we think, is its focus on character—and its definition of character as including both performance character and moral character. Most school reform models emphasize excellence, but say nothing about the role of performance character in achieving excellence. Moreover, few reform models address moral character. No other model we know uses character in the full sense—performance character and moral character—as its main organizing theme.

We argue that schools must make performance character and moral character the cornerstones of schooling. Why? Because they're the cornerstones of success in life.

Performance character and moral character must be the cornerstones of schooling—because they are the cornerstones of success in life.

We're saying you can't separate excellence and ethics. We don't want to graduate kids who become mediocre teachers, incompetent surgeons, or sloppy mechanics. And we don't want to graduate kids who become crooked CEOs, steroid-popping athletes, or citizens who don't vote. We need to give more than lip service to the integration of excellence and ethics. They have to be our twin touchstones, the lenses through which we see all our work.

So do you see your model as an alternative to other approaches?

More like a complement to them. The chemical company BASF has a slogan that says, "We don't make a lot of the products you use—we make a lot of the products you use, better." This tagline describes the catalytic nature of their product. Without BASF chemicals, many other products wouldn't be as good as they now are. And without the other products, BASF chemicals wouldn't be as valuable to so many customers.

This is similar to our Smart & Good High Schools vision. We think it has the potential to make any school or any classroom better. For example, we think that strong math pedagogy coupled with the Smart & Good High Schools vision will get more from students than strong math pedagogy alone—especially in struggling schools.

The Smart & Good vision can complement other reform models.

Why is that so? Because the message is received according to the disposition of the receiver. Your math message isn't going to be received as well by students who are missing the performance character qualities needed for math—diligence, perseverance, positive attitude, orderliness. You might have great math teaching methods but not have a classroom culture in which kids push each other to do their best work. You might have great math methods but not good classroom discipline. If classroom discipline and a culture of excellence are not established, the best math pedagogy will be less than optimally effective.

Whether you're a Coalition of Essential Schools member, a Talent Development School, a First Things First school, or any of the other current reform models, you can also be a Smart & Good High School. You don't have to choose one over the other. However, we do believe that our approach can strengthen the other approaches.

What's your feeling about advisories? Are they necessary?

Advisories are one way to get to a goal—namely, school connectedness. Research shows the importance of school connectedness—close relationships between adults and students, and close relationships between students and each other. When kids feel connected in these ways, they work harder in school, are less likely to drop out, and are less likely to engage in a range of risky behaviors such as sex, drugs, and drinking.

Are advisories the only way to create connectedness? No. You can create connectedness through classrooms that build community around excellence and ethics. You can create it by using the traditional "homeroom period" for advisory-type activities. You can achieve connectedness through extracurricular and co-curricular activities, which the research shows often have a bigger impact on a student's performance and moral character and long-range life outcomes than any academic experience.

Do all advisories work? Not necessarily. We saw advisories where, quite frankly, the structure didn't appear to promote strong connectedness or foster other important goals. Like any school structure or practice, advisories

need what we've called Re-BAR—research-based action and reflection. Schools need to collect data—from surveys, interviews, and student performance—that enable them to answer questions such as, "What's working?", "What might work better?", and "How can we make our use of this practice as strong as it can be?"

Advisories need Re-BAR—Research-Based Action and Reflection—in order to answer the questions, "What's working?", "What might work better?"

We do think advisories have strong potential to contribute to the development of our eight strengths of character. We think they have a much better chance of achieving their potential if they are focused in a very deliberate way on developing critical thinkers, diligent and capable performers, ethical thinkers, democratic citizens, spiritual persons, and so on. That means developing an advisory curriculum with lessons aimed at these goals. We also think it's wise, as some schools have done, to consider training upper-level students to help lead the advisories. That takes some of the burden off faculty and also gives students another opportunity to develop leadership.

One of the buzz phrases in school reform is "rigor, relevance, and relationships." How does the Smart & Good model address that?

We think our model goes to the heart of these three ideas. Let's start with relationships. For many students, their experience of high school is one of anonymity. We can't hope to improve student achievement, decrease disciplinary problems, or increase retention unless we can improve the quality of the relationships students experience. A Smart & Good High School, through the six principles it uses to create an ethical learning community, helps students feel known and needed, supported and cared for, and challenged to do their best work.

