



## Character 2.0: The Value of Taking a School-Wide View Toward Students' Life-long Success

A COLLABORATIVE REPORT FROM THE MEMBERS OF  
THE VIVA NEW JERSEY CHARTER TEACHERS' IDEA EXCHANGE

**Prepared for:** Chris Cerf, New Jersey Commissioner of Education

**Prepared by:** Members of the VIVA New Jersey Charter Teachers' Idea Exchange

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**Abstract & Summation:** Empowered by an innovation in crowd sourcing technology that we call WikiWisdom™, teacher volunteers who had participated in the VIVA New Jersey Charter Teachers Idea Exchange spent hundreds of hours together online sharing ideas about how to teach and foster skills such as grit, persistence and resilience to increase career readiness and college persistence. Rooted in their professional practice, a group of five teachers, still working exclusively online, distilled the group's collective experience into five recommendations to give all of us a better understanding of excellent and effective practices for fully preparing students for success. Their recommendations give new insights for understanding school-wide culture of learning.

**Partners:** The New Jersey Charter Schools Association



## Introduction



The VIVA (Voice Ideas Vision Action) Teachers Idea Exchange invited nearly 2,000 charter school teachers working in schools across New Jersey to share their perspectives and experiences about teaching non-cognitive or “soft” skills as part of their classroom and school-wide activities.

The online VIVA Idea Exchange uses WikiWisdom™, a combination of technology and peer collaboration created by New Voice Strategies. Facilitated by a professional moderator, the conversation is open to peers seeking a safe, productive and easily accessible avenue for joint problem-solving and action.

The VIVA New Jersey Charter Teachers Idea Exchange began on November 4, 2012, and concluded on March 4, 2013.

### **The VIVA NJ Charter Teachers Idea Exchange was conducted in three phases:**

During **Phase I**, teachers from New Jersey charter schools were invited to share their ideas in response to this question:

*“What should schools do to ensure all students develop both the academic and non-academic skills they need to succeed? What is the proper role for a teacher? How have you attempted to teach or build ‘character’ with your students? How do you know if you’re succeeding?”*

During **Phase II**, five teachers who emerged as thought leaders in Phase I, identified by quantifying onsite engagement, were invited to join The VIVA New Jersey Charter Teachers Writing Collaborative. Their assignment: Take the ideas presented during Phase I and summarize them into insights and suggestions for how public education administrators can apply the teachers’ expertise to better inform the public about a school’s overall impact on students.

**Phase III** of the process began on March 4, 2013, when the members of the Writing Collaborative presented their ideas to New Jersey Department of Education Commissioner Chris Cerf.

At New Voice Strategies’ VIVA Teachers, we believe in the inspiration that grows from pragmatic experience and in the power of individual voices to make big change. We are inspired by the ideas and perspectives of the teachers who participated in the VIVA NJ Charter Teachers’ Idea Exchange. Many thanks to the VIVA NJ Teacher Leaders: **Stephen Chiger, Amelia Herbert, Staci Marshall, Jessyca Saavedra, and Maricia Jodi Wilson**, whose profiles can be found at the end of this report. The innumerable hours these teachers spent grappling with big ideas and small details made this work possible.

We wish to thank the **New Jersey Charter Schools Association**, our partner in this endeavor. Support for this work was provided by **The Walton Family Foundation**.

VIVA Teachers would like to thank **David Meketon, M.ED.**, research coordinator for Dr. Angela Duckworth at the Positive Psychology Lab at the University of Pennsylvania, for serving as an advisor on this project.



## Overview

### Character 2.0: The Value of Taking a School-Wide View Toward Students' Life-long Success

*"You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one."*

– English historian **James Anthony Froude**

Some of the most exciting news from the last decade of education reform comes from a handful of high-performing charters that have been able to fulfill the promise that they can prepare and send their students to college. Amid the spirited and sometimes acrimonious debate about charters, these schools have quietly demonstrated that it's possible to send 85, 95, even 100 percent of their graduates to college, even in the lowest-income districts. They have reshaped the debate over what is possible in the near-term for our education system and the families we serve.

But while the data on college matriculation rates is encouraging, less so is the data on how many of those students actually finish college or leave high school ready for employment. Last year, for example, the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) network boldly announced that its college completion rate was 33 percent. KIPP's rate, while frustratingly low, was still 2 percentage points higher than the national average and more than four times the average for low-income students.<sup>1</sup>

The message is clear: when it comes to the goal of closing the opportunity gap between poor students and their wealthier counterparts, we have come far—but not far enough.

College persistence and post-secondary career options present the next major hurdle that schools—charter, public or private—must tackle. Schools are coming to the conclusion that while academics remain paramount, skills and mindsets such as intellectual perseverance, study habits and goal-setting often have made the difference for their alumni who have persisted in higher education. Recent reporting by Paul Tough and others has brought these skills back into the public discussion on education, and a growing body of research is giving educators new insights into the most effective ways to teach them.<sup>2</sup>

In this report, we set out to make a series of concrete recommendations for how schools and districts can pursue a curriculum of so-called “non-cognitive skills”—teaching students not only what to learn, but *how* to learn. We use this term broadly to mean any skill, character trait, or outlook on learning that will give students the meta-cognitive tools needed to support their own growth.

We reject the notion that these abilities are “soft” or somehow lesser than other academic skills that children need to master by the end of their secondary education. Instead, this report is a call to schools to commit significant school resources to non-cognitive skills. At the same time, we must be clear that none of these recommendations is designed to be implemented in complete isolation. Non-cognitive skills are chiefly valuable when integrated into rigorous, thoughtful, and expertly delivered instruction. They are one part of high-quality teaching, not a replacement for it.

**Broadly, our advice comes in the form of five key recommendations:**

1. Help Schools Define and Build Cultures that Develop Non-Cognitive Skills, Then Assess Those Skills
2. Establish Shared Vocabulary and Meaning that Fosters Character Development and Student Accountability from Preschool through High School and Beyond
3. Develop Students’ and Teachers’ Ability to Navigate in a Diverse Society with Cultural Proficiency
4. Reinvent School Discipline as an Opportunity to Build Character
5. Design Opportunities for Students to Demonstrate Character in Student-Centered, Student-Led Initiatives

In each section, we have taken care to frame our ideas in a policy context. But, we also provide bite-sized action steps schools and districts can use to implement these ideas in the manner that best suits their needs, capacity, and context. Ultimately, policies will be most effective at driving successful practice when they begin with excellent practice. We hope that our work will prompt more conversation between educators and administrators and more discussion between policy makers and teachers.

We publish these suggestions just as the conversation about college persistence and non-cognitive skills is beginning to take hold. Indeed, if we are looking to integrate non-cognitive skill instruction as a key component of successful schools, the wind is at our backs. It is our hope that the recommendations in this report can help to speed that journey for our schools and our kids.



