

ETON JOURNAL FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

SPECIAL ISSUE ON CHARACTER EDUCATION | NOVEMBER 2019



Eton Journal for Innovation and Research in Education
Published by The Tony Little Centre for Innovation and
Research in Learning
Eton College

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Tony Little Centre
c/o School Office
Windsor
SL4 6DW

Director
Jonnie Noakes
j.noakes@etoncollege.org.uk

Editor & Research Associate
Dr Iro Konstantinou
i.konstantinou@etoncollege.org.uk



<https://www.etoncollege.com/CIRL>
<https://cirlresearch.com/>

EDITORIAL	03
CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: AN INITIAL OVERVIEW OF SOME FRAMEWORKS AND ASSOCIATED IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES	04
POSITIVE EDUCATION: AN APPROACH STILL IN SEARCH OF A PRACTICE	10
CULTIVATING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	12
HOW CAN WE BEST FORMATIVELY ASSESS CHARACTER?	14
CHARACTER AND THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION	16
RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTER SKILLS AT ETON	18
ORGANISTS AND CHARACTER	21
CHARACTER IN MUSIC	22
CHARACTER IN DRAMA	23
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	24
WHAT PLATO HAS TO SAY ABOUT CHARACTER EDUCATION	26
FOSTERING CHARACTER IN PE	28
A VIEW FROM THE ETON COLLEGE CHAPLAINCY: CHRISTIAN THINKING ABOUT CHARACTER	30
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT ETON COLLEGE: MEASURING ITS IMPACT ON YEAR 12 BOYS	31
LAE X ETON LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME WITH THE OXFORD CHARACTER PROJECT	33
PLACING CHARACTER AT THE CORE OF EDUCATION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE LAURUS TRUST	35
DEVELOPING CHARACTER IN FUTURE ARMY OFFICERS AT WEST POINT	37
CHARACTER AT BEDALES	40
BUILDING MORAL IDENTITY WITHIN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING	42
CHARACTER EDUCATION: A LEADERSHIP JOURNEY	45
HAPPINESS STARTS FROM WITHIN: HOW DO WE GET MORE HAPPY PEOPLE?	47
#DIGITALCHARACTER @CHELTCOLL: A STUDY ON DIGITAL CHARACTER	48
THE ETONX APPROACH TO CHARACTER EDUCATION	51
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RUPTURE: TRAUMA LITERATURE AS EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL	53
THE JOURNEY OF CHARACTER EDUCATION AT ST RONAN'S	55

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REASONS WHY CHARACTER
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CO-ED, PRIMARY, SECONDARY, ETC.*

EDITORIAL

Dr Iro Konstantinou | Research Associate, Eton College

Why a special issue on character education? I don't want to give the epistemological, ontological, or practical reasons why we decided to focus this first special issue on character as these will be explored in detail by various articles in this issue. There is a multitude of reasons why character can and should be explored in schools, whether these are boarding, state, independent, co-ed, primary, secondary, etc. Evidence suggests that when character skills and virtues are fostered, we can observe increased wellbeing and academic attainment. For example, as Kathy Weston discusses resilience is one of those broad terms that can have a lasting impact on young people for their whole lives. Resilience is a topic that we have a keen interest in; this is why in 2019–2020 we have commissioned a study which will look at the impact of an intervention in resilience across 12 schools. This is one more element of character education which this issue explores: the fact that it can transcend localities and be explored across schools and contexts. All schools are faced with concerns around the wellbeing of pupils, mental health, safeguarding and ensuring they help young people flourish. Hence, we felt it was important to produce a special issue which looks at character education in its various manifestations and encourage conversations around character to continue (or start).

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This issue is divided into 3 sections:

The first section looks at wider theories. Bill Lucas introduces a number of taxonomies which can be utilised in the journey of a school which aims to foster character skills and virtues. The rest of the articles in this section, by Matthew White, Kathy Weston, and Jonathan Beale, are looking at theories and wider implications for implementing and assessing character education within a school. Most importantly, they introduce parental engagement and reflective practice as part of what character education might include.

The second section discusses character education within the Eton context. There are a number of articles which discuss character in the various curricular and co-curricular areas of the school. We also introduce the findings of research projects we have conducted at Eton: identifying our values; assessing the impact of community engagement; or extending our partnership with the London Academy of Excellence to launch a leadership initiative between the two schools. We also look at character through drama, music, sport, and from the perspective of a House Master on the purpose of education.

The last section looks at other contexts and engages with either whole-school approaches or research that has been conducted looking at various aspects of character education. It has been interesting to see how others engage with character education and hopefully, some of the ideas here can help anyone reading start their own research or reflection on what character might look like in their school or environment.

As ever, we are grateful to those who contributed their ideas and reflections for the journal.

CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: AN INITIAL OVERVIEW OF SOME FRAMEWORKS AND ASSOCIATED IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Professor Bill Lucas | Professor of Learning, University of Winchester

Character is ‘plural’, that is to say, most educators think character is not one but many things (Park et al, 2017). But there is little agreement as to how plural it is, which ingredients are essential and which optional. At the extremes of interpretation, character can be either wholly about virtue and goodness or entirely about performing well in school or in life. Somewhere on this continuum of definition there are debates to be had about culture, epistemology and pedagogy as we consider how such a complex thing as character can best be taught or caught or cultivated (or all three) in schools. According to John Dewey, by the middle of the last century it had become ‘a commonplace of educational theory that the establishing of character is a comprehensive aim of school instruction and discipline’ in the USA (Dewey, 1944: 346).

In England, two of the four most recent Secretaries of State for Education have sought to encourage schools to place more value on character education: Nicky Morgan through the character innovation fund¹ and Damien Hinds by defining character in terms of five extra-curricular activities – sport, creativity, performing, volunteering and the world of work.² In England, an advisory group is currently drawing up recommendations for developing ‘character and resilience’ in pupils and new character benchmarks to measure performance of schools.

With multiple interpretations of character, it is difficult to produce high quality evaluations of the different approaches used as character programmes are often at least as much cultural – tacit, informal – as it they are about specific, identifiably discrete, formal interventions. Recent meta-analytical research (Jeynes, 2019) has shown a clear positive impact of character education on student achievement and on expressions of love, integrity, compassion, and self-discipline. In the UK, a recent review by the National Foundation for Educational Research describes 14 robust evaluation studies (Taylor, 2017) with less consistent results.

Overall, existing evidence is mixed as to whether specific character education interventions actually improve the aspect of character they set out to develop or whether the intervention impacts on other factors such as attainment, behaviour or wellbeing. Even if there are significant effects, we do not yet understand enough about the mechanisms by which such effects are achieved.

This paper offers a brief overview of some of the more widely regarded character education frameworks, along with some questions which such frameworks raise in terms of implementation.

The challenge of producing a useful framework for character education

There are two problems with any framework: the ‘size’ of any concepts or ideas used as descriptors and the language employed.

How ‘big’, for example, is a big idea? Is wisdom too big? Is curiosity too small? Is productivity too instrumental but kindness too morally relative? Is a civic virtue really any different from a moral virtue or is the community just a location for moral virtues to be enacted? Is it better to think of a psychological attribute as the big idea or more helpful to focus on the skills which go to make up the attribute?

Mention of the word ‘attribute’ sets up a related semantic problem. Is character an attribute or set of attributes, something that can be developed? Or is it better captured by words like ‘habit’ or ‘disposition’, with the suggestion that whatever the attribute, character is that which is routinely deployed? For many, the word ‘virtue’, much associated with character, is freighted with Ancient Greek and Christian ‘baggage’. And the concept of ‘trait’ can suggest that it is fixed and potentially inherited.

The five frameworks which follow illustrate these various dilemmas. The criteria for their selection include scrutiny in peer-reviewed literature, recognition via the web sites of academic centres and, to a lesser extent, references on school web sites.

Broadly speaking, the frameworks are listed in chronological order. The first three are frameworks for character education which seek to describe what it is, each organised according to different categories and implying a different definition. The last two are slightly different in their scope and invite thinking about the framing of character within schools more broadly.







FRAMEWORKS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

VIA Institute on Character Inventory of Strengths

The VIA Institute on Character³ draws on the work of Peterson and Seligman (2004) and their identification of 24 character strengths. The character strengths are grouped together under six headings; see Table 1.

A particular feature of the 24 strengths is that while they are personally beneficial in terms of the achievement of, for example, learning goals, they are also morally valuable. So, for example, persistence is a both a form of moral courage and an aspect of a growth mindset (Dweck et al., 2014).

The six higher order virtues have obvious face validity, albeit with one – transcendence – being an abstract noun less widely used or understood than the other five. Interestingly, factor analysis of the 24 character strengths indicates that they do not actually produce a factor structure consistent with the six virtues (Macdonald et al., 2008).

 WISDOM	 COURAGE	 HUMANITY	 TRANSCENDENCE	 JUSTICE	 MODERATION
Creativity Curiosity Judgement Love of learning Perspective	Bravery Persistence Humility Zest	Love Kindness Social intelligence	Appreciation of beauty Gratitude Hope Humour Spirituality	Teamwork Fairness Leadership	Forgiveness Modesty Prudence Self-control

Put simply, the six headings are not the only or even the most valid way of organising the character strengths; it is a matter of researcher judgement that they are categorised as they are.

Table 1 – VIA Character Strengths

Center for Curriculum Redesign Character Framework

The Center for Curriculum Redesign positions its work on character, alongside the development of knowledge and skills, in terms of the way we behave and engage in the world; see Table 2 (Bialik et al., 2015).

It divides character into two parts, performance – ‘mastery and thrust for excellence in life, school and work’, (ibid., p. 27) and moral – ‘wisdom and how one treats oneself and others, in interpersonal, social and occupational matters’ (ibid., p. 28).