What about rigor? When we talk about performance character, we're talking about developing "conscience of craft"—qualities such as perseverance, positive attitude, diligence, and orderliness that are all essential for rigor.

Smart & Good High Schools also achieve rigor by creating a "culture of critique" where students support and challenge each other in the pursuit of excellence. For example, a kid writes an essay. It gets shared with and critiqued by the rest of the class. The teacher mediates that feedback and does his or her most important instruction as part of that process. A culture of critique examines models of excellence, requires multiple revisions, and has students striving to meet the standards of real-world work. This is real rigor.

In fact, if we remove character as the pathway to rigor and excellence, all we're left with is the "big hammer of exhortation." We beg, plead, punish, and reward in our efforts to get better work from students. But, if we engage students in the intentional development of their performance character, so that they *own that* as an important personal goal, and we do that in a classroom culture where peers support and challenge each other, we'll have a much better chance of getting high-quality performance.

If students intentionally pursue the development of their performance character, their academic performance is likely to improve.

Finally, what about relevance? The qualities of performance character and moral character and the process of working collaboratively to achieve excellence are not only absolutely relevant for success in school—secondary and post-secondary—but also for success in the workplace.

Do schools really have time to devote to developing moral character?

Schools don't have time *not* to attend to moral character. We don't mean to be glib about this; we know that schools are facing tremendous academic pressures. But we believe that if you want to maximize the power of your learning climate, you must attend to issues of character. First of all, you need a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment. In our report, we describe research-based, practitioner-friendly strategies for creating that kind of school and classroom environment.

The other reason, of course, to pay attention to moral character is that we want to graduate ethical people and democratic citizens. We have enough people in society who are just looking out for themselves and will do whatever they need to do—lie, cheat, steal—to succeed. We need more people who are willing to sacrifice something

An ounce of character is worth a pound of intelligence.

—Proverb

for others—who define success in terms of building healthy families, leading a life of integrity, and contributing to the common good.

We need more people who define success in terms of leading a life of integrity and contributing to the welfare of others.

What we think schools do *not* have time for is overloading themselves with too many disconnected practices and programs that are not aligned with the truly important outcomes, those that will help young people lead flourishing lives.

Will it take time to implement the Smart & Good High Schools vision in a way that truly integrates excellence and ethics in all phases of school life? You bet. But we feel that the time invested in that mission will contribute to the most important goals of cutting-edge high school reform and to the education of the whole person.

What difference does your focus on character and integrating ethics and excellence make in terms of what a teacher or school actually does?

Whether you're teaching a student to do calculus, write a persuasive essay, understand history, or play a musical instrument, you always keep in mind two fundamental questions: First, *what is the contribution of character to this challenge?* Are students not turning in homework because they don't know how to be organized, manage their time, and persevere? Do we have put downs, exclusion, and bullying in our school because we haven't invested time in developing character qualities such as respect and caring?

Second, *how might handling this issue with a character focus help students and our community—now and in the future?* For example, if we develop strong norms of collective responsibility in our schools, will students be better teammates now and better employees and citizens as adults? If we cultivate integrity through our honor code, will it help our young have more honest relationships later in life? When you keep a focus on character, there's both a short-term payoff and a long-term payoff regardless of the learning task you're working on.

How does your vision meet workforce needs—including the demands of the high-tech global economy?

On this point, the research coming out of business and industry is pretty clear: They want and need people of strong performance character—people with attention to detail, timeliness, work ethic, diligence, and ingenuity.

They also want people of moral character—people with strong interpersonal skills, integrity, and a sense of social responsibility.

This was the lesson we took from Jim Collins's book *Good to Great*. Companies that made the leap from good to great performance said that education and skill level are important, but qualities of character are more important. This is as true for students graduating with hopes of working in a blue-collar trade as it is for students graduating with hopes of going to college and then into a white-collar profession.

We obviously also need to prepare our students for the high-tech jobs many of them will have in the global economy. The character strengths that have guided the great scientists, statesmen, inventors, and entrepreneurs of the past will serve today's workers as well. In the highly competitive global economy they'll need the performance character qualities we've named before: diligence, perseverance, ingenuity, and so on. They'll need to work collaboratively; they'll need to be good teammates who bring out the best in those they work with; they'll need to be open to new ideas and new ways of thinking. These qualities are a matter of character.