## RECOMMENDATION 1

### Help Schools Define and Build Cultures that Develop Non-Cognitive Skills, Then Assess Those Skills<sup>3</sup>

#### Statement of the Problem

For too long, we have seen non-cognitive skill development as somehow supplemental to the business of education. Schools were laser-focused on college and career preparation—and these “soft skills” presented themselves as somehow less important, less rigorous, and less definable. But if schools want their students to be able to master the rigor of a truly college-ready curriculum, they must prioritize and develop these traits and mindsets in the same way they do academic aspirations, by weaving them into the school’s culture.

In the past, we have settled for a reactive rather than proactive approach to defining our school climates. A 2011 report showed that while most states (45) have policies on bullying, only 24 states have policies on school climate.<sup>4</sup> The time is right to shift our thinking on this issue. Reflecting on non-cognitive skill instruction now gives us the opportunity to develop the school cultures we want rather than solely focus on safeguards against the ones we don’t.

#### Proposed Solutions\*:

- 1. Help Schools Reframe Their Identities as Academic Communities that Operate Under a Set of Clearly Articulated Common Values, Then Create a Comprehensive Action Plan to Communicate Those Values**
- 2. Establish a Plan to Teach Non-Cognitive Skills and Mindsets to Students and Teachers**

This plan should include identifying and defining those skills and dispositions a school will pursue, including the idea of having a “growth mindset.” Teachers should be hired for receptiveness to these ideas and trained in how to implement them.
- 3. Develop and Implement Systems for Holding Schools and Students Accountable for Non-Cognitive Skill Development**

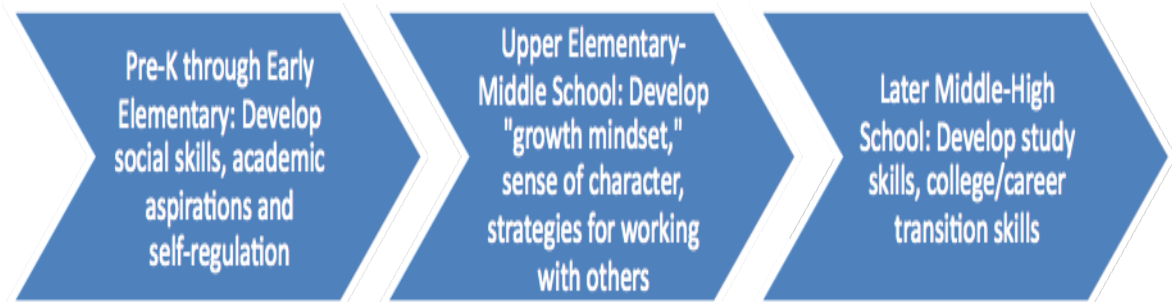
State leaders should establish clear protocols and pathways for assessing, sharing and acting on data. This initiative is best situated in broader, data-based efforts to assess school culture.

\*For each recommendation, suggestions for ways individual schools can implement the solutions in schools and classrooms are included in the appendix to this report.



**4. Help Districts Establish Plans for Vertical Articulation of Non-Cognitive Skill Development, with Each Level of Schooling Responding to the Developmental Needs of Its Children**

Particular attention should be given to transitions into and out of each educational level.



**5. Help Schools Articulate the Ways They Foster an Environment that Establishes a Purpose for Learning Beyond Compliance, Earnings Potential or Other Extrinsic Motivators**

**A Note on Vertical Articulation**

Transitions between school systems present critical times for non-cognitive support, as each level of education presents new developmental challenges.

**Pre-K** and **Elementary School** are places to establish social skills, academic aspirations and rationale for receiving an education and lay the groundwork for self-regulation. Teaching a “Growth Mindset” will then be particularly beneficial to students as they reach the upper elementary grades and begin the transition to middle school. Research suggests that, at this time, students are first faced with academic challenges that test their response to adversity.

Adolescence is also the time when the pre-frontal cortex of the brain develops—when students’ ability to understand how others see them grows. In an effort to avoid negative judgments from others, students may begin to disengage or self-sabotage, equating poor performance with lack of ability.

By the time students reach **high school**, non-cognitive interventions should add focus on college-ready academic behaviors such as study skills, annotation, goal setting and follow-through. At this age, many students receive substantially less academic support both in school and at home, leaving them vulnerable to poor decision-making with lasting consequences. In fact, one study indicated that failure during 9<sup>th</sup> grade was a much better predictor of dropout rates than 8<sup>th</sup> grade performance. As students prepare to leave high school, we recommend schools provide course work around college and career readiness.

\*Additional resources about vertical articulation can be found in the Appendix of this report (see page 25).



## Measures of Success

**Rubric Scores on a Culture Walkthrough:** A district or leadership team conducts a walkthrough of classes and public spaces using a rubric that checks the aforementioned cultural components. Data from this walkthrough are made available to the public. School culture should be assessed on a variety of dimensions that touch on non-cognitive skill development, including:

- Presence of communal values in teacher and leader talk
- Common spaces and bulletin boards
- Presence of a system for assessment and reflection on college-readiness or character skills
- Ability of students and teachers to identify core values and the utility of a “growth mindset”
- Techniques of positive framing as outlined in Doug Lemov’s *Teach Like a Champion*

**Self-Reporting:** Schools complete a non-cognitive skills report that details efforts in the categories mentioned above and includes data benchmarks such as rubric scores on the culture walkthrough and student-level data on value-added and non-cognitive skills rubrics. Schools identify where in the curriculum students practice/learn study skills. These reports should also identify action plans based both on school data and feedback from alumni about their experience at the next level of schooling.

**Teacher and Student Interviews/Surveys:** Ninety-five percent of teachers and 90 percent of students can articulate the core values of the school when asked in an interview or survey; 90 percent of teachers can articulate the value of having a growth mindset when asked, and 90 percent of students agree or strongly agree with the statement that their hard work will lead to success.

**Leader Interviews/Surveys:** Leaders can identify a minimum of three places where school values are explicitly communicated to students. These are observable on a walkthrough.

**Next-Level Persistence Rates:** Schools should use the persistence rate of alumni at the next academic level as one measure of the success of their non-cognitive programs.

## Why We Believe This Will Work

If a school is going to succeed at influencing what is ultimately a personal and intrinsic set of skills, the entire endeavor must be infused in the fundamental nature of the school community. Schools have to articulate a mission and establish a clear culture based on that mission. Each element of school administration and activity—curriculum, instruction, behavioral norms, and school-wide celebrations, to name a few—must consistently convey those values. These efforts cannot be ancillary to a school’s curriculum, they must be the marrow in its bones; a school culture must embrace non-cognitive skills in concrete ways that can be evaluated and held to account.