Table 2 – Center for Curriculum Redesign Performance and Moral Character

Performance	
Adaptability	Flexibility, dealing with ambiguity, feedback
Resilience	Diligence, discipline, perseverance, patience, effort, grit, confidence, tenacity
Curiosity	Open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, playfulness, passion, exploration
Initiative	Self-direction, self-discipline, self-control, timeliness, motivation
Socialization	Cross-cultural, diversity, listening, speaking, decorum, observation, cooperation
Productivity	Accountability, conscientiousness, efficiency, project/program management, results-orientation, precision, load management, focus, execution, dependability, reliability
Leadership	Engagement, inspiration, responsibility, following, decisiveness, consistency, leading via example, selflessness, altruism, mentorship, goal-orientation, commitment, organization & delegation, patience, accountability, vision, self-reflection, collaboration
Moral	
Integrity	Honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, authenticity, genuineness, ethics, virtue, decency
Fairness	Justice, civic-mindedness, equity, sportsmanship, citizenship, social perspective, forgiveness, mercy
Respect	Self-respect, respect for others, honor, reverence, humility, receptivity
Courage	Fortitude, determination, resilience, grit, confidence, stability, bravery, persistence, grace, risk taking, prudence, toughness
Zest	Gratitude, optimism, passion, inspiration, enthusiasm, verve, energy, vigor, zeal, cheerfulness, spunk, spontaneity, humor
Empathy	Care, kindness, compassion, tolerance, generosity, charity, cheerfulness, helplessness, devotion, love, inclusiveness, belonging, camaraderie, humaneness, consideration
Self-awareness	Consciousness, mindfulness, presence, tranquility, spirituality, balance, self-actualization, existentiality, oneness, beauty, acceptance, appreciation, interconnectedness, insight, patience, sensibility

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dfe-character-awards-application-window-now-open>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-sets-out-five-foundations-to-build-character>

³ <https://www.viacharacter.org/>

In making the distinction between ‘performance’ and ‘moral’ character, the Center is drawing on thinking by Lickona and Davidson (2005). Interestingly the same researchers also explicitly see the interdependence of these aspects of character when they recombine them as 8 Strengths of Character.⁴

By separating performance from moral character there is an implicit invitation to consider the different ways in which each might be cultivated. Whether the main distinction in character education is between performance and moral is arguable. The performance notion, with its emphasis on mastery rather than on learning or meta-cognition, could be seen as limiting; an alternative pairing might be to contrast ‘epistemic’ with ‘pro-social’ (Claxton and Lucas, 2013). The sub-elements of performance are also of obviously different sizes. Even a concept such as ‘zest’, which might seem relatively bounded is, on closer analysis, complex (Lucas and Spencer, forthcoming), while ‘leadership’ is huge and sprawling in its implications for practice.

For some educationalists, the choice of the word ‘performance’ is problematic when performativity in schools (the idea that results in test scores are supremely important) is often seen as a reason why character education does not flourish in schools in some countries.

The large number of sub-elements describing each of the seven aspects of performance and moral character is further illustrative of the challenge of the relative size of any ‘big idea’.⁵ The Center for Curriculum Redesign framework has recently been revised⁶ into three sections, Skills, Character and Meta-learning; see Table 3.

Dimension	Competency
Skills – How we use what we know	Creativity Critical Thinking Communication Collaboration
Character – How we behave and engage in the world; aka agency, attitudes, behaviors, dispositions, mindsets, personality, temperament, values, social and emotional skills, non-cognitive skills, and soft skills	Mindfulness Curiosity Courage Resilience Ethics Leadership
Meta-learning – How we reflect and adapt (and learn how to learn)	Meta-cognition Growth mindset

Table 3 – Curriculum Redesign Framework for Character 1.0

This amalgamation of earlier thinking about skills, the 4Cs of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2006) with the earlier framework (Bialik et al., 2015), introduces complexity and some confusion by separating out four ‘skills’ (which could equally be described as dispositions) and then grouping so many items of different kind and scale together under the heading of character.

Another way of framing character is to consider the ‘location’ of the expression of character in young people and the behaviours which might be observed. Developed empirically in a number of studies in schools, Park and colleagues (2017) offer an approach which builds on both the VIA and Center for Curriculum Redesign thinking, Table 4, and seeks to recognize both the individual and social dimensions.

Dimension	Competency
Interpersonal	Gratitude Social intelligence Interpersonal self-control
Character – How we behave and engage in the world; aka agency, attitudes, behaviors, dispositions, mindsets, personality, temperament, values, social and emotional skills, non-cognitive skills, and soft skills	Mindfulness Curiosity Courage Resilience Ethics Leadership
Meta-learning – How we reflect and adapt (and learn how to learn)	Meta-cognition Growth mindset

Table 4 – A tripartite taxonomy of character (Park et al., 2017)

Both the intellectual and intrapersonal dimensions map on to performance character, while the idea of an interpersonal dimension reminds us of the social context of schools.

Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools

Each of the previous frameworks has influenced the Jubilee Centre model (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, no date), along with earlier research conducted by Shields (2011) and by the Jubilee Centre itself; see Table 4.

The Jubilee model reaches back to Aristotle, taking his notion of phronesis (φρόνησις) or practical wisdom as a meta-virtue integrating the four types of virtue, intellectual, moral, civic and performance.

According to Aristotle, a person’s character is ‘comprised of her dispositions to act, think, and feel in various ways’ (Baehr, 2017, p. 1153). The Jubilee model would seem to have moved a considerable way from the affective domain of feelings with emphasis largely being placed on thinking.

Similarly, the framing of everything to do with character as a virtue, especially the learning/performance dimension, does not sit well with the language which most schools use. Increasingly, schools in England, often influenced by the Education Endowment Foundation, are more likely to use the language of the learning sciences such as meta-cognition, self-regulation, practice and so forth.

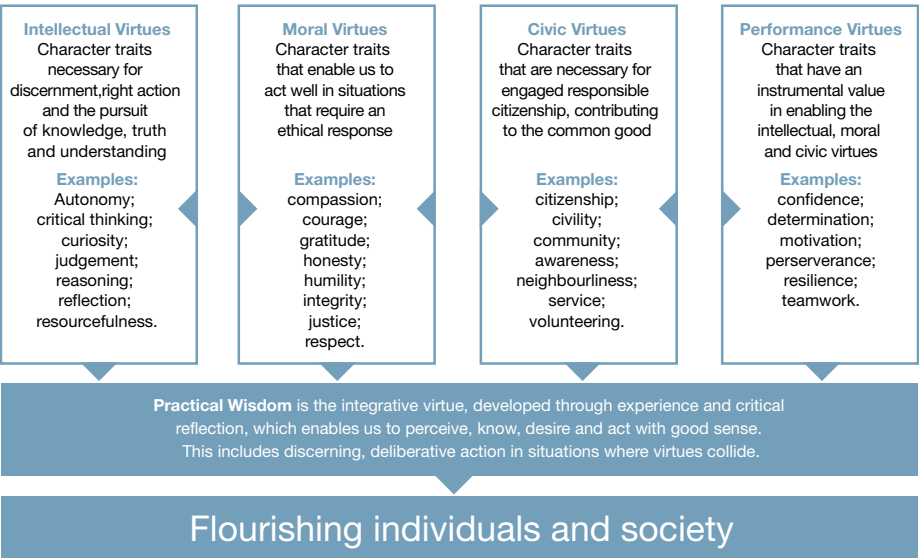


Table 5 – Jubilee Centre Framework for Character

Discussions of frameworks for character education inevitably beg wider thinking about the degree to which deliberate attempts to cultivate character fit within school and beyond.

UChicago Framework for Young Adult Success

Nagaoka and colleagues (2015) frame character in a more holistic way; Figure 1. The outer ring describes three key factors – agency, integrated identity and competencies, while the second ring focuses on four foundational components – self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets and values. At the heart of the model is the suggestion that the combination of action and reflection is a core mechanism in young people’s development.

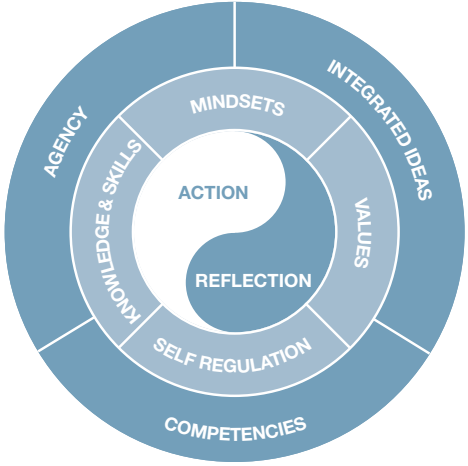


Figure 1 - UChicago Framework for Young Adult Success

While character as a term is invisible in this framework many of the concepts explored in the frameworks explored thus far are very much present. Of particular interest is evidence from the research which led to the construction of the framework (Nagaoka et al., 2015) about the holistic nature of character development within and beyond schools.

A character education prototype

The most recent of these five frameworks (McGrath, 2018) takes a rather different approach and is more a set of criteria sitting alongside any of the frameworks, a kind of meta-framework. The seven central features of any character education programme are positioned as a prototype or set of essential elements; see Table 5.

7 Key features of Character Education
1. Is school based
2. Is structured
3. Addresses specific positive psychological attributes
4. Addresses identity
5. Addresses moral growth
6. Addresses holistic growth
7. Addresses the development of practical wisdom.

Table 6 - A character education prototype

McGrath helpfully forces us to think about the essential active ingredients of a character education framework without offering advice and thereby slipping into the implementation stage of any character education initiative. A possible criticism of the model is that as schools increasingly see themselves as part of a wider learning eco-system, explicitly engaging with parents, to focus on the school as the location seems potentially limiting in scope.

Partial frameworks for character education

In addition to these holistic attempts to frame character education, there are several well-regarded frameworks which deal with aspects of character or even bigger ideas of which character is arguably a sub-set. These are listed in Table 6.

⁴ These 8 Strengths of Character are: Lifelong learner and critical thinker; Diligent and capable performer; Socially and emotionally skilled person; Ethical thinker; Respectful and responsible moral agent; Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle; Contributing community member and democratic citizen; and Spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose.

⁵ Yan, B. (2018). Frameworks for Effective Character Education Practices. In Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, Volume 180. Paris: Atlantis Press.

⁶ <https://curriculumredesign.org/framework>

Focus	Originators
Non-cognitive skills	Gutman and Schoon, 2013 Heckman and Kautz, 2013
Habits of Mind	Costa and Kallick, 2002
Creative habits of mind	Lucas, Claxton and Spencer, 2013
Learning Power	Claxton, 2002
Deeper Learning	Fullan and Langworthy, 2014
Intellectual character	Richhart, 2002
21st Century Skills	Dede, 2010 Binkley et al., 2012 Farrington et al., 2012 Lamb et al., 2017 Pellegrino and Hilton, 2012

Table 7 – A selection of character-like frameworks

Moving from framework to implementation

Across the world there is currently a growth of interest in making aspects of character more explicit in schools. Care and colleagues (2016) have shown how across the world the kinds of dispositions, habits, attributes and skills encompassed by character education are increasingly and explicitly featuring in national curricula; see Figure 2. Many of these owe at least as much to the ideas described in Table 6 as they do with the language of the character frameworks reviewed earlier and are beginning to be well-evidenced in a variety of countries across the world.

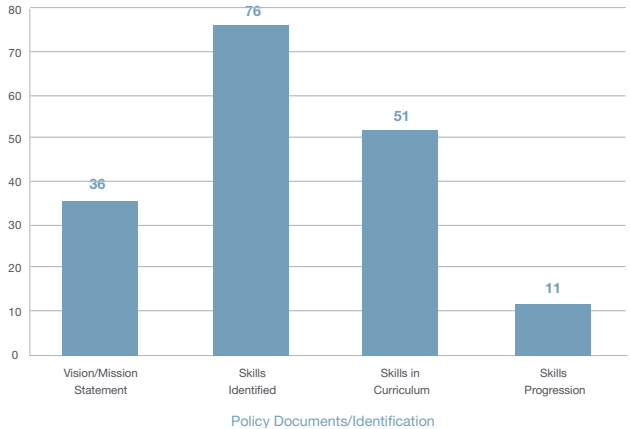


Figure 2 – Broader character-like skills in national curricula

Alongside the growing visibility of the field, advocates of character education are beginning to offer suggestions as to how best it can be implemented in schools. More than a decade ago the Character Education Partnership developed ‘eleven steps for effective character education’ (Lickona et al., 2007):

- 1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
- 2. ‘Character’ must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling and behavior.
- 3. Effective character education requires an intentional proactive and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.