Companies that went from good to great considered character qualities more important than technical skills.

In a world of rapid technological growth, there's an even greater need for highly developed ethical thinking and moral character. We need students who are not simply prepared to compete in the global economy, but also able to grapple with the ethical challenges of our age. How do we avoid the destruction of the environment on which all life depends? What is the dignity of the human person? What is a reasonable wage? What is the value of life? What promotes peace instead of war? Justice instead of a growing gap between the rich and the poor?

Your report features lots of practices; which practices are most important?

It depends on your particular challenges and your existing assets. Consider the key ideas in the Smart & Good High Schools vision and the range of practices for implementing them. Determine which among them fills a void that you're not currently addressing, strengthens a structure that you have in place but isn't as strong as it could

be, or can replace something that isn't doing what it was intended to do.

For example, you might not have an honor code. Having one would fill a void. You might have a student government, but modifying it to allow for greater schoolwide participation would make it more effective. Or you might have a system of disciplinary consequences that you feel does little to develop moral character and avoid repeat offenses—and you really want to try a very different approach.

You talk a lot about the development of a "Professional Ethical Learning Community." Why so much emphasis on this if student results are the real bottom line?

Research indicates that collegiality differentiates a learning-enriched environment from a learning-impoverished environment. What does that mean? You can't hope to have faculty and staff do their best teaching unless they are able to work well together. Student performance, the research shows, is improved by having a professional ethical learning community where colleagues share their practices and seek constructive critique, where test scores are shared to discern strengths and weaknesses in teaching styles, where colleagues act as "Critical Friends" in the pursuit of excellence.

Student performance improves when colleagues share and critically evaluate their teaching practices.

This kind of collaboration won't and can't take place unless there is a community that is defined by the norms of respect, civility, integrity, and collective responsibility—and that makes time for ongoing collaboration. That's what a professional ethical learning community is.

How do you develop that kind of a professional learning community if you don't already have one? Where do you start?

Start with how you use what you're already doing. For example, how are faculty meetings used? If people feel they aren't as productive as they could be, can they be used differently—to share practices that are working and to look at the alignment of practices with the outcomes you want in your graduates? Can you get at least one Critical Friends Group formed and meeting on a regular basis? The research shows that teachers who participate in CFGs say their teaching gets better every year. There's a whole website (**www.nsrfharmony.org**) devoted to how to implement CFG's. If you did one thing to jump-start your PELC, we think this would be a great choice.

But what if you can't even begin the conversation with colleagues or administrators in your school?

That takes us back to the Power of One. Begin with yourself and your sphere of influence. As a teacher, counselor, coach, parent, or administrator, you can begin to make character the pathway to excellence and ethics. Help your students see the connections between effort and outcome. Share the results you're getting with at least one person on staff that you can talk to.

Do the ideas in the report apply to schools where students are already high achievers and pretty good kids?

Absolutely. As the old saying goes, "From those who have been given more, more is expected." We want our good kids to be great kids—by realizing their full potential, ethically as well as intellectually. The national studies of cheating show that two-thirds to three-quarters of students, including the "best and the brightest," admit to cheating on a test or major assignment in the past year. They typically carry that pattern into college, where studies show that in the absence of an honor code, 75% cheat, and often into their adult lives where they may cheat on everything from their taxes to their spouses.

What kind of leaders do we want? Our high-achieving kids are going to lead our communities, our corporations, our schools, our country. Do we want them to be moral leaders? If so, what are we doing in our schools that contributes to that goal?

A great educator is a "maximizer of potential."

Moreover, we think there are plenty of talented kids who don't come close to realizing their full potential because they don't have performance character. They don't persevere in the face of difficulty, don't work on things they're not good at, don't work well with others. They stay in their comfort zone, hide from real challenges. Test scores

> Great learning and superior ability are of little value unless honor, truth, and integrity are added to them.
>
> —Abigail Adams

don't always tell us what we've done to help these students become all they're capable of being.

Our definition of a great educator is to be a "maximizer of potential." We clearly have that responsibility with struggling students, but we have it to the same degree with our most talented students.

What about Type A kids who take this "work in progress" stuff to the extreme, who are never happy with themselves?