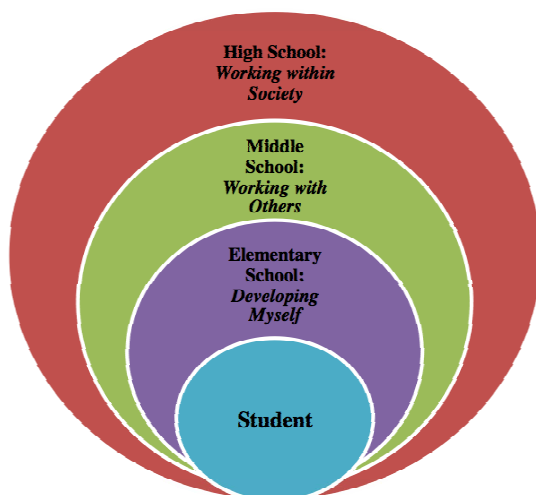


## RECOMMENDATION 2

### Establish Shared Vocabulary and Meaning that Fosters Character Development and Student Accountability from Preschool through High School and Beyond

#### Statement of the Problem

We have all witnessed cringe-inducing student behavior. A person’s character “...the inward values that determine the outward actions”<sup>5</sup> has so many competing factors: one’s culture, past experiences, home life, how we feel about ourselves—everything has the ability to impact one’s character—and ultimately a student’s behavior.



Are we holding students accountable for their actions? How can we show students that their current behavior shapes them into the adults they will become? When students enter the working world they need to be responsible for their actions. If students have not had to be responsible, how can we expect them to suddenly know how to do it when they are out of the academic environment? We want students to understand that their actions have consequences and we want families to get involved in shaping and molding their young children into productive members of society. Once students can identify positive character traits, it is easier for them to figure out their place in the world. Students should be connected to this idea, and they can’t do it alone.

“Character education should not...be shouldered by teachers alone. There should be a harmonious synergy among schools, families, communities and the government as the stakeholders of national education. This is because character is not taught, rather, it is shaped.”<sup>6</sup>

We believe an effort must be made to establish a shared vocabulary so that everyone involved in the school community has an understanding of key words and phrases that can be used in discussions and education in relation to character development. Having a shared vocabulary ensures common ground between adults and students. It allows for more meaningful conversations about both positive and negative character traits. Without a full understanding of the expectations we have of young students and their behavior, how can we expect student behavior to improve?



## Proposed Solutions

### 6. Define Vocabulary for Common Understanding

While each school must ultimately determine its own values, it is useful to consider the developmental needs of the students. To that effect, we have divided the shared character vocabulary into three categories. Ultimately, there is overlap, and schools will need to choose the concepts that best meet the needs of their community. Staff and students need to know what is expected of them and how they are affected by others around them.

The vocabulary is organized into three categories designed to match the developmental needs of each grade level. The shared vocabulary should be connected to school values, and infused within the school curriculum across all grade levels.

- Developing Myself
- Working with Others
- Working within Society

Working on Myself	Working with Others	Working within Society
<p><b>BEHAVIOR:</b> how we act</p> <p><b>RESPECT:</b> how we feel about ourselves</p> <p><b>UNDERSTANDING:</b> what we know</p> <p><b>LISTENING:</b> following directions</p> <p><b>CONFIDENCE:</b> believing in yourself</p> <p><b>PATIENCE:</b> ability to stay calm and wait</p> <p><b>SELF-CONTROL:</b> having control over your actions, words, and emotions</p> <p><b>HONESTY:</b> being truthful in what you say and do</p> <p><b>COURAGE:</b> taking a risk and not withdrawing from something that is difficult</p> <p><b>COMMITMENT/DEPENDABLE:</b> deciding to take an action and following through with the decision</p> <p><b>CREATIVE:</b> being original</p> <p><b>INITIATIVE:</b> taking the first step before being asked to do something</p> <p><b>SELF-DISCIPLINE:</b> planned control of yourself for the sake of personal development</p> <p><b>ATTITUDE:</b> my disposition and how I act</p> <p><b>MOTIVATION:</b> the reason for my action</p>	<p><b>RESPECT:</b> how we treat others, having control over our actions, and honor</p> <p><b>INTEGRITY:</b> doing the right thing even when no one else is watching</p> <p><b>COMPASSION:</b> caring for others</p> <p><b>COOPERATION:</b> working together toward a common goal</p> <p><b>PERSEVERANCE:</b> demonstrating determination and commitment to complete a task</p> <p><b>PUNCTUALITY:</b> being on time</p> <p><b>TRUST:</b> belief in honesty, integrity and the reliability of other people</p> <p><b>DECISIVENESS:</b> the ability to recognize key factors and finalize difficult decisions</p> <p><b>DISCRETION:</b> recognizing and avoiding words, actions, and attitudes that could bring undesirable consequences</p>	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b> taking ownership of what you say and do</p> <p><b>INTEGRITY:</b> moral principles</p> <p><b>CITIZENSHIP:</b> being loyal to your school, community, and country</p> <p><b>TOLERANCE:</b> accepting differences/ uniqueness of others and celebrating the common ground</p> <p><b>LEADERSHIP:</b> the act of guiding and inspiring others</p> <p><b>ADAPTABILITY:</b> being able to change based on circumstances</p>



## 7. Apply Character Vocabulary Using Developmentally Appropriate Practices and Student Accountability

**Early and Elementary Grades**—Introduce all character development vocabulary words. We want all students and staff to know what it means when we refer to a student as needing patience or having self-discipline. Memorization is not enough; understanding is crucial. Include opportunities for class discussions, embedding these words and discussions within the curriculum.

**Middle School**—Character values are especially important at this level, as students start to think about how others view them. It is recommended that the community take steps to celebrate these values as well. Create classroom dictionaries—with peer to peer explanation and discussion. Bring in professionals to work with students on understanding character development.

**High School**—By now, students have an idea of character traits. At this point, it is recommended that they work on applying those character traits to their lives and understanding how the decisions they make can affect them and their future, especially within society. Schools should work to incorporate their values into freshman and new student orientation. Consider tasking Student Government and Student Advisory Leaders with coaching underclassmen in applying school values. This coaching may include volunteer projects, peer-to-peer mentoring, connections between character traits and curriculum, connections between school values and study skills.

## 8. New Jersey Should Establish a State-Level Repository of Best Practices for Non-Cognitive Skill Development and Make the Information Applicable at Both the District and School Level

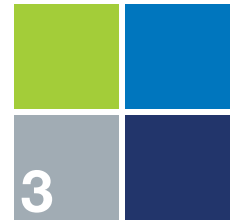
### Measures of Success

A school behavior dashboard could be created to paint a picture of student gains in personal accountability. Track the frequency and severity of behavior problems in the classroom, on the playground and in other parts of a school. School start, dismissal and passing times present more opportunities to obtain data on rates and trends in student behavior. Reporting on frequency trends for in-school and at-home suspension rates is another important way to measure student accountability. The language of accountability should also become part of parents' interactions with their children's school. Tracking the quantity and quality of a school's work with parents on student accountability will be a strong indicator of the success of a school's implementation of a shared vision for character development.

### Why We Believe This Will Work

The benefits of having the shared vocabulary organized to oneself, to others, and to the society is to be able to relate choices made by the student and how those choices eventually affect them, their school, and the community in which they live. If we have common ground to begin meaningful dialog we can work toward self-improvement. Holding students accountable for their behavior within the school walls will translate to better behavior outside of them.