- 4. The school must be a caring community.
- 5. To develop character students need opportunities for moral action.
- 6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
- 7. Character education should strive to develop students’ intrinsic motivation.
- 8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
- 9. Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.
- 10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.
- 11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff’s functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

The Jubilee Centre Framework (no date) offers advice such as:

- character is largely caught through role-modelling and emotional contagion: school culture and ethos are therefore central;
- character should also be taught: direct teaching of character provides the rationale, language and tools to use in developing character elsewhere in and out of school;
- character depends on building Virtue Literacy.

Nagoaka and colleagues (2015; p. 39) draw on research to suggest the kinds of developmental experiences which seem to develop character, Figure 3:



Figure 3 – Developmental experiences to build character (Nagoaka et al., 2015; p. 39)

Berkowitz and Bier (2017) describe effective practices using the mnemonic PRIMED:

- Prioritization of character education;
- strategic and intentional nurturing of healthy Relationships;
- Intrinsic, authentic motivation and promotion of core values/virtues;
- role Models with adults modelling what they want students to be;
- a pedagogy of Empowerment;
- Developmental pedagogy explicitly seeking to meet students’ needs and develop character.

In England, the National Foundation for Educational Research recently undertook an analysis of five schools which had won the Department for Education’s Character Award (Walker et al., 2017). As a result, they conclude that the key features of effective character education can be expressed as a series of instructions:

- 1. Senior leaders must drive it and all teachers must deliver it.
- 2. Place at the core of school ethos.
- 3. Take a long-term approach.
- 4. Build a collective understanding and language.
- 5. Maintain focus, momentum and ongoing communication.

Only when we have focused more precisely on what character is can more nuanced exploration take place about how best it can be cultivated in schools. Then we can develop a more finely-grained theory of action to describe the mechanisms in play and evaluate their effectiveness.

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POSITIVE EDUCATION: AN APPROACH STILL IN SEARCH OF A PRACTICE

Dr Mathew A. White | The University of Adelaide

In recent articles Oades and Johnston (2017) contend wellbeing literacy is an important step in positive education and O'Brien and Blue (2018) challenge teachers, headteachers and administrators to develop a positive pedagogy, designing pedagogical practices that facilitate positivity within the classroom. While these are important steps forward in the development of positive education theory and practice, a critical stage continues to be overlooked (White, 2016; 2017).

To date, positive education has no agreed conceptual framework or model to guide teachers to theorise and critically self-reflect on what they do and how they have an impact based on existing theories of professional practice (White and Murray, 2015). Therefore, if Oades and Johnston's (2017) wellbeing literacy, O'Brien and Blue's (2018) developments or Waters and Loton's (2019) SEARCH framework are to achieve deep pedagogical change, I assert that critical teacher self-reflection be an integral starting point. Written from the researcher-practitioner perspective, this article proposes a conceptual model for critical self-reflection for teachers of positive education through two questions:

- Can positive psychology developments enhance the planning, implement and self-reflection required for effective learning and teaching?
- How can character strengths be integrated into reflective practice to enhance effective learning and teaching?

Trask-Kerr, Quay and SlemPs (2019) contend that a significant hurdle for positive education is that it 'revolves around issues to do with psychology itself and the capacity of psychology to comprehensively inform the imagined idea of positive education' (p. 2). As Kristjánsson (2017) notes, positive education's focus on a flourishing paradigm should allay 'the fears of traditionalists that the flourishing paradigm is just one more attempt to smuggle a Trojan horse of touchy-feeliness into the classroom in order to undermine standard subjects and processes'. In the decade following Seligman et al's (2009) original article in the Oxford Review of Education, Trask-Kerr, et al. (2019) highlight that 'it is worth acknowledging that teachers have imagined education in positive terms for a very long time' and that 'it seems that positive psychology's philosophical roots have been largely assumed', arguing for a 'Deweyan positive education' that 'incorporates psychological knowledge in the embrace of philosophical thinking' (pp. 2; 13). I argue in the research, discourse and professional practice of positive education to develop the field and integrate Peterson and Seligman's (2004) character strengths classification¹ with Brookfield's (1997, 2017) theory of reflective practice.

Put simply, how can teachers integrate these concepts into their self-reflection cycle? First theorised in 1995, Brookfield (1998, 2017) defines reflective practice as 'the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions' concerning learning (p. 3). Brookfield's research focuses on adult education, critical theory, learning and teaching and has been widely adopted internationally over the past 20 years in initial teacher education and other professions, including nursing. While it may seem evident that reflecting on learning and teaching is the foundation to improve professional practice and teacher efficacy, it is one of the areas that positive education researchers have failed to address. Much of the progress in positive education has focused on the application of positive psychology theories and interventions. For example, Kern Waters, Adler and White (2015) outlined the measurement of Seligman's PERMA theory of wellbeing in a school. Waters and White (2015) summarised the application of an appreciative enquiry process in education as three strategic phases used to build wellbeing over a two-and-a-half year period: development, implementation, and monitoring. While these articles provided ground-breaking overviews of activity in the field of education, they did not address the professional practice of positive education. Waters and Loton's (2019) article 'SEARCH: A Meta-Framework and Review of the Field of Positive Education' made a significant contribution to the decision-making process for the development of positive education interventions; however, it does not explore the process of teacher's professional practice (Vuorinen, Erikivi, & Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2018).

A missing part of positive education research discourse focuses on teachers' critical self-reflection on professional practice (Brookfield, 1997, 2017). To be clear, when I discuss professional practice, I do not mean just classroom programmes, worksheets, activities or interventions teachers undertake with their classes. Here, professional practice refers to a teacher's ability to self-reflect; and the 'repertoire of effective teaching strategies and use them to implement well-designed teaching programs and lessons' (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). One way to develop this skill and practice in initial teacher education is to invite pre-service teachers to reflect on their professional practices. On graduation, evidence of the reflective practice is also a requirement for teacher registration and teacher registration requirements throughout Australia and internationally. While many schools will adopt wellbeing or positive education approaches to shift educational practices, the challenging task of shifting professional practice is often overlooked, or initial enthusiasm gives way to a dominant school culture (Oberle, & Schonert-Reichl, 2016).

Brookfield's (2017) research has much to offer positive education, in particular, where school leaders and teachers can become frustrated after initial training and investment in the field yields limited results.

Four aspects of Brookfield's definition of reflective practice provide much-needed clarity for teachers of positive education and respond to White and Kern's (2018, p. 2) criticism 'that the time has come for the discourse on the pedagogy of positive education to become more sophisticated'. Brookfield claims that reflective practice needs to be 1) sustained, 2) intentional, and 3) seek evidence to 4) assess teaching assumptions (Brookfield, 1997, 2017). He asserts that paradigmatic assumptions are widely present in education and that 'critical reflection is all about hunting the assumptions that frame our judgements and actions as teachers' (Brookfield, 2017: 21). Therefore, is it possible that with the rise of positive education and the enthusiasm surrounding its application, some teachers have jumped the gun – focusing on implementation without undertaking the significant critical self-reflection demanded in professional practice? There are many synergies in Brookfield's theory of reflective practice and discussion about the need to shift positive education discourse beyond a positive-negative dichotomy. Classrooms and schools are complex ecosystems. Given the prevalence of interdisciplinary perspectives in social science research focusing on the teacher, the practice continues to be a surprising omission in the literature (Brookfield, 1997, 2017). While there are pockets of positive education practice which claim to have developed curricula, there is scant evidence of how this has been integrated in professional practice beyond a series of worksheets or claiming they are based on what works for in-school experience (Waters, 2011; Waters & Loton, 2019). Reflective practice in positive education is an overlooked step towards the integration in professional practice. For example, in the Australian context, there is a plethora of wellbeing frameworks between and across education systems, sectors and individual schools (Brookfield, 1997, 2017). Many of these positive education pedagogies have remained within the domain of educational psychology or on the edge of education research.

In education, a widely recognised body of research focuses on the significant role reflective practice plays in transforming teaching. Indeed, teaching is often referred to as a reflective profession in which teachers are continually evaluating their impact on learning and practice. Some of the most recent conceptual advances in the field skirt around the gap in positive education. At the heart of reflective practice research is a teacher's ability to know, understand, and reflect upon professional practice from four lenses. Brookfield (2017) argues that 'critically reflective teaching happens when we identify and scrutinise the assumptions that undergird how we work. The most effective way to become aware of these assumptions is to view our practice from different perspectives. Seeing how we think and work through different lenses is the core process of reflective practice' (pp. xii–xiii). As outlined in Brookfield's 'Four Lenses of Critical Reflection' there are four lenses of critical reflective practice: Lens 1: Our Students' Eyes, Lens 2: Our Colleagues' Perceptions, Lens 3: Personal Experience, and Lens 4: Theory.

The promise of positive education could be transformative for teacher professional practice. In this article, I have argued that positive education continues to be a pedagogy in search of a practice. I theorised that one of the hurdles for the development of professional practice in the field is that teachers do not fully reflect on their own professional practice to adopt positive education approaches comprehensively. To promote further discussion, I proposed that teachers can engage with Brookfield's theory of reflective practice for positive education to promote effective professional practice.

This article is an extract from 'A Strength-based Reflective Practice Model for Teachers' to be published in Kern and Wehmeyer (in-press) *The International Handbook of Positive Education*.

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¹ See VIA website for the full classification and discussion by Lucas in this issue

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Dr Kathy Weston | *Motivational speaker, education researcher and author* | www.drkathyweston.com

The expectations on our children and young people to be emotionally, academically and digitally resilient come from their teachers, schools and parents. Moreover, Southwick and Charney (2018) note that resilience is a ‘prized characteristic’ among employers, a fact emphasised by the World Economic Forum (2016), which listed ‘grit, persistence and adaptability’ as key character attributes that will increasingly be in demand.

In part, the drive to boost young people’s resilience stems from the worrying state of our nation’s children’s mental health. Currently, 10% of children aged between 5 and 16 in Britain have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Children’s Society, 2008). 1 in 6 young people aged 16–24 has symptoms of a common mental disorder such as depression or an anxiety disorder. Half of all mental health problems manifest by the age of 14, with 75% by age 24 (Young Minds, 2019). Nearly half of 17–19 year olds with a diagnosable mental health disorder have self-harmed or attempted suicide at some point, rising to 52.7% for young women (ibid).

Data on girls’ mental health is particularly worrying. The NHS Health Survey for England (2018) noted that: among the nation’s 17–19 year olds, girls are more than twice as likely to have a mental health disorder than boys, with anxiety comprising the largest mental health disorder category. The data also suggests that our nation’s children are worried; worried about family life, death, terrorism and further down the line, exams. Girls, in particular, worry about their looks, a concern that only seems to grow as they move through the school years. There is an increase in boys’ concerns about body image too. Girls’ self-esteem is generally lower than boys’ and falls over time.