That's obviously something we need to be concerned about and one reason why **Outcome 8,** becoming a spiritual person who is crafting a life of noble purpose, is essential. Kids, just like adults, need a larger view of life that puts things in perspective.

There's a greater danger of producing stressed-out students in schools that focus just on academic achievement.

Frankly, we think there's a much greater danger of producing stressed-out, Type A students in schools that focus on achievement to the exclusion of becoming a socially and emotionally skilled person, an ethical thinker, a democratic citizen, and a spiritual person. Schools that don't talk about character, about the whole person, are the real breeding grounds for the "doing school" syndrome that Denise Pope and others describe.

This is why we argue for the integration of strengths of character such as spiritual person with diligent and capable performer. We're arguing for balance. Aristotle said, "Virtue is the mean between excess and deficiency." When kids do their best to maximize their talent potential, to behave ethically in their relationships, and to begin to craft a life of noble purpose, they should experience balance and fulfillment, not burn-out.

What are scheduling issues that a school would need to consider in order to implement the kinds of things you're talking about?

> If we would re-order the world, we must first ask, "How well are we re-ordering our souls?"
>
> —Russell Kirk

Scheduling is an important piece of the puzzle. The ability of a school to implement the Smart & Good High Schools vision will certainly depend on its ability to find the time to plan, implement, and monitor the practices that make this vision come to life. But we also think the vision can be worked into a wide variety of school schedules.

One thing many schools have found essential for developing the PELC is a common planning time. Different schools have found creative ways to establish that time, which is crucial for the collegial conversation that makes and sustains real change in school culture.

What kind of training is required to do the things described in the report?

Once again, it depends. The report features a mix of practices with different levels of difficulty. Some, like a handshake at the door, can be implemented with no training at all. Other practices, like initiating a democratic student government or implementing a quality service learning program, would require training. With changes such as establishing an effective honor code, a school would be wise to look at case studies, use a guidebook such as that published by the Council for Spirituality and Ethics in Education (**www.csee.org**), and talk to a school that has developed a code that's working.

There are really two significant areas for training that will have the broadest possible contribution to realizing the vision of the report. First, training in Re-BAR—Research-Based Action and Reflection. Everything that happens in the life of the school has the potential to contribute to or detract from the development of performance character and moral character. Therefore, as we explain in our chapter on the professional ethical learning community, we think it's critical that educators become reflective practitioners who consider the intended outcomes of everything they do, collect data on the extent to which those outcomes are being achieved, and use that data to determine what to continue, improve, start, or stop.

Schools need data in order to determine what practices to continue, improve, start, or stop.

Equally vital is training that helps faculty and staff to begin working individually and as a community to improve their own character and build a collegial staff culture—the professional ethical learning community. The PELC commits every staff member to two things: (1)

the personal quest for excellence and ethics—doing our best work and being our best ethical self; and (2) supporting and challenging each other in this quest for excellence and ethics.

That means all of us need to be involved in developing the 8 strengths of character that we want our students to develop. We can't give what we haven't got. In the end, the people are the program. Develop the people, and you'll improve the program.

How would a school go about assessing its effectiveness in developing performance character and moral character and the eight strengths of character?

Part of the next phase of our work will be to begin developing an institutional assessment system that enables schools to rigorously monitor the development of the strengths of character and the ethical learning community. Continue to look to our Center's main website **www.cortland.edu/character** for our progress in this area. There are already a number of assessment tools available for use free of charge.

In the meantime, you can begin with the Re-Bar process. Under Outcome 6 (**page 162**), for example, we describe a school that used this process with its freshman advisories.

This school had two goals: to decrease the percentage of freshmen who failed a first-semester course and to increase the percentage who participated in an extra-curricular activity. They collected data on both and found improvements in both areas, with room for further improvement. They could have also done surveys and interviews with at least a sample of their freshman to identify how advisories might be strengthened to get even greater gains. This is an example of the research-based action and reflection cycle that we're recommending that schools use with a variety of their practices.

In the end, the people are the program.

Concerned about student cheating? Use a survey such as Don McCabe's Academic Integrity Survey (**dmccabe@andromeda.rutgers.edu**) to get baseline data, then implement an honor code and classroom discussions of academic honesty, then re-administer the survey, perhaps coupled with interviews of a sample of students and staff. Look at the new data, make further improvements in your interventions, then keep the cycle going.