## RECOMMENDATION 3

### Develop Students' and Teachers' Ability to Navigate in a Diverse Society with Cultural Proficiency

#### Statement of the Problem

To equip students with the skills to navigate successfully in a diverse society, schools must develop a curriculum filled with material and content that allows for subtle infusion of practices and information that promote cultural proficiency. Cultural proficiency must be embedded in daily teaching practices and interactions among all members of a community. In the diverse world in which we live, there is a need for educational environments that no longer simply “talk” about being culturally competent. Rather, these settings need to turn words into action. Teachers and leaders have to learn and gain insights from one another’s cultural identities.

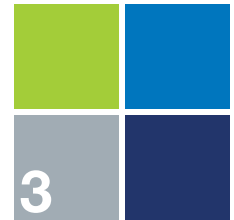
In the school environment and community, it is essential for stakeholders to have a deep understanding of the cultural dynamics represented by the population being served. It is crucial for every member of a school community to acquire knowledge about the diverse learners in their classroom that will enable them to evolve from being culturally competent, to culturally proficient. Consequentially, once educators have a deeper understanding of the learners in their classrooms, as well as their respected colleagues, they will be able to implement and utilize effective strategies that will enhance the atmosphere of culture and achievement in their classrooms, and school community at large.

#### What We Mean When We Say “Cultural Proficiency”

Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations. ‘Culture’ refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. ‘Competence’ implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities. (Adapted from Cross, 1989.)

Advanced cultural competency or cultural proficiency refers to knowing how to learn and teach about different groups in ways that acknowledge and honor all people and the groups they represent. Those committed to increasing their awareness, see the difference and respond. In their words and interactions with the individuals being served, they honor the differences among cultures, viewing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups.





## Proposed Solutions

### 9. Help Every School Articulate Its Values and Train School Leaders to Take a Comprehensive Approach to Infusing Those Values into all Aspects of the School

Schools should write an annual “vision for cultural competence” that can become an invaluable touchstone for school leaders to create the model they believe will promote the success of their students and the growth of their teachers.

### 10. Ask Schools to Set Explicit Annual Goals and Objectives to Increase the Cultural Competency of All Constituencies

It is important to note that cultural proficiency is a *cognitive* area; it requires deliberate thought, effort, collaboration, and application of higher-order thinking skills to address the needs of all students, parents, teachers and staff. Elements of this plan should include: workshops for parents and community members to interact with members of the school community, professional development workshops and deliberate allocation of resources that will enrich students’ exposure to diversity in its broadest terms—geographic, economic, ethnic, racial and more.

### 11. Help Schools Take a Deliberate, Comprehensive Approach to Fostering Teachers’ Cultural Competency

Professional development, staff induction and instructional practices should reflect high achievement in cultural competencies.

Teachers are the driver of cultural competency in students and the most important element in educating our students in knowledge of self. By meeting the academic needs of our learners through culturally responsive teaching methodologies, we will be able to cultivate their character development in a rich and profound manner.

### 12. Ensure Students Are Given Many Contexts and Opportunities to Develop Their Cultural Competencies

In addition to a curriculum that emphasizes building cultural proficiency, other activities need to be built into the students’ school life that reinforces those lessons.

Every student should have the opportunity to experience some of the following practices, activities and programs:

- A chance to explore the ancient proverb, “Know Thyself” in a way that seeks to answer the question: “Who am I?”
- Community service projects that advocate for social justice
- Empowerment programs for males and females
- Rites of passage rooted in the cultural traditions of the students being served
- Cooperative and experiential learning
- Programs that promote self-confidence and ethnic pride
- Programs that are infused with traditional cultural values and principles



- Mentoring and peer coaching
- Affirmations and chants rooted in the cultural traditions and language of the students being served
- Programs that promote a strong sense of personal cultural connectivity and respect for self and cultures of others

### **Measures of Success**

Cultural competency can be incorporated into our existing evaluation tools and can be measured through performance indicators such as instructional delivery, assessment, professionalism, and lesson planning. It would be counter-productive to add an additional standard of “cultural competency” because we’d disconnect cognitive and non-cognitive growth in a way that would undermine the essence of developing cultural competency.

### **Why We Believe This Will Work**

As we infuse more culturally responsive practices and pedagogy in our design of character education curricula, children will develop a keener sense of self-awareness and grow in confidence as they better understand:

- Themselves, their perspectives and worldviews
- How our perspectives and worldviews affect our relationships with each other
- Their experiences in this world as children of diverse ethnic backgrounds
- How their experiences impact their motivation and achievement
- Their ability to effect change in the world





## RECOMMENDATION 4

### Reinvent School Discipline as an Opportunity to Build Character

#### Statement of the Problem

Too often, we see student discipline as a chance to punish kids or assert adult authority. The results are often shocking—and occasionally challenges to the civil rights of our children.<sup>7</sup> When this happens, schools create a negative feedback loop, stymieing students' growth and leaving them feeling left out of the community we hope to build for them. Too often, the end result is students with low expectations of themselves. Policies must help schools redefine discipline as an opportunity to teach character. Investments in supporting teachers to combine strong instructional practices with cutting edge research and practice in psychology and related sciences.

#### Proposed Solutions

- 13. Designate a Staff Member as the Point Person for Helping Teachers and Families Monitor and Maintain Character Values and Related Behaviors, Especially When Processing Disciplinary Infractions**
- 14. Adopt Preventive Discipline Techniques Such as Teaching Metacognition and Leveraging Peer-to-Peer Interactions**

If discipline is a way to build character, the best opportunities come before infractions occur. Schools should teach students to reflect on their own ability to set and achieve goals and leverage successful students to drive their peers.

#### Measures of Success

**Student Interviews/Surveys:** Ninety percent of students say the school's discipline system helps them make better choices, set long-term academic goals, and plan for what to do when their initiatives do not pan out.

**Teacher Interviews/Surveys:** Ninety percent of teachers identify character development as a goal of student discipline and can explain the school's approach to working with students during discipline issues.

**Student Discipline Data:** Administrators assess the number and type of disciplinary infractions and use the recidivism rate of serious disciplinary infractions to evaluate whether their program is contributing to non-cognitive growth.





### **Why We Believe This Will Work:**

Discipline—whether through proactive coaching or responsive in-the-moment corrections—must be reframed as a character-building enterprise. Aligning staff attitudes toward a school's discipline system in this way keeps the conversation around student misbehavior action-oriented, rather than ad hominem. In a well-functioning school, no moment to teach students is wasted. By leveraging the school's discipline code, schools have the opportunity to fuse non-cognitive skill building directly into the school's operation—and in a way that is differentiated based on need. Peer-to-peer mentoring, at the same time, helps students build academic and social behaviors which in many cases will prevent the need for discipline in the first place.