There is a growing awareness of the need to instil resilient habits and thinking in young people but the appetite to focus on resilience is dampened by a confusion about an appropriate strategy for doing so. That is why it is important to ensure that we maintain a practical, evidence-based approach to boosting children and young people’s resilience. The main tenets of resilience that should be communicated are:

Resilience is born and bred within family life

So much of the template of a resilient mindset stems from what goes on behind closed doors, within family life. We know that the quality of the attachment between parent and child determines to a great extent how secure children feel long-term and the quality of one’s parenting a key predictor for children’s emotional, social and academic outcomes. One of the most important ways that parents can influence a child’s capacity to be resilient is through modelling (Timmins, 2017). Resilient children tend to come from homes where resilience is practised and modelled. Modelling an optimistic ‘glass half full’ mindset can be an effective

approach. Optimism ignites resilience and has widespread implications for physical and mental health. Optimists have more successful relationships, careers, are more engaged in the pursuit of their goals and may even live longer than pessimists (Southwick and Charney 2018).

Recognising one’s resilience is a useful starting point

Everyone is resilient to some extent, and a useful first step is recognising that. Start with the low-hanging fruit and identify areas where we are resilient. This necessitates an understanding of what the characteristics of resilience are: namely flexibility, being reflective, the ability to reframe, problem-solve, consider differing viewpoints and use adaptive humour. Holding an optimistic view, believing in a bright future and positive relationships are key features of the resilient mindset, as are having a strong locus of control, sense of agency and autonomy (Ungar, 2007).

Self-esteem is always worth investing in

Feeling resilient necessitates a positive sense of self and self-worth. Those working or caring for children and young people need to remember that investing in young people’s self-esteem should be a primary focus. We do so through building positive relationships with them, making them feel ‘liked’, and helping them to recognise their own ‘signature strengths’ and assets (Seligman, 2011). Just as feedback is critical to building academic resilience, self-esteem is also dependent upon access to opportunities to receive positive affirmation from others. This socially constructivist view of how self-identity grows and develops over time (Jenkins, 2008) is a useful one for educators and parents to consider. Our aim is to help young people see themselves in that metaphorical mirror as capable, competent and valued by others.

At the heart of resilience is resilient thinking

The idea that children and young people should be encouraged to be ‘thinking scientists’ is an extremely useful one. At once, it highlights the role of reflection in helping us evaluate our thinking and usefully highlights the importance of spotting thoughts that may threaten resilience. Younger children might term these ‘gremlin thoughts’ – thoughts that tell us we are, for example, rubbish at a task, useless, ugly or unpopular (Collins–Donnelly, 2013). Among older teens, this sort of negative self-talk (when constant) can fuel low self-esteem, anxiety and stress.

Teaching young people to recognise when they are falling into ‘thinking traps’ can be an effective way of helping them buffer against negative self-talk (Naoumidis, 2018). Examples of such ways of thinking include: ‘catastrophising’ or imagining the worst possible outcome; ‘fortune-telling’, where an individual is absolutely certain they will fail in any given activity; ‘overgeneralizing’, where someone might feel that they ‘always make mistakes’;

‘mind-reading’, where someone assumes to know what others think of them; and ‘filtering’, by only ever focusing on the bad stuff. By recognising or ‘catching’ these thoughts and reflecting on them, whilst critically collating all the available evidence that might contradict the assertion, resilient thinking can be encouraged. The role of parents and educators is to help the young person ‘spot’ anxious or negative thinking, see such thoughts as unhelpful, ascertain the exact nature of their worry or fear, and disrupt their anxious thinking habits. Research suggests a coaching, problem-solving approach is more effective than simply soothing (Creswell, 2019).

Language has an important role to play

Children and young people’s capacity to reframe life’s challenges and difficulties can be influenced and shaped by the self-talk, mottos and mantras that they are exposed to in childhood and throughout their schooling. Everyone needs a ‘resilient script’ that they can repeat and use to reassure themselves and others. Phrases such as ‘Onwards and upwards’ and ‘let’s look on the bright-side’ that are used in everyday parlance within families or in the classroom, when repeated, can help instil resilient thinking habits in young people. Adopting a resilience metaphor can be a fruitful way in which a particular approach can be conveyed. A coiled spring that is able to bounce back, a ball that hits the floor and rises up again, or the concept of wearing a ‘resilience’ raincoat to weather negative comments, can provide an effective visual means of deflecting harm.

Emotional resilience can grow from physical activities

The link between physical resilience and emotional resilience is often less valued or understood by parents and carers. When young people compete in a sports match, play ‘rough and tumble’ with their parents and try new and challenging things, it helps to inoculate them against life’s knocks. Through participation in sport, young people experience the joys of winning, the lows of losing, and an array of emotions – and gradually learn how to control them. By participating in tricky, challenging things, they gain a sense of physical competence that directly feeds into their self-esteem. They learn to have faith in themselves and their competencies. What’s more, overcoming physical challenges attracts external praise and validation from others, which can add to the perception of oneself as capable, competent and resilient.

The experience of failure matters

As counter-intuitive as it may seem, the normalisation of mistakes as ‘part and parcel’ of effective learning leads to better academic outcomes. This necessitates helping students understand that within the completion of ‘tricky tasks’ lies the chance to grow, develop and even excel. In using effective praise, focused on the process and the persistence required to complete the task, students are more likely to stay motivated (Dweck, 2006). In praising students’ effort, rather than their success, their hard work and attitude are highlighted as the key attributes that are valued. We know that the ability to bounce back from failure and resilience in the face of intellectual challenges are characteristics that are highly valued by employers (Castrillon, 2019).

Simple things can make a difference

There is a risk that upon reading the vast literature on resilience, we forget that resilience is boosted by simple things too. Take laughter. There are reams written about the neurobiology of laughter and its holistic benefits. Laughter correlates positively with wellbeing variables such as self-esteem, optimism, cheerfulness and negatively with depression, anxiety and stress (Louis et al, 2016). Humour provides an easy route to reframing something that may challenge us. It relaxes the entire body whilst creating connection between us and others. Anyone who cares for children and young people should purposefully engineer regular opportunities for laughter in their setting.

We need to recognise what threatens resilience

In considering the protective assets around young people’s resilience, it is important to be aware of the threats to it as well. Family conflict, trauma, stress and bereavement all threaten a child’s sense of self in the world. Within family life, poor sleep and a lack of digital hygiene can sometimes challenge resilience. Poor relationships with teachers and unhappy school experiences can equally contribute to diminished resilience. Overwhelming anxiety can paralyse an individual’s ability to participate in activities they once enjoyed and threaten resilience. In identifying early signs of overwhelming anxiety in young people, we are better able to teach them how to manage those symptoms, giving them the best chance to thrive.

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HOW CAN WE BEST FORMATIVELY ASSESS CHARACTER?

Dr Jonathan Beale | *Researcher-in-Residence, Eton College*

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills ('Ofsted') published their new *Education Inspection Framework* in May this year, which was implemented in September. Following the framework's implementation, Ofsted will monitor how schools develop pupils' character. Consequently, a wide range of institutions throughout England, including maintained schools and academies, and non-association independent schools, will need to explicitly demonstrate the impact they have on pupils' character development.

Ofsted's 2019 *School Inspection Handbook* for maintained schools and academies and their *Non-association Independent School Inspection Handbook* contain the following identical information on the assessment of character education. The section under 'personal development' in both handbooks defines character and outlines the aspects of character education Ofsted will assess. Judgements focus 'on the dimensions of personal development of pupils', which include:

developing pupils' character, which we define as a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs their motivation and guides their conduct so that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others. This gives pupils the qualities they need to flourish in our society. (Ofsted 2019b, p. 58; Ofsted 2019c, p. 52).

The sections on 'personal development' include areas of assessment relevant to character education, such as the importance of building confidence and resilience, and the relationship between these and maintaining good mental health; teaching pupils how to engage with society; 'developing responsible, respectful and active citizens'; 'developing and deepening pupils' understanding of... fundamental British values'; and promoting equality and inclusivity. (Ofsted 2019b, pp. 58–9; Ofsted 2019c, pp. 51–2).

The Independent Schools Inspectorate ('ISI') – the inspecting body for 'association independent schools', i.e., schools that are full members of the associations that form the Independent Schools Council – has not announced revisions to its inspection framework. However, personal development is also an area of the existing ISI inspection framework. In their evaluations of the ways schools develop pupils' personal development, ISI evaluates the extent to which pupils develop character traits such as self-esteem, self-confidence, resilience, social awareness, awareness of moral responsibility, independence, sensitivity, tolerance and respect for diversity. Inspectors assess these by reference to the curriculum; extra-curricular activities; staff role models; opportunities provided by the school; the role of boarding; resource provision; processes of monitoring and evaluation; and a school's wider culture (ISI 2017, pp. 13–4). Since character education occupies a place within Ofsted's inspection

framework, it is not unreasonable to suppose that ISI might place greater emphasis on the assessment of character education in a revised framework in the future.

The revisions to Ofsted's inspection framework will exert a significant influence on the development and direction of school policies and educational research in the coming years. There is a need for increased research in character education, particularly in the area of formatively assessing character. Schools inspected by Ofsted that do not already assess character education will need to find at least some means of assessing the development of character among their pupils; schools that already assess this will, at the least, wish to develop and consolidate existing practices; and inspection bodies will be interested in state-of-the-art research on how the development of character can best be assessed. At present, there is not, however, a clear means of assessing character education; nor is there consensus on how this should best be done; nor what the best options are. An important area of research is to look at areas where character is already assessed and how these can be developed or included within a holistic framework for assessing character.

There are numerous activities in which secondary school pupils typically engage that we take to be supportive of character development. These include: voluntary work; the Duke of Edinburgh Award; the Cadet Forces; the arts; sports; community action; and contribution towards life in boarding houses. These are among the areas that offer means of assessing several character traits through various activities.

There are existing ways of assessing character built into the assessment criteria of certain school courses. For example, one of the required components in the International Baccalaureate ('IB') Diploma Programme is 'creativity, activity, service', which 'requires students to undertake an unpaid and voluntary exchange' (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2019). The motivation behind this is that such an exchange provides pupils with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to community service in a way that complements their academic study. Similarly, Eton recently published a report that assesses the impact of community engagement on character development in year 12 students (see Arbuthnott, this issue).

Given how elusive and broad the concept of 'character' is and how much more difficult it is to assess the development of character traits by comparison with measuring the many areas we assess in academic subjects, it seems, at least prima facie, that a holistic, hybrid method of assessing character involving multiple means of assessment would be the most suitable, accurate, rigorous and fair method to pursue. This could involve attention to areas such as pupil reports by tutors

and teachers; pupil and peer interviews; questionnaires; tests that assess character, such as situational judgement tests; extra-curricular activities where character is assessed, such as established programmes including the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Cadet Forces, which have methods of assessing character traits such as leadership skills and the ability to engage in effective teamwork; and a study of academic courses that involve an assessment of character traits as part of the assessment criteria, such as the IB.