Concerned about sportsmanship and the extent to which coaches are character educators? Take a look at our website's Coach's Checklist.

Where does the work of Smart & Good High Schools go from here?

For an update on the Smart & Good Schools Initiative, go to **www.cortland.edu/character**.

Be careful of your thoughts,
For your thoughts become your words.
Be careful of your words,
For your words become your deeds.
Be careful of your deeds,
For your deeds become your habits.
Be careful of your habits,
For your habits become your character.
Be careful of your character,
For your character becomes your destiny.

—Author unknown

Comprehensive Endnotes

Letter to the Reader

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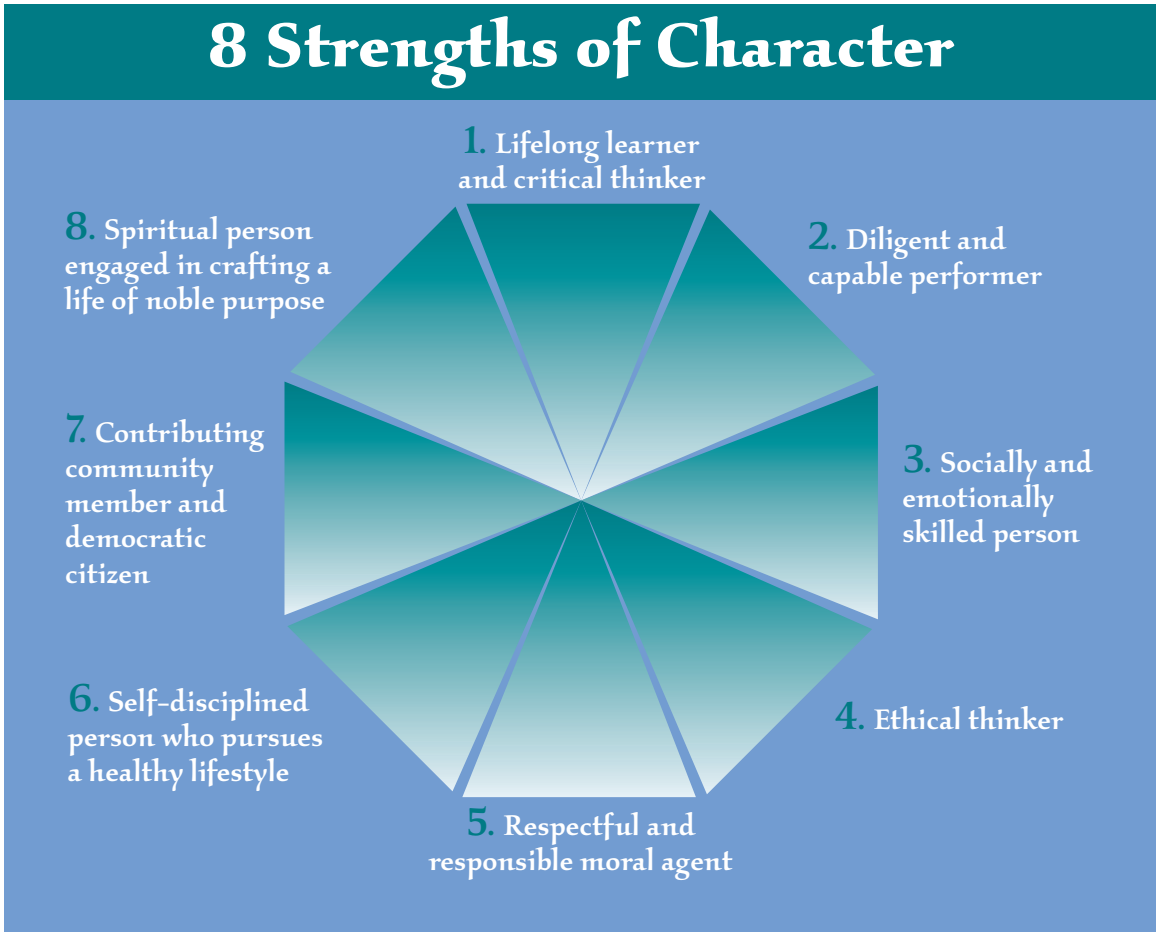

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