## RECOMMENDATION 5

### Design Opportunities for Students to Demonstrate Character in Student-Centered, Student-Led Initiatives

#### Statement of the Problem

The true test of character is what we do when no one is looking. In highly monitored academic settings, this fact makes it uniquely challenging for teachers to design curricula that teach non-cognitive skills like grit, integrity, and perseverance in ways that mirror real life tests of character and even harder to measure student mastery. Students need opportunities to practice non-cognitive skills in authentic ways in order to build the intrinsic motivation that will enable them to exercise these skills in settings that are less monitored such as college, career, and personal life. In addition, character should not be defined as merely those things that enable success on assessments, admission to top colleges, or acquiring a great job, turning character into a merely self-enhancing tool. Nor should character be cultivated solely in the form of obedience or submission; these non-cognitive skills must be linked to worthy pursuits.<sup>8</sup>

As with all material taught in schools, instructors must communicate relevance. Students shouldn't become gritty for grit's sake; grit should be practiced in service of a clear objective. It has been indicated that when students focus on problems worth solving, motivation and learning increase.<sup>9</sup> For students to build efficacy in being part of the local and global community, the curriculum must extend beyond classroom sessions and incorporate opportunities for relevant experiences that truly challenge grit, character, and tenacity.

Our proposed solutions are admittedly student-centered. Teaching is our profession and students are the center of the endeavor. While we caution against prescriptive policies, we believe in our students.

#### Proposed Solutions

**15. Explicitly Link Non-Cognitive Skills Such as Grit to Specific, Worthy Pursuits to Avoid the Practice of Character as Obedience**

These can include collective goals such as whole school/class academic benchmarks, individual student academic/behavioral goals, or personal goals related to student interests and extracurricular activities.

**16. Incorporate Structured Student Leadership Roles that Allow Students to Have a Role in the Recognition of Peer Actions that Display Strong Character and the Sanctioning of Actions that Violate a School's Culture/Values**

Create a forum for student leaders to address the student body around topics related to non-cognitive skills.





**17. Develop an Advisory System that Allows for Peer-to-Peer Interaction in Safe, Small-Group, Non-Academic Settings**

This advisory can include activities such as book clubs centered around age-appropriate literature that highlights aspirational figures or real-world character tests and structured student-led discussions of current events, school events, personal life events, and topics of choice.

**18. Implement an Interdisciplinary Curriculum that Includes a Central Theme Connected to a Relevant Real World Problem (Inherently Posing Ethical Questions)**

**19. Incorporate Student-Led Initiatives in the School Community and Local Community, and Service Projects in the Local and Global Community to Give Students Opportunities to Practice Character in Action**

Create connections with other schools, community organizations, private sector organizations, etc., to enhance the scope through which learners can see possible solutions to real-world problems.

### **Measures of Success**

Successful efforts to achieve this goal can be measured by the number and quality of opportunities students have to lead efforts that make the academic curriculum relevant to their daily lives. Examples include incorporating the use of character rubrics for students and teachers to measure the connections between academic and character goals, an increase in the number of student-created and student-led workshops centered on making sense of current events, and an increase in whole-class participation in community service activities that link directly back to the academic curriculum being studied.

### **Why We Believe This Will Work**

Many studies have demonstrated long-term positive life outcomes for young children who attend schools where ethical decision-making behavior is explicitly taught. The most famous of these is the longitudinal High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, which found that preschoolers who had experienced the enriched curriculum were more likely to complete homework at age 15, to graduate high school, and to have higher earnings at age 40.<sup>10</sup> A longitudinal nonrandomized controlled trial of public elementary school children in majority free-and-reduced-lunch schools in Seattle had similar findings. The school-based intervention included specific classroom-instruction methods (proactive classroom management, interactive teaching, and cooperative learning) and explicit child skill development (teaching children to think through conflicts and come up with solutions). By age 27, the children who had experienced the “social development” program in elementary school had better outcomes on 16 measures of life success, including socio-economic status, mental health, criminal activity, and educational attainment.<sup>11</sup> Similar short-term results were found with an ethics-based curriculum developed by the Institute of Global Ethics and implemented in a large high school in St. Louis. Students there had increased scores on ethical awareness, responsibility, and values relative to a control group.<sup>12</sup>



## Conclusion

The current body of research on non-cognitive factors suggests that academic mindsets (e.g. having a growth mindset and feeling a part of an academic community) and learning strategies (e.g. studying, organizing materials, setting goals) are the greatest levers for improving students' perseverance.<sup>13</sup> These tools must be embedded as a curricular component at both the classroom and school-wide level. Research has long told us that teacher expectations of students dramatically impacts students' abilities to achieve. That's why it's so important that we consider teachers' receptiveness to non-cognitive development when we hire and train them.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, the promise of non-cognitive factors is too great for schools to ignore. They must however, be pursued as one piece of a culture that is singly dedicated to rigorous study and student achievement. Anything less would be an effort too little and too late to make lasting change in the way students approach work, learning, and the educational trajectory of their lives.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.kipp.org/files/dmfile/CollegeCompletionReport.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Tough, P. (2012). *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- <sup>3</sup> In this report, we use the term “non-cognitive skills” in its broadest possible sense, referring not only to discrete skills but also to the strategies and dispositions that support student learning.
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- <sup>5</sup> Definitions for character development vocabulary retrieved from <http://www.characterfirst.com>
- <sup>6</sup> Sakhiyya, Zulfa, “Rampant student brawls and our character education,” *The Jakarta Post*. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/09/29/rampant-student-brawls-and-our-character-education.html#.URPfQaWW-z8.email>
- <sup>7</sup> Resmovits, J. (2013, January 17). School Discipline Report Highlights Tension Between Safety, Civil Rights. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved January 20, 2013, from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/17/school-discipline-report-\\_n\\_2498826.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/17/school-discipline-report-_n_2498826.html)
- <sup>8</sup> Goodman, Joan. (2012, November 27). What Kind of Success Does Character Predict? *Education Week*. Retrieved February 13, 2013, from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/11/27/13goodman.h32.html?tkn=WNPFpejlqPFwurOJnOaQxYar1cJGWAYHyQ%2BD&cmp=ENL-EU-NEWS2>
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- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Hawkins, D.J., Kosterman, R., Catalano, R.F., Hill, K.G., Abbott, R.D. (2008) Effects of Social Development Intervention in Childhood 15 Years Later. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 162(12):1133-1141
- <sup>12</sup> Leming, J. S. (2001). Integrating a structured ethical reflection curriculum into high school community service experiences: Impact on students’ sociomoral development. *Adolescence*, 36, 33–45. Summary retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/www/interventionreport.aspx?sid=61>
- <sup>13</sup> Allensworth, E., and Easton, J.Q. (2007) What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public Schools. *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research*. Retrieved 28, January, 2013 from <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/07%20What%20Matters%20Final.pdf>
- <sup>14</sup> Teacher Expectations of Students: A self-fulfilling prophecy? (2013). *The Progress of Education Reform*, 13(6), 1-7. Retrieved January 19, 2013, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/05/51/1>



## Appendix A

### Implementation Notes for Educators

The recommendations in this report are designed for action at the district and state policy level. However, in some cases members of the writing collaborative identified additional concrete suggestions that would assist individual schools searching to develop their non-cognitive skills programs. We have included them here because we know that our success with students ultimately rests on the details of design and implementation that happen every single day in our schools. We hope school administrators, instructional leaders and our fellow teachers will read this report and be inspired. This additional information can be a springboard from inspiration to implementation.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1