If character assessment encompassed such a broad range of activities, research would be required into what weightings should be placed on each of the constituent areas of assessment. Moreover, the number of ways in which character is assessed would vary depending on which options a school offers.

A framework could be developed that places methods of assessing character into a hierarchy of accuracy and effectiveness, which serves as a means of advising schools upon which areas of character education are most useful for assessing character development in terms of the breadth and depth of assessments that can be made about character. If, for example, a pupil takes the IB, engages in community action projects, and participates in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Cadet Forces, a framework would be required that states what proportion each of these should constitute in the overall assessment of the pupil's character development. If, for reasons such as restrictions on time, a pupil has to choose between participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award or the Cadet Forces, and the pupil, their parents or the school wishes to have their decision informed by the role and importance that each of these plays in character development, such a framework could offer a reliable means of illustrating the differences between each area in terms of how significant a role each can play in character development.

SCHOOLS INSPECTED BY OFSTED THAT DO NOT ALREADY ASSESS CHARACTER EDUCATION WILL NEED TO FIND AT LEAST SOME MEANS OF ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER AMONG THEIR PUPILS.

For areas of education that do not have methods for assessing personal development in place already but can clearly support character development, such as voluntary work or community action, methods of assessing character development relevant to pupils' experience in these areas could be developed (see, for example, Konstantinou and Harrison 2019). Such methods could include: self-report via pupil questionnaires or interviews; reports from teachers, tutors, or other staff involved in the convening of such extra-curricular activities; and situational judgement tests. The final of these could be tailored in relation to a specific area of pupil experience (such as community action), and could take place before and after pupils engage in certain activities to assess any differences their experiences made to their judgements relating to character traits and skills, such as empathy, leadership, teamwork and compassion. These could, for instance, be conducted at the start and end of the academic year, as could two sets of questionnaires, to assess possible differences to pupils' character development over the year.

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CHARACTER AND THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Jonnie Noakes | *Director of Teaching & Learning, Eton College*

The nineteenth century Eton schoolmaster William Johnson Cory explained the purpose of education in these terms: ‘You go to a great school not so much for knowledge as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment’s notice a new intellectual position, for the art of entering quickly into another person’s thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms, for the habit of regarding minute points of accuracy, for the art of working out what is possible in a given time, for taste, for discrimination, for mental courage, and for mental soberness.’¹ This brilliant articulation of the purpose of training the intellect still rings true today. But what of teaching the whole child?

It’s not that nineteenth century schools didn’t teach what we now call character: far from it. They prepared young men (mostly) for public duty by inculcating character values, many of which sound familiar to modern ears, such as service, integrity, leadership and perseverance; but these values were largely tacit, part of the warp and weft of school life, especially in the traditional boarding public schools. ‘Character education’ is not new. What is new is that educators have been seeking in the twenty-first century to create conceptual frameworks and taxonomies of non-cognitive skills and character strengths, to evidence why it is important to teach these, and to evidence how we can do so successfully.

The argument most often cited for why schools should teach the whole child is the utilitarian one that young people need character skills to succeed in education, the workplace and beyond. Such ‘life skills’ typically include understanding and persuading others, conscientiousness, sense of purpose, optimism, resilience, persistence, self-awareness and social awareness. Furthermore, it is frequently argued² that character qualities such as adaptability and initiative are essential for success in an increasingly innovation-driven economy. Teaching character promotes personal flourishing.

A related argument is the humanitarian one that societies worldwide are undergoing transformations which have given rise to complex, evolving problems such as environmental damage, mass migration and the effects of social media in creating echo chambers and fake news: so-called ‘wicked’ problems for which a single, defined solution does not exist. Education needs, so the argument runs,³ to prepare young people to meet these challenges by teaching social responsibility and ethical accountability, dispositions which fall under the broad term ‘character education’. Teaching character promotes societal flourishing.

Leadership is an interesting example of how traditional character skills and attitudes are being re-defined for the twenty-first century. The idea of a ‘leader’ as an especially talented individual who motivates, controls and directs subordinates in a fixed hierarchy is giving way to an idea that leaders need emotional intelligence, the ability to negotiate and ask questions, and to be capable of working flexibly in ambiguous situations. Leadership is less about the talent of the individual than about their awareness of the group and the quality of their interactions with others.

Character education has its roots in ancient Greek ethics and specifically the idea of ‘eudaimonia’ or human flourishing. Distinct from pleasure and deeper than happiness, eudaimonia describes the fulfilment that derives from leading a meaningful life, which will be different for each individual. It therefore entails a high degree of self-knowledge and, by implication, self-direction. Aristotle thought it the highest human good, and a good in itself.

Recently, strong evidence has shown repeatedly and across cultures that certain character dispositions, alongside good sleep and regular exercise, are predictors of wellbeing. These include strong social connections, gratitude, perseverance and mindfulness. Arguments for teaching wellbeing have gained extra urgency by the startling rise in mental health problems among children and young people. The most reliable study of its kind reported in 2017 that 12.8% of 5 to 19 year-olds had at least one mental disorder; 16.9% of 17 to 19 year-olds experienced a mental disorder; and emotional disorders have become more common in 5 to 15 year-olds, going from 3.9% in 2004 to 5.8% in 2017 (Gov Statistical Service, 2018).

The UK government has been foregrounding the value of character education for some years, in particular identifying resilience as the quality most likely to boost young people’s life chances. A character education committee of experts set up under Damian Hinds continues to advise the government, and in August 2019 the Education Secretary claimed that ‘character and resilience are key to social mobility’. The DfE is currently creating guidance and benchmarks for schools to help them to teach character, and specifically to help them to meet new Ofsted frameworks for teaching ‘personal development’.

The extent to which character qualities are learnable or innate is a moot point. An influential 2013 paper by James Heckman and Tim Kautz concluded that ‘Character is a skill, not a trait... Character is shaped by families, schools, and social environments... Successful interventions [across all stages] emulate the mentoring environments offered by successful families’. A growing body of evidence supports the argument that character is teachable through the academic curriculum, through the co-curriculum, and through collaboration with other schools. It can be taught explicitly and implicitly, cognitively and experientially.

As soon as one starts talking about teaching character values or virtues, the question arises, ‘Whose values are we teaching?’ The influential Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has gone back to an Aristotelian model of intellectual, civic, moral and performance virtues. All of the great spiritual traditions speak directly about the moral aspects of character. A more secular approach is to look for universal values. Heckman and Kautz (ibid.) argue that certain skills and dispositions are valued across cultures including perseverance, self-control, trust, self-efficacy, resilience, empathy, tolerance and engaging productively in society.

‘Character’ includes a wide range of virtues, dispositions and attitudes, as the pieces in this journal attest. There are multiple conceptual frameworks for character, and many different terms in currency such as ‘soft skills’, ‘non-cognitive skills’, and ‘socio-emotional skills’. Faced with such a broad field of enquiry, schools need at the very least to make a deliberate decision about which character qualities they wish to give priority to throughout their curriculum and foster in their pupils. Public statements by schools about their values are traditionally pretty generic: excellence, teamwork, kindness and so on. Increasingly, schools are working to create an explicit, coherent framework of their own values. An important dimension to reflect upon is which values are actually most influential in the lived experience of the pupils, teachers and staff in a school environment. Character is caught as much as taught, and there is a benefit in making these tacit values explicit.

Looking at the wider educational debates discussed above, at Eton we decided that we needed to engage in some rigorous examination of what we currently do to promote character skills. Last year we sought to dig into the school’s prevailing culture by researching which character skills and dispositions are central to the Eton community, how the school is supporting the development of these skills and dispositions, and how it can further support them (see Glennon and Hinton, this issue). This project is one stage in a longer process by which we are creating an explicit and agreed working definition of what we mean by ‘character’ at Eton. Once created, this definition will serve as a useful point of reference for the design, teaching and assessment of our whole curriculum and co-curriculum. Without wishing to simplify a complex area, we are aiming to create a shared language which we can refer to in order to set our own standards in our pursuit of academic excellence, flourishing lives and the values which we wish our ethos to be imbued with.

We are not only gazing inwards. We are collaborating with other schools, state and independent, to create interventions which can equip young people with the character skills and dispositions mentioned above. During 2019–2020 we have commissioned a Year 9 intervention on resilience across 12 schools. In the future, we hope to work with primary and preparatory schools as well. We believe that our work on character education will sharpen and inform our own thinking, allow us to share our knowledge explicitly with others, and help us to learn from their approaches to character education at the same time.

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¹ As adapted by George Lyttleton in writing to Rupert Hart-Davis https://www.etoncollege.com/william_cory.aspx [accessed 14.10.19]

² For example, World Economic Forum, (2015). New Vision for Education, Geneva

³ For example, UNESCO, (2015). Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good? Paris

RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTER SKILLS AT ETON

Catherine Glennon and Dr Christina Hinton | *Research Schools International, Harvard University*

Research Schools International (RSI) partnered with the Tony Little Centre at Eton College to carry out research on character education. Eton is committed to educating pupils beyond their academic aptitude; educators at Eton care deeply about the development of pupils' character as well. As such, Eton embarked on a project to identify which character skills are most central to the Eton community, determine if and how Eton is promoting those skills, and learn how Eton can further develop those skills.

In the first phase of this project we conducted a survey to identify the character skills that are most central to the Eton community. We surveyed pupils, teachers, support staff, and dames, and explored how important they believe it is for Eton to promote a wide range of character skills. Results indicated that the character skills most central to the Eton community are: motivation, perseverance, gratitude, happiness, and respect.

In the second phase of the project, we conducted an academic literature review to identify research-based practices known to support the development of these five character skills. Following this, we distributed a second survey to the Eton community, which was used to explore to what extent those research-based practices are implemented at Eton. In this article, we share research-based practices known to support the five character skills and offer illustrative examples of those practices from our research at Eton.

MOTIVATION AND PERSEVERANCE

Emphasize the Role of Effort in Success

Educators can support student motivation and perseverance by recognizing and rewarding students for their effort, not only for their performance. Doing so teaches pupils that their successes are not a result of innate intelligence or chance, but are a function of the effort they put into achieving their goals (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007; Duckworth et. al, 2007; Dweck, 2006; Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Results from our character study at Eton suggest that this practice is thoroughly implemented across the college. As one pupil succinctly explains, 'there is certainly an emphasis on learning, and putting effort into one's endeavors'. Eton accomplishes this in various ways. For example, one way that Eton emphasizes the role of effort in success is by giving students rewards for their effort. As one pupil explains: 'I am a very self-motivated individual, and this is encouraged by rewards for excellent effort which help to keep me motivated'. Eton also emphasizes the role of effort in coaching on the sports field. As one student shares, 'I have found that sport, in particular house sport, encourages perseverance'.

Use Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is an effective tool for harnessing student motivation and developing perseverance in the learning process (Boaler & Confer, n.d.; Masters, 2013). Formative assessment involves using ongoing evaluations throughout the learning process to shape further instruction (OECD, 2005). This approach provides pupils with assessments for learning rather than assessments of learning. Results from our study show that Eton is currently implementing several forms of formative assessment practices across the year levels including goal-setting, frequent assessments, and effective feedback (Black & William, 1998; OECD, 2005).

Collaborative goal-setting is an important first step in formative assessment. Here a pupil explains how Eton's use of goal-setting can deepen motivation, 'Eton helps provide suitable goals with suitable rewards that help us be more motivated with our studies'. Pupils appreciate the level of support received as they work towards goals as well, '[teachers] keep allowing you to set targets and support them in knowledgeable, friendly, and engaging ways'.

Another formative assessment practice that Eton uses is giving frequent assessments to inform pupils of where they are in the learning process. This pupil eloquently explains, '[Eton] often provides goal orientated exercises to allow yourself to check how effectively you have learned a topic. i.e., they give you tests after every section of the syllabus rather than just at the end of term'. Eton pupils are cognizant of the benefits of using ongoing assessments to shape learning, as one pupil puts it, 'We are reminded that weekly learning (continuous small term assessments) will make the learning process much easier and more effective'.

Finally, pupils remark that teachers offer effective feedback on how they can improve and move forward. For example, this pupil explains, '[Eton] gives you [the] freedom to try again and tells you how to do it better'. Another pupil shares that one way he receives support to persevere in the learning process is from 'good feedback where areas for improvement are clearly highlighted'. Together, emphasizing the role of effort and using formative assessment practices support students to be motivated and perseverance in the face of challenges.

COLLABORATIVE GOAL-SETTING IS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.

HAPPINESS AND GRATITUDE

Cultivate Positive Relationships

Research has shown time and time again that positive relationships are fundamental to happiness. In fact, the best predictor of a person's happiness is the quality of their relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Gilbert et al., 2017; Holder & Coleman, 2009; Myers, 2003). Given this, it is essential for schools to create an environment in which positive relationships can thrive and flourish across the school community. Our findings indicate that Eton cultivates positive relationships both between teachers and boys and among boys.

The majority of pupils surveyed agree that teachers 'quite a bit' or 'very much' build positive relationships with boys. Echoing this finding, most of the teachers, support staff, and dames believe they 'quite a bit' or 'very much' build positive relationships with boys. As one pupil shares, 'One of the greatest things about this school is the relationships which may develop between boys and teachers.' He goes on to mention that these positive relationships can engender feelings of gratitude and encourage boys to express those feelings, noting, '[These relationships] are so important for encouraging expression of gratitude'.

Our survey results also demonstrate that Eton is cultivating positive relationships between boys. This perspective appears throughout the open-ended responses across our whole sample. For example, a master notes, 'Eton provides plenty of time for boys to develop friendships'. The boys also remark on this support noting, 'Eton is pretty good at fostering good relationships between boys' with another sharing, 'Teachers are always making sure boys are kind to each other'.

Encourage Boys to be Grateful

Intentionally practising gratitude supports students to feel more grateful. Seemingly simple gratitude exercises can increase how grateful one feels in various areas of their life, which also boosts their happiness (Senf & Liau, 2013; Dickerhoof, 2007; Boehm, Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2011; Layous, Lee, Choi & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Chancellor, Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2015). Our character study shows that teachers at Eton support boys' gratitude and happiness by encouraging them to be grateful as well as by modelling gratitude. In addition, Eton provides boys with opportunities to volunteer, which supports gratitude as well.

The open-ended responses suggest gratitude is part of the ethos at the school. For example, a pupil explains, 'Gratitude is expected at Eton which is great at preparing you for the outside world'. Another pupil shares a similar

observation, 'I think that overall everyone at the school has a great deal of respect for each other and the school encourages students to express gratitude by returning favors or simply saying thank you'. Our collected responses also offer a look into how Eton encourages gratitude more explicitly. For instance, here a pupil explains that teachers model gratitude, noting 'teachers thank you at the end of the lesson, encouraging you to thank them as well'. Furthermore, we learn that pupils feel a sense of gratitude is developed through volunteering opportunities. One pupil shares, 'Through the work of charities and various organisations the school supports, we are reminded of the importance of gratitude'.

RESPECT

Support Boys to Respect Differences in Perspectives, Beliefs, and Backgrounds

Creating a culture of respect begins with engendering a capacity to respect differences between those in the school community (OECD/PISA, 2018). We find that Eton supports a culture of respect across the school specifically by encouraging pupils to respect differences in perspectives, beliefs, and backgrounds. Put simply by one pupil, 'Eton teaches well about the values of respect, especially for those who are different to you'.

One way that Eton promotes respect is to encourage boys to be open to different points of view in discussions. One pupil describes how respect for different points of view is cultivated through debate, explaining 'In a debate, during a scenario where there isn't a right or wrong answer, one is not discouraged to share their view and others tend to be taught to respect that point of view'. Another boy shares that this practice of respect is consistent across lessons, stating, 'We are encouraged to respect each other's ideas and points in almost every lesson'. A pupil notes that this extends to beliefs as well, '[In] divinity [we talk] about respecting beliefs and understanding not everyone thinks like you'.

Another way that Eton fosters a culture of respect is by providing opportunities for pupils to build relationships with people from different backgrounds. Here a pupil explains, 'In my house there is a scheme where we invite members of the wider Eton community to lunch... it teaches people to respect them'. With this practice, students have the opportunity to get to know members of the community from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, which nurtures mutual respect. By encouraging pupils to consider different points of view and build relationships with people from different backgrounds, Eton builds a community characterized by respect.

ORGANISTS AND CHARACTER

David Goode | *Organist, Eton College*

Conclusion

Through this work with the research team at RSI, Eton is ensuring that they are intentionally nurturing the character skills most central to their community. By implementing the research-based practices discussed above, educators at Eton are supporting pupils to grow into individuals who are motivated and persevere in the face of challenges, who are grateful and happy, and who are respectful of different perspectives, beliefs and backgrounds.

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At Eton we have, for a school, an unusually large number of boys learning the organ, and of these a significant number perform regularly in chapel, as well as helping out in parish churches around the local area. Organists are not generally thought of as a particularly glamorous or charismatic breed (indeed, to be honest, they can be somewhat eccentric and retiring) but I want to shine the spotlight on them briefly in this article, and in particular I want to focus on two kinds of character required. One is determination, and one is a certain kind of courage.

Determination, first. It is peculiarly complicated to practise the organ, and I don't mean simply because it is technically rather a complex instrument to master (for, indeed, one could say the same about many instruments). No, rather, it is logistically complicated, since you need to find an instrument to practise on, and unless you can have a small electronic instrument in your home you must gain access to a space, usually a church, which is often locked and requires keys to access it. The building may well be booked for some other purpose, so you may well have had to plan ahead and book it; and if it is in a parish church, the church authorities (however sympathetic in principle) may find it inconvenient or inadvisable to have you practise there. You may well have to practise at an unsociable hour, quite possibly in the dark (I have had pupils who have had to combat their fear of being alone in large dark spaces in order to practise). I have myself had to practise for a BBC Proms concert from 11 pm until 4.30 am, since that was the only time the Albert Hall was free; and that is not an isolated experience, particularly when on tour abroad. If in a church, the temperature will almost certainly range from chilly to quite perishingly cold. One middle-aged colleague still vividly recalls having to share a chapel with a coffin late at night while practising. All this means that while practising, say, the piano every day is commendable, managing to practise the organ every day is really something closer to remarkable. If you agree to helping out in a local church while an Etonian, you will have to get up over an hour before most of your mates on a Sunday morning, if you are lucky wolfing breakfast along the way, to do so.

And so: to courage. I don't speak of physical courage (although, in those situations where the organ loft is placed vertiginously high or precipitous to access, even this may come into play). Rather, I mean emotional courage. But even here, before proceeding, I should clarify, for I don't mean facing the type of nerves commonly involved in appearing solo in concert; these nerves, however real and challenging, are routinely faced by any musician (along with actors, or business people giving a presentation). No, instead, I speak of an activity which is, from the performer's point of view (especially at the beginning) uniquely demanding, but which from the listener's point of view may be almost mundane.

I speak of playing hymns. I realise you may be surprised and wonder why these are of a different order than other music; but please hear me out, for there are a couple of aspects to consider! The first one is that hymns, often thought of as straightforward to play, are actually somewhat under-rated in their complexity: they require approximately two new four-part chords to be played every second. I don't want to overstate this, since there are many more objectively complex types of music. However, two extra considerations within this 'up the ante' significantly. The first is that a hymn never stops: it has to continue absolutely in rhythm. If, in a flashy Liszt piano piece, the performer takes a little more time here or there over a fiddly corner, the piece is unlikely to suffer, and probably few will notice; however, in a hymn, it will definitely suffer, and along the way the whole congregation will somehow magically notice, however unmusical they might be. The second consideration builds on the first, because those other people are in fact not merely listening; they are expected to take part themselves (which at 8.35 am on a wet November morning, they may as boys be taking some real persuasion to do) and they therefore depend completely on this rhythm in order to fulfil this. So all round the stakes are pretty high for our nervous 15-year old boy organist: he must apparently be not only a performer but a leader of men (or at least of hundreds of boys).

Which brings us to the second big aspect of courage required here: because his audience or congregation is not, say, a small group of supportive parents, house masters and dames, plus a couple of mates who have come along. No, it is five hundred of his sometimes unwilling and certainly not always sympathetic peers, to whom he is ruthlessly exposed, both aurally and visually. Muck up a hymn in chapel and his entire year group know about it instantly – and they may well remind him about it all day. Talk about pressure...

For these reasons, I take this opportunity to salute these young warriors for the way they negotiate challenges with such determination. So why do they do it? Well, possibly because they know it trains them for the pressure of playing in the '9 Lessons' service at King's College, Cambridge, broadcast all around the world, or in the Proms, or wherever it may be. But, possibly, also because (and in many ways this is a better reason) when, at the end of an exhausting day of lessons, sport and homework, you have walked through the rain to use that carefully pre-booked practice slot in a cold, dark chapel to make absolutely sure (as far as you can), that you have nailed 'Jerusalem' for St Andrew's Day the next morning: then, when the morning comes – ah! – you have that unique privilege of being the one boy who single-handedly steers and encourages half a thousand other boys to belt 'Jerusalem' to the skies as though it is all they had ever dreamed of doing. And it is all worth it.

CHARACTER IN MUSIC

Leandro Silvera | *Head of Strings and Chamber Music, Eton College*

The concerts are just an excuse, really – what I love are the rehearsals. Because it is in the dynamic, unpredictable and unique environment of an orchestral rehearsal that the incredible transformation happens. And I don't mean just a musical process, but an intangible (but at times unmistakable) transformation that takes place when a group of seventy or so young musicians work together, give their best and unite in their common purpose of bringing a masterful piece of music alive. I would argue, it offers us an educational opportunity like no other.