##### Help Schools Define and Build Cultures that Develop Non-Cognitive Skills, Then Assess Those Skills

- 1. Help Schools Reframe Their Identities as Academic Communities that Operate Under a Set of Clearly Articulated Common Values, Then Create a Comprehensive Action Plan to Communicate Those Values**
  - a. School values should be presented as being in the service of both character development and the academic goals and mission of the school community.
  - b. Schools should develop comprehensive action plans for communicating these values at the systems level of their organizations. Examples include: in regular community gatherings, on hallway displays, on school materials and stationary, in the language used to refer to rooms or cohorts, through student advisories, and in teacher-talk within lessons.
  - c. School celebrations and student discipline should make consistent and specific reference to a school's core values.
- 2. Establish a Plan to Teach Non-Cognitive Skills and Mindsets to Students and Teachers**
  - a. Schools should train teachers on the value of positive mindsets toward learning and how to build a classroom culture that promotes them. Topics might include:
    - Embracing neurodiversity, the notion that all of our brains work in different ways, each with different strengths. (This is a particularly important redefinition for children with special needs.)<sup>1</sup>
    - Combatting stereotype threat, the fear people have of acting in ways that confirm negative stereotypes about their group.



- Doug Lemov’s technique of “positive framing,” which consists of creating a positive narrative for the classroom environment while simultaneously making consistent corrections to it. <sup>2</sup>
  - Angela Duckworth’s research on “grit,” defined as “perseverance and passion for long term goals.” <sup>3</sup>
  - Carol Dweck’s research on having a “growth mindset,” a belief that one can, through effort, shape one’s basic qualities. <sup>4</sup>
- b. Schools should be explicit about the meaning and power of having a “growth mindset” (a belief that one’s own basic qualities may be shaped by effort).
  - c. Schools should coach teachers to provide feedback to students in the language of “growth mindsets.” (Examples include highlighting students’ academic growth rather than making comments purely evaluative and providing encouragement based on actions rather than praising a person.)
  - d. Schools should define a plan for teaching specific non-cognitive skills at each grade-band. Topics might include teaching social skills such as teamwork, listening and cooperation; teaching learning skills such as note-taking, questioning and participation; and teaching study skills such as review strategies, goal setting and planning.
  - e. Schools should evaluate teaching candidates for their receptiveness to the school’s non-cognitive learning strategies, avoiding those who do not believe in students’ ability to direct their own growth. <sup>5</sup>

### **3. Develop and Implement Systems for Holding Schools and Students Accountable for Non-Cognitive Skill Development**

- a. Schools should create a non-cognitive skills rubric and assess students on it regularly.
- b. Schools should share non-cognitive skills data with students, teachers and parents, as well as the district.
  - In elementary and early middle school, collect and share data on the extent to which students have developed a “growth mindset” and students’ sense that they are valued members of an academic community, capable of learning through hard work.
  - In middle school, share additional data on how students’ character traits (e.g. grit, caring, respect) are perceived by others.
  - In high school, collect and share data on students’ college readiness. (e.g. study skills, ability to make and follow-through on plans, ability to self-advocate).
- c. Schools should prepare an annual reflection on their non-cognitive skills initiatives.



- d. Schools should revise their parent communication plans to make non-cognitive skills development transparent.
  - Schools should communicate with families around students' study skills, and how to develop action plans when necessary.
  - Schools should track and report persistence at the next academic level to families and community stakeholders (e.g. a high school should report the college persistence of its alumni).
- e. District- and state-level agencies must take leadership on promoting and identifying best practices for non-cognitive skill development.
  - Leaders should collect and distribute best practices for programs that address non-cognitive skills.
  - Leaders should establish and promote a framework for assessing school culture via a walkthrough, and a protocol for taking action on findings.
  - Leaders should facilitate cross-district cooperation for schools looking to gain feedback from peer institutions.
  - Leaders should create a self-reporting and data-collection template for schools to facilitate comparison between districts and identification of best practices.
  - Leaders should publish and distribute exemplar curricular supports designed to support students at each level of academic transition.

**4. Help Districts Establish Plans for Vertical Articulation of Non-Cognitive Skill Development, with Each Level of Schooling Responding to the Developmental Needs of Its Children**

- a. Schools should regularly celebrate student achievement as the centerpiece of school culture. Success breeds more success; students' motivation is redoubled when they see themselves and their peers succeeding on rigorous tasks.
- b. Schools should offer a variety of extracurricular activities in which students can interact with peers across grade-levels and in non-academic settings.
- c. Schools should make deliberate, structured efforts—community events, assemblies, special instructional days—to build intellectual curiosity and passion as intrinsic motivations. Non-cognitive skills should not be separated from cognitive ones, but developed in service of them.



## RECOMMENDATION 2

### Establish Shared Vocabulary and Meaning that Fosters Character Development and Student Accountability from Preschool through High School and Beyond

#### Proposed Solution

##### 6. Define Vocabulary for Common Understanding

Suggested activities across the grade levels:

**Early and Elementary Grades**—Students can create meaningful classroom vocabulary books and use “words of the week.” If the vocabulary is just memorized, how will students identify with character traits that we want them to have? If they are using the information they are more likely to understand what is being discussed. It is recommended that discussions happen at least three times a week. When possible, imbed character development within curriculum.

**Middle School**—Schools can work with students to create a town-wide monthly poster contest focused on words that come up within current events that allow for teachable moments. Posters can then be distributed to businesses in the community for display to support student initiative.

**High School**—Schools can create student forums where character traits are examined with the goal of reaching a unified understanding of how these traits are related to accountability. Create opportunities for high school students to discuss character development with elementary school students.

Ultimately students should be held accountable for the decisions they make and actions they take. Consider creating developmentally appropriate student contracts or action plans when students are not holding up their end of the bargain on behavior. This applies to all grade levels.

Schools should have the following programs to complement and enhance their curriculum:

##### 7. Educate Families on Character Development

Character education should be extended so that the work done in class can be continued at home. Schools must develop training programs for families to familiarize them with the school’s values curriculum and how they can reinforce these skills at home. Schools should be encouraged to create workshops to explain the school’s values to families and get them on board since they are paramount in a child’s overall education. Revise the school communication plan so that it makes explicit reference to these values. Not all of the student’s time is spent in the classroom. Families need to understand that conversations that occur in school with respect to a student’s’ character can continue at home.



## **8. Empower Family Involvement in Character Development**

Families need to be involved in the decision-making process so they feel a part of the school. The Parent Teacher Associations (PTA/PTO) should be given the authority to create partnerships that foster character development in extracurricular activities. These organizations can work with the schools to come up with character development objectives for the school community. They should be involved in the creation of character development goals they would like to see implemented within the academic year. A 'Character Education Response Team' can be created to deal with issues that arise. The team should include parents, community members, students, guidance counselors, and teachers.

## **RECOMMENDATION 3**

### **Develop Students' and Teachers' Ability to Navigate in a Diverse Society with Cultural Proficiency**

It is important for everyone to understand that they are navigating along a journey together and meet individuals where they are, without making assumptions. Some practical points that leaders should consider to promote cultural proficiency: working with staff to identify and address biases and assumptions that can be counter-productive to student success and explicitly planning to create a school with a strong focus on cultural awareness and its necessity within the academic setting.

## **9. Help Every School Articulate its Values and Train School Leaders to Take a Comprehensive Approach to Infusing Those Values into All Aspects of the School**

Things come up within a school, the community or in the news that require us to take a small break from the planned academic component of the school day and learn a little more about ourselves and society. Current events are often discussed at home and at school. Give teachers and staff time to understand student thinking and apply that to what they see in the real world. If we don't give students that opportunity, how are we helping them grow?

## **10. School Curriculum and Classroom Lessons Should Be Aligned to the School's Overall Values and Vision of Cultural Proficiency**

When teaching character education topics, we must provide opportunities for students to examine their own cultures so they may understand how they, as cultural entities, impact the perception and interaction of those who are different than them. This means identifying the dynamics of difference caused by historical distrust and experiences on a daily basis. According to Lisa Delpit, "...listening...requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs...It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue."





## RECOMMENDATION 4

### Reinvent School Discipline as an Opportunity to Build Character

#### Proposed Solutions

##### 16. Take a Comprehensive Approach to Student Discipline and Behavior

- a. Create a uniform discipline policy that aligns to school values. Infractions should be viewed as a violation of those shared values. For example, cheating is a violation of “integrity.”
- b. Coach teachers on the standard that both encouragement and discipline should be precise, centered on student actions and not personal judgments.
- c. Apply the “broken windows” theory to character breaches, and address these with urgency. For example, graffiti in the bathroom or theft are violations of the community compact, and should be treated with gravity. <sup>6</sup>

##### 17. Designate a Staff Member as the Point Person for Helping Teachers and Families Monitor and Maintain Character Values and Related Behaviors, Especially When Processing Disciplinary Infractions

This person would:

- a. Help train staff on how to apply the school’s discipline code and work with families.
- b. Serve as a first contact for family communication, especially in the case of disciplinary infractions.
- c. Establish behavioral expectations with students’ families during new student induction, through a behavioral contract, code of conduct or other agreement.
- d. Operate an honor board or other system that allows students to hold peers accountable to school values
- e. Create a discipline protocol that gives teachers guidance on how to counsel a student after he/she has broken school rules. This should give the student the onus of contrasting their aspirations with their actions, as well as identifying self-regulation techniques that could be used going forward.

##### 18. Adopt Preventive Discipline Techniques Such as Teaching Metacognition and Leveraging Peer-to-Peer Interactions

- a. Schools should establish a plan to teach students how to set and follow-through on SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) goals. <sup>7</sup>
- b. Particularly in upper grades, schools should develop opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring so that students practice accountability within their peer group, not just in response to authority.



## Appendix Endnotes

### RECOMMENDATION 1

- <sup>1</sup> Armstrong, T. (2012). First, Discover Their Strengths. *Educational Leadership*, 70(2). Retrieved January 26, 2013, from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct12/vol70/num02/First,-Discover-Their-Strengths.aspx>
- <sup>2</sup> Lemov, D. (2010). Building Character and Trust. *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college* (pp. 203-223). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- <sup>3</sup> Duckworth, A.L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D., & Kelly, D.R. (2007). "Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals". *Personality Processes and Individual Differences*, 92 (6), p. 1087.
- <sup>4</sup> Dweck, C. S. (2012). *Mindset*. London: Robinson.
- <sup>5</sup> This was a recommendation made by the Educational Commission of the States. (2012). Teacher Expectations of Students A self-fulfilling prophecy?. *The Progress of Education Reform*, 13(6). Retrieved January 18, 2013, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/05/51//10551.pdf>. It's also one of the principles behind the Haberman Foundation's Star Teacher selection program. <http://habermanfoundation.org/>

### RECOMMENDATION 4

- <sup>6</sup> Allensworth, E., and Easton, J.Q. (2007) What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public Schools. *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research*. Retrieved 28, January, 2013 from <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/07%20What%20Matters%20Final.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: how little things can make a big difference*. Boston: Little, Brown.

## Resources About Vertical Articulation

- Farrington, C., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D. W., et al. (2012, June). Teaching Adolescents To Become Learners The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance: A Critical Literature Review. *The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research*. Retrieved January 12, 2013, from <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Noncognitive%20Report.pdf>
- Blackwell, L. S., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Dweck, C. (2007). Implicit Theories of Intelligence Predict Achievement Across an Adolescent Transition: A Longitudinal Study and an Intervention. *Child Development*, 78(1), 246-263. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.00995.

## The Teacher Volunteers



### **Stephen Chiger**

**Teaches English and journalism at North Star Academy College Preparatory High School in Newark, NJ**

*Teacher for more than 10 years*

Stephen became a teacher hoping to address some of the social injustice he saw in the world around him. He started out as a journalist but he wasn't satisfied reporting; he needed to be a part of the change more directly. Stephen knew he wanted to do something good for people, and he knew he loved learning. He feels so lucky that this work combines the two things he wants to dedicate his life to – pursuing social justice and sharing the sustaining joy that learning offers. When he is not teaching, he is playing piano, reading, writing, exploring New York or connecting with the people he cares about.



### **Amelia Herbert**

**Teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (all subjects), 8<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade AP World History, and research at North Star Academy College Preparatory High School in Newark, NJ**

*Teacher for more than 5 years*

Amelia became a teacher because of the reasons captured by this quote from *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks: "The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility.....This is education as the practice of freedom." (207) When she is not teaching, Amelia is reading, writing, listening to music (preferably live), going to museums, or traveling.



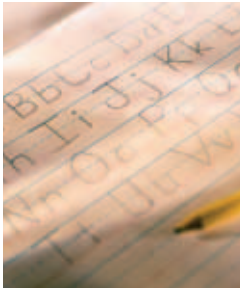
### **Staci Marshall**

**Teaches preschool at Juan Pablo Duarte-Jose Julian Marti School #28 in Elizabeth, NJ**

*Teacher for more than 10 years*

Staci became a teacher because she wanted the opportunity to develop young minds and be a part of the early stages of the learning process. She wanted to ignite the creativity in young children and spark their love of learning. She feels teachers should partner with families in providing an educational foundation to their children. When she is not teaching, she is spending quality time with her husband, a seasoned high school science teacher and their two children, ages 7 and 4. They enjoy going to parks, museums, the theatre, and on vacation as a family.

## The Teacher Volunteers



### **Jessyca Saavedra**

**Teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at the Ethical Community Charter Schools in Jersey City, NJ**

*Teacher for more than 5 years*

Jessyca has been a charter teacher in Jersey City for six years.



### **Maricia Jodi Wilson**

**Teaches middle school science at Pride Academy Charter School in East Orange, NJ**

*Teacher for more than 10 years*

Maricia became a teacher after reading *Savage Inequalities* by Jonathan Kozol. “My life was forever changed. I knew without a shadow of doubt that I wanted to be a teacher in an urban setting. I didn’t feel that I could ‘save’ poor inner-city children, but rather, felt that I could serve them in a way that would empower them to realize their own capabilities and potential. I believe that my students possess a deep-rooted brilliance that if cultivated appropriately, will flourish and blossom in significant ways.” When she is not teaching, she is volunteering, mentoring children, or indulging in writing or reading.