As a senior boy in the orchestra this year, Shaw, points out, the expectation is incumbent on every member to be committed and involved throughout rehearsals – this demands particular discipline, especially when the rehearsal focuses on other players, but the level of concentration needed from the rest of the orchestra is extremely high in order to allow the work to take place. It takes an impressive level of self-control and steely courage to wait patiently and in silence while the conductor decides to check articulation markings in the piccolo part, only to be given 15 seconds' notice to play an extremely exposed solo in front of your peers – an experienced principal trumpet player once summed it up: he had spent his long orchestral career either bored to death or scared to death, with nothing in between.

There is a huge amount of rehearsal codes and orchestral playing style that can only be learnt by experience – these are not written down anywhere, but are part of some kind of tribal knowledge. And that is why we put so much emphasis on role modelling and opportunities for leadership on the older boys, which fits very well with the educational ethos of our school. They pass on to the less experienced boys what they learnt in their earlier days of orchestral playing, forming a kind of knowledge chain that can be traced back for generations and will continue after us.

We are all just passing on the torch that someone gave us when we were starting, and that takes kindness, patience and responsibility.

There is a tacit understanding that almost every member has a hand in organising the orchestra's day-to-day operation: setting up chairs, showing up on time, diplomatically negotiating clashes. Shaw points out that here's an element of mutual gratitude that develops – even if all you're doing is carrying chairs downstairs, there's still a sense of the whole being greater than its parts. Self-reliance and mutual support develop a sense of responsibility to a wider community that is integral in the orchestra itself. Attending rehearsals early on Thursdays, when other boys in the House have a lie-in, on Sunday nights or after a day packed with lessons, sport and other activities, requires an extra layer of dependability. Ultimately it has to be about the orchestra and the music, not about each orchestral musician – you'd be hard-pressed to find a boy who doesn't understand that, and it requires a remarkable level of altruism.

Another instance in which an orchestra can be a mutually supportive environment is when the orchestra finds itself accompanying a concerto soloist (which at Eton tends to happen every term). Orchestral players in concerto rehearsals spend the majority of time playing for a peer. The responsibility is therefore not just artistic but personal, integrating the players' ability to demand the highest standards of themselves as well as the humility needed to support the success of a peer.

This list could continue – in my work with young musicians, I am constantly reminded of how working with an orchestra (or a chamber music ensemble) is just an opportunity at our disposal to bring out the best in our students.

Oh – and just to be clear – I absolutely love the concerts...

CHARACTER IN DRAMA

This is the narrative of an interview given by Scott Handy, Director of Drama, Eton College, to Jonnie Noakes; narrative by Iro Konstantinou

Drama has massive potential to develop character. I am wary of making grand statements about how one can teach character, but I am sure that working in drama can reveal character. Character, whatever it means, it is about very personal elements within an individual and a lot of those are developed by families before the pupils come into a teaching environment. Within that environment you have realms of exploration. Within the realm of drama I am going to say there is potential, but who knows? When you are working with young actors you have to give them attention, to become unblocked. The whole point of drama is that it is specific to the individual; but this, I think, is the doorway to potential character development.

Drama is based on a very powerful word: 'if'. If I were to murder the king with my wife, what then? It simultaneously asks you to discard your current set of beliefs and take upon another. In that way I think drama encourages creative doubt, and this is a hugely important part of one's armoury before the world. Young people will have grown up among a whole lot of assumptions and they are going to need to create a new culture for their generation. Therefore, the most fundamental aspect of their education that we can encourage is creative doubt: to be able to question what they have been given by the previous generation. Otherwise, there is no progression in culture. I believe all the artists who have written plays believe that you will be better equipped when you have read their play. Consider 'what if?'. Doing plays is a safe way of doing that. You don't have to kill the king to explore what might happen if you did. Drama is a way of testing the future and allowing young people to doubt things safely.

The other thing is empathy. From the moment young children start mimicking their parents or dressing up for Christmas, drama is very literally stepping into someone else's shoes. Literally wearing someone else's clothes. You are figuratively seeing through someone else's eyes.

That hopefully leads to having an understanding that there are countless worlds. In order to be an actor you need to recognise that there is not one world. To develop empathy is an absolutely fundamental consequence of acting what is not you. I have seen good actors who lack empathy and are very cruel and bad actors who are very empathetic; so I don't know if you can teach empathy or other character qualities. But I do believe that practising a good habit repeatedly has the power to change you. By following certain principles you can get better; for example, seeing and hearing other people without judging them. Because that is an absolute truth about acting. You may have rehearsed one thing but you have to accept that whatever happens happens, you have to pay attention to what is around you. A sentimental person might call this love; seeing and hearing another person without judging them.

An all-boys school is fuelled by teenage competition and it powers them to do amazing things. The theatre takes this competitive edge, but they are not competing with other people; they are competing against time. Can you make the show before the time runs out? The only way you can do that is to harness people with uniquely different skills. Each is different and each is the best for their role. They cannot compete, they are a family. And that is a better model for how groups should be working than who came out top of the test. All the people working with different skills, starting at different times, with different rhythm, but finishing together to create something. I don't think we are going to the theatre to see a play revealed, we are going to see character revealed. I think this is a powerful realm for young people to explore things.

We have a few rules in improvisation:

1. Make your partner look good
2. Accept and build
3. Say the first thing that comes to your head

If you apply these principles in your life, amazing things can happen. My job here is not to produce professional Oscar-winning actors. Drama is great for practising how to see and hear the world without judging it. In practising drama, I hope you come out a more empathetic person, a kinder person, a more resilient person and one that has a huge resource of creative doubt.

Very few of us act for a living, but all of us act to live.

Rehearsals for, 'As You Like It'.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Mark Fielker | *Master in Charge of Outdoor Education, Eton College*

I have been taking students into the mountains for a long time, and have known for almost as long the state of mind that experience generates. New environments and activities bring new demands and challenges which impel students into awareness of themselves and of those around them, appreciation of their environment, and engagement with new skills which are quickly tested in a real sense. Collaborating as a group is particularly relevant and essential.

The impact on students is striking both during their time in the mountains and, particularly, in the minibuses on the way home. There is a buzz, a sense of achievement, chatter about shared and bonding experiences, and an exhausted elation. All of this sums up the phrase 'type two fun' which is so often cited in outdoor education: the feeling of accomplishment that comes with doing something challenging but rewarding.

I knew there was plenty for these students to gain from these experiences, but I became increasingly aware that I was lacking the tools which could convert this rather unfathomed experience into something much more successful in terms of teaching and developing character. In time I found myself talking about this with a friend and colleague whom I had spent time with in the hills but who also had a background in life coaching which allowed him to see the potential provided by immersing students in the outdoors. That conversation evolved over several years into an experiential programme called 'Eton Plus'. This involved taking a group of 25 D blockers (Year11) who had just finished their GCSEs and an equal number of boys from Windsor Boys' School to the Scottish Highlands for a two-week programme of outdoor activities and self-awareness training.

Eton Plus was designed to improve the pupils' abilities at setting and achieving personal goals and developing their resilience in overcoming setbacks, alongside improving their confidence and developing their self-awareness. The programme was also designed to teach the pupils to make good decisions and take responsibility for the consequences, to help them experience and understand leadership, and to develop a range of skills around improving communication, planning and problem-solving. It was intended that they would also recognise the importance of considering and appreciating others, become more environmentally aware and develop their experience of service. Overall, the programme was designed to develop skills that cannot readily be gained in a classroom setting.

The boys were briefed at the start of the day on a particular process, such as how to give and receive non-judgemental, fact-based feedback, or a four-step process for resolving conflicts (see Whitaker, this issue). They then spent the day immersed in a range of challenging activities, including climbing, abseiling, kayaking and gorge-walking, before

returning for a debrief and discussion session in the evening. The daytime activities were designed so that every boy would come up against something he found personally challenging, whether that was something related to the environment, such as a fear of heights or uncertainty around fast-flowing water, or something related to the group dynamic, such as having to take the lead and make decisions for the group, or having to follow another's lead. Equipped with the tools for dealing with that challenge and for helping others to do the same, they had powerful opportunities to put those tools to action and learn experientially.

A range of issues emerged during the evening debrief sessions. Boys learned to recognise and appreciate what was going on for them and for others. One thing quickly became clear: that the boys found it difficult to break out of the one-dimensional and primarily individualistic dynamic of the classroom and adapt to the very different learning environment in which they found themselves. Indeed, it was interesting to note that those boys used to commanding respect and influence at school who assumed the same dynamic in the hills quickly struggled to cope with the programme. Conversely, more considered boys who had the ability to see the needs of the group emerged as natural leaders in unfamiliar situations. This was an excellent lesson to all the boys about what contributes to good and effective leadership and the elements of good teamwork. As one boy described it, 'we learned through experience how much more we could achieve by working effectively together and harnessing individual strengths through strong leadership. [We developed] key skills of resilience, self-awareness, and communication. There was also an emphasis throughout the course on the value and rewards of service to the community.'

Of course, there are lots of ways of teaching character and a multifaceted approach will always be best. But, outdoor activities offer some special opportunities: its realness; the engagement with one's surroundings which directly impact on one's experiences; the progressive nature of the activities which allow a skilled instructor to ratchet up challenges until students are tested outside their comfort zone; its group focus which develops an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses within a team and the best way to utilise those strengths; and the scope for genuine adversity and need to overcome setbacks, but with only positive long-term consequences. The genuine need for collaboration, teamwork and empathy in completing a group task with a joint goal is in stark contrast to many of the demands on pupils as they go about their work at school.

The outdoor aspect of 'Eton Plus' was facilitated by Outward Bound, whose Evaluation Department carried out an extensive study of the programme. Demonstrating the benefits from this kind of work is difficult but they are

expert in this field and achieved both qualitative and quantitative evidence for the benefits enjoyed by the students. In this evaluation there was clear evidence from all involved that the programme enabled students to develop self-awareness, the ability to persevere, the ability to work effectively with others, and an improved understanding of leadership. These qualitative results were supported by quantitative data collected through pre and post-course surveys, which showed increases in the pupils' perseverance, self-efficacy, and aspects of their social skills.

This very much confirmed my observations over the years which are based much more on direct experience and feedback. I regularly receive communications from parents about the changes they have noted in their sons having returned from the mountains. A particularly striking experience was spending time trekking in the South African bush with a group of Etonians as part of an excellent trip organised by Eton master Kerri Hicks and run by the Wilderness Foundation. We spent five days and nights walking through the bush and sleeping under the stars. We left behind all electronic devices and timepieces so had no communication with the outside world and the passage of time was just a sense of steady changes through the day and the movement of the stars at night. Regular discussion groups (indabas) gave the boys a chance to reflect on their experiences. Detachment from the outside world was a popular theme and most appreciated the time and space it allowed them. I remember one boy explaining how for him the outside world had not disappeared but that he could draw down parts of it and digest them in a way he just could not when it was bombarding him throughout the day (and night!).

Clearly these sort of programmes are hard to deliver regularly to all our boys from our location in the south-east of England and with a busy term-time programme. Significant outdoor education programmes require the sort of environment and immersion, both in terms of time and distance, which is hard to find in term-time without significant disruption to the normal school routine. But the benefit it provides really matters and I believe warrants the disruption it causes. There is a huge net gain in terms of a boy's general education and personal development.