## Our Moderator

### **Tina R. Nolan, Ed.D.**

Dr. Tina Nolan, moderator for this VIVA Teachers project, has spent nearly 20 years working with teachers and teacher leaders in schools, cultural institutions and community-based organizations across the country. Prior to joining VIVA Teachers in 2011, she was Associate Director of Partnerships at National Louis University and Director of Education at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago. She serves as Editor in Chief for the *Journal of Museum Education*.

## Index of Recommendations and Proposed Solutions

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### RECOMMENDATION ONE

#### **Help Schools Define and Build Cultures That Develop Students' Non-Cognitive Skills, Then Assess Those Skills**

##### **Proposed Solutions**

1. Schools must have clearly articulated, frequently referenced principles about the value of scholarship. They should have a comprehensive action plan to communicate those values.
  2. Schools should establish a plan to teach non-cognitive skills and mindsets to students and teachers.
  3. Schools and districts should have an accountability process for the growth of both student content knowledge and non-cognitive skill development.
  4. Districts must have clear plans and an effective system for vertical articulation of non-cognitive skill development, to manage transitions as students progress through grades.
  5. Schools must be able to articulate a persuasive view about the relevance of education and personal intellectual growth to students, parents, and other stakeholders.
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### RECOMMENDATION TWO

#### **Establish Shared Vocabulary and Meaning That Fosters Character Development and Student accountability from Preschool through High School and Beyond**

##### **Proposed Solutions**

6. Talk about non-cognitive skills development, explain its importance to students' success, and define vocabulary for common understanding of what goals are set for students' skills development.
  7. Incorporate evaluation and measures of non-cognitive skills development into our assessment of student achievement.
  8. Establish a state-level repository of best practices for non-cognitive skill development and make the information applicable at both the district and school level.
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### RECOMMENDATION THREE

#### **Develop Students' and Teachers' Ability to Navigate in a Diverse Society With Cultural Proficiency**

##### **Proposed Solutions**

9. Expect and support schools to create a clear statement of the value of developing skills so students can succeed in navigating the myriad forms of diversity they will face in their adult lives.
  10. Look for all schools to set annual goals and measures for developing students' and teachers' Cultural Competency
  11. Create new resources and supports to develop the Cultural Competency of all teachers, including new initiatives to build such training into teacher recruiting and induction.
  12. Make deliberate, regular efforts to expose students to a continued variety of setting where they can develop skills in navigating diversity with success.
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**RECOMMENDATION FOUR****Reinvent School Discipline as an Opportunity to Build Character****Proposed Solutions**

13. Schools should re-think their staff structures to increase their capacity to dedicate attention to monitor and maintain character values in their school.
14. Schools must redefine school discipline as an opportunity to teach character and train teachers on corresponding systems and protocols.

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**RECOMMENDATION FIVE****Design Opportunities for Students to Demonstrate Character in Student-Centered, Student-Led Initiatives in School, Local, and Global Community****Proposed Solutions**

15. Schools should approach character development with deliberate links to skills like grit, persistence and resilience to avoid giving students the impression that character is simply obedience.
16. Incorporate structured student leadership roles that allow students to have a role in the recognition of peer actions that display strong character and the sanctioning of actions that violate schools culture/values.
17. Develop an advisory system that allows for peer-to-peer interaction in safe, small-group, non-academic settings.
18. Implement an interdisciplinary curriculum that includes a central theme connected to a relevant real world problem (inherently posing ethical questions).
19. Incorporate student-led initiatives in the school community and local community, and service projects in the local and global community to give students opportunities to practice character in action.

## New Voice Strategies

**New Voice Strategies** is a nonprofit corporation founded by a group of seasoned professionals who believe in an individual's ability to make our world better, fairer and more productive. New Voice Strategies created WikiWisdom™ to offer leaders a new way to communicate with their stakeholders. Our innovation—the VIVA Idea Exchange—is an online peer collaboration platform that plumbs the wisdom of committed people with front-line experience to create consensus on a variety of actionable recommendations. We believe in the power of authentic experience and provide passionate people with an avenue to make a difference.

Our passion is to make their voices heard. In its first year of operation, VIVA Teachers engaged 4,000 committed classroom teachers in a VIVA Idea Exchange. Nearly 1,000 of those teachers have joined the VIVA Teachers network to provide unvarnished insights into the vision and priorities of classroom professionals as we work to strengthen America's public schools from coast to coast.

### Board of Directors

**JILL BASS** taught in the Chicago and New York City public schools for 14 years. She has a master's in instructional leadership from the University of Illinois at Chicago and has been a professional developer, curriculum writer, educational consultant, and instructional coach. She is currently director of the Mikva Challenge's National Center for Action Civics, overseeing curriculum development and teacher training.

**ELIZABETH EVANS**, founding CEO, is a recognized national leader in building unconventional alliances and bringing innovative approaches to solving difficult policy problems. For the last decade, her work has focused on education reform, and she has spent her career promoting the interests of children. She was executive director of the Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS), where she was the chief architect of a successful statewide campaign that culminated with Illinois being the first state in the nation to enact comprehensive charter law reforms in 2009. Before joining INCS, Elizabeth was part of the Illinois Facilities Fund leadership team, where her responsibilities focused on Illinois government relations, communications, and advocacy. Elizabeth also worked at the Civic Committee of The Commercial Club of Chicago and was a political organizer in Washington, DC, and Michigan. She practiced law from 1990 to 1998 for the US Securities and Exchange Commission Enforcement Division and was a staff attorney in the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

**JOHN HUSSEY** is Chief Strategy Officer at Battelle for Kids. John provides organizational and strategic oversight for Battelle for Kids and the organization's clients in the area of innovation, technology, communications, development and strategic planning. Prior to joining Battelle for Kids, John enjoyed a 30-year career in education and technology. He previously served as the regional manager for SchoolNet, Inc., helping create Web-based products to help teachers access student data and curricular standards via the Internet for use in instructional planning. He was also a middle school science teacher and technology coordinator in several Ohio school districts.

**KIPLUND "KIP" KOLKMEIER** is of counsel to the Political Law and Government Relations practice groups of Perkins, Coie, LLC & Kolkmeier Consulting. His legal practice focuses on state legislative lobbying in Illinois, corporate and governmental ethics issues, administrative rulemaking and executive agency lobbying, PAC management, state and federal campaign finance issues, and association management. He previously was a partner at the following law firms: Sidley & Austin, Altheimer & Gray, and Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon.

**ASHLEY WARLICK**, Chair, teaches elementary school in the Cambridge, MA Public Schools. She has a concentration in teaching students with special needs and brings a strong interest in the arts to her work. She serves on the Board of Directors of her school's affiliated nonprofit organization, which brings urgently needed resources to the students at the school.