At Eton we are looking carefully at ways to create more opportunities whilst minimising the impact on the school routine generally. There are activities that can be woven into the normal routine alongside other co-curricular activities such as indoor climbing, kayaking and mountain biking. Moreover, training and preparation for trips away from school are valuable activities in themselves. Central camps for all boys at certain points throughout their time at Eton would provide a great focus for regular term-time activities and allow a level of immersion which can produce changes that can continue to be accessed and developed once back in school.

We will continue to offer specialised trips during the holidays such as mountaineering, climbing, kayaking and sailing, which offer boys with particular interests and ambitions the chance to fulfil those. Indeed, the benefits of this sort of progressive and layered approach to outdoor activities extend to opportunities to lead and instruct, to develop a skills base and set of qualifications which provide such a boy with particular opportunities for a gap year and for life-time interests and passions.



WHAT PLATO HAS TO SAY ABOUT CHARACTER EDUCATION

Ralph Oliphant-Callum | *House Master, Eton College*

When Socrates asks Protagoras, the greatest intellectual of the era, what a student stands to gain from an education with him, he receives the answer: 'Each day he spends with me he will become a better person'. Protagoras is presenting himself as an expert of character education. True to character (sic), Socrates is not entirely happy with the answer. He and Protagoras spar for a time, refining, perhaps re-defining the Protagorean syllabus: first as becoming successful in private and public life, then as the art of living in a community and finally as human excellence. Socrates claims to be excited by Protagoras' claim, but is troubled by one concern: he does not think that it is something that can be taught.

The Protagoras was the first Plato dialogue I studied and it has stayed with me in various ways over the last thirty years, especially the opening pages, which are an attractive and accessible read for A level Greek students, and which also serve as just about the best introduction to philosophy that I have ever found. But my main educational focus of the last thirteen years, running a boarding house, has made me read Protagoras' claims and Socrates' cross-examination in a different way. Socrates thinks it is clear what one seeks to

learn from an expert doctor, a brilliant artist or musician – medicine, art, music; we might say it is clear what one seeks to learn from a maths teacher, a physicist or a Latin teacher – maths, physics, Latin. But what does one seek to learn from a house master or, to extend the thought, from school in general? I have often felt that Protagoras presents the answer that I would like to give; like him, I feel that a boarding house master and schools as a whole are in the business of character education.

But this presents a few unsettling thoughts. First, as I have already said, Socrates doubts whether it is possible to teach character; he also casts doubt on the qualifications of the likes of Protagoras who claim to be able to teach it. Perhaps most telling of all is the big question: what is human excellence, or in our terms, what constitutes 'good character'? Until we have answered this question, says Socrates, we cannot hope to answer the question of whether it can be taught, let alone how one can teach it. The dialogue ends, to the frustration of many readers, with a sense that they need to start the discussion again from the beginning.

We may think we have an idea of the character we seek to instil in the young people we teach; although I confess I am rarely convinced by most statements along these lines. For their part, Protagoras and Socrates certainly had some apparent shared ground from their common Greek heritage, the idea that human excellence could be broken down to the possession of five distinct but related qualities: intellectual understanding, morality, emotional control, courage and spirituality. A good list, I would argue, and not all that different from the lists that those in the vanguard of 21st century theorising about character education have compiled. But, as Plato's dialogues have shown readers for the best part of 2500 years, it is far from simple to answer the next level of questions: what is courage? what is morality? And, if we cannot answer these questions, or if the answers are constantly changing, how can we start teaching these qualities?

Too many questions for this modest article, even if I happen to think that struggling with these questions must continue to have a central role in delivering character education. But, for the moment, I would prefer to park these enquiries and to explore another idea that the opening of Protagoras develops, when Socrates suggests – with characteristic disingenuousness, I would argue – that the Athenians did not believe that character could be taught and that his evidence for this is that they did not teach it. Protagoras takes his time and is far from direct in his answer; but in essence he argues that Socrates is wrong. The Athenians and other Greeks, according to Protagoras, do believe that character can be taught and they do teach it; but it is different from other accomplishments, skills or academic disciplines. It is taught, directly and indirectly, in their family upbringing, in their formal education (comprising of academic study, physical education and music), in their life in their local community, in their participation in the life of the city as a whole.

This answer has helped me to pin down how character education has been delivered by people like me during my 25 year long career as a teacher and decades/centuries before this; many teachers (not to mention parents), probably were (and still are) unaware that this is a part of what they are doing (for good or bad). That is to say: when we are in charge of students in a boarding environment, we are delivering character education.

Let me try a slightly different approach to develop this idea. 'What do they of cricket know, who only cricket know?' So opined the great Trinidadian writer C.L.R. James. There can be a number of different readings of this expression of the rich quality of the game, but, one obvious extension of the idea is to suggest that in coaching cricket, the really good coach is teaching something more than just how to score runs, take wickets or field well. That is not the same as buying into the old and, I believe, false (or at least, incomplete) adage that sport forms character. It does not. A more accurate refinement of this principle is to say that sport tends to reveal character. When this happens, it gives the educator a chance to develop character traits in their students by trying to influence such things as how they relate to their team members, the opposition, the officials and, of course, how they cope with those famous twin imposters, triumph and disaster.

While learning to fulfil the requirements of a syllabus, the students of great teachers ought also to be learning some of the traits that our best cultural intuitions suggest constitute that elusive quality of human excellence – or, using slightly different terminology, our best attempt at defining the type of character we seek to instil in our students. Some subjects, sports or activities have more to offer to the development of certain traits than others; and what gives a valuable learning structure for one student, will not have much to offer another: not everyone will be able to learn much from playing cricket any more than they will from Latin. But within the parameters of the curriculum and the co-curriculum, it is possible for them to develop most if not all of the various qualities of character we want them to learn.

A concluding thought: ultimately, when we deliver character education, just as when we coach sport or teach an academic subject, we will not always get our students to develop the qualities we would like them to develop. This, however, should not deter us from trying.



SOME SUBJECTS, SPORTS OR ACTIVITIES HAVE MORE TO OFFER TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CERTAIN TRAITS THAN OTHERS.

FOSTERING CHARACTER IN PE

Phil Macleod | Head of Physical Education, Eton College

The distinction between PE and Games is rarely even acknowledged, let alone appreciated, by PE sceptics. PE deliberately sets out to be essentially different from Games and to offer a distinct experience of inclusivity as opposed to exclusivity. So it could be said that Games and PE complement each other.

In PE, a boy learns to take responsibility for his own decisions and actions early. By being challenged in an environment in which he can trust those around him, he can experience the benefits of taking risks. This setting is achieved by establishing a culture of ‘can’ and ‘what if?’, mutual respect and celebration of (and enjoyment in) the success of others. This is combined with a readiness to seek and offer help through the appreciation of one’s strengths and limitations, and those of others. The ‘zero-sum game mentality’ is challenged whenever it emerges.

At Eton each character plays his part in team sport and we are building each boy a stage so he can choose which part he feels most moved by. Consequently, he learns to respect and appreciate the relative strengths and weaknesses of others. What becomes evident is that there will always be someone better than him as well as someone worse than him in the kaleidoscope of classmates and taking part in the myriad activities taught. Thus with a little timely guidance from the teacher the seeds of humility can be sown! This humility, tolerance and wisdom enables the boy to play an active part in the wellbeing of those around him, now and into the future.

Empathy is one of the focuses as solutions are sought to solve group problems. An appreciation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of group members is critical in any workable solution. One has to learn to bear the responsibility of being relatively strong with an appropriate disposition or skill, and offer to use it in the resolution of the team problem. But more difficult is that one has to learn to accept the responsibility of being challenged by the demands of a problem, admit it and seek help; this takes courage.

The centre of what is done is to help boys develop their dispositions and skills, contributing to the growth of their self confidence. The intrinsic physical and mental health benefits of a lifetime of activity are made clear, too: mens sana in corpore sano. This prepares them for continuing the lifelong development of their character.

Within this PE cultural setting process is often considered more important than outcome. Indeed, some tasks are set which cannot be solved. In this way it is recognised that we often learn more by searching for a solution and sometimes not finding it than by discovering it. This is not to say that a result or competition is absent in what we do. Competition is an integral and important element in the work. The boys are not ‘protected from losing’ but learn to appreciate the value of having achieved personal targets and the satisfaction and enjoyment of that achievement. We play games for the chance of playing well and the thrill of perhaps playing our best ever. This wisdom embraces the prospect of lifelong improvement. In this way boys begin to appreciate the futility of the single minded and limited focus on winning and recognise that winning is something they rarely have total control over. They and their team can have played their best yet still lose. Winning might best be considered as merely the icing on the cake when one has played well and a crumb of consolation when one has not.

Team activities nurture emotional maturity as they help an individual to recognise that the sum of the parts amounts to less than the whole and that there are greater goals than the win. It matters not that you won or lost, but how you played the game. The unique experiences of shared emotions which characterise team sports offer a landscape in which spiritual richness and emotional maturity can be nurtured. Learning opportunities to recognise, respect and value integrity, honesty, effort, and individuality are experienced in PE.

When self-confidence in a range of settings has started to develop we seek to place the individual in interactive situations, normally partnerwork. Thus it becomes possible to see how their dispositions and skills compare with and complement those of others.

At the moment, leadership/teamwork is formally drip fed to boys over the three years of PE. Situations are contrived and tasks set to place boys in unfamiliar settings that require imagination, creative solutions and a high level of interdependence, teamwork and/or leadership. During these lessons the teacher stands back from the work after the task has been set up, and observes. The plenary and reflection part of the lesson is guided by carefully worded questions to elicit a thorough evaluation of the decisions and actions made by the boys as individuals as well as those made by the team. They are encouraged to think about and discuss how they behaved towards the situation set and towards each other, and how that reaction affected the outcomes. It is hoped they will come to learn that they can affect outcomes by positive reactions to events experienced throughout their lives and build resilience through this wisdom.



Here is an example of the type of lesson which can showcase what is written above.

The Micro scale: a Gymnastics lesson in the first year

For example, in a gymnastics lesson the boys will be responsible for getting there on time, appropriately dressed, and each boy will understand and know the consequences of failure to do so for him as an individual as well as for the group.

The lesson starts with revision of what concepts, facts and physical as well as personal techniques were taken away from the last lesson. For example, a boy might volunteer to his partner or the group: ‘we discovered that tucking into a small ball helps us rotate more quickly’; ‘Phil had the best forward roll because his hands touched the ground only once’; ‘when supporting your partner, encourage him and feedback positively at first and ONLY then suggest a way he might be able to improve’.

The theme of the lesson – rotation, for example – may be kept secret and boys asked to consider the hidden theme as they work. They have to coordinate their actions to set out the equipment safely, swiftly, efficiently and accurately. This exercise in itself involves decision-making, taking responsibility and co-operating unselfishly for the common good, as well as appreciating self-evident consequences if the task is not achieved efficiently and safely.

Once set up, the various working areas represent a calculated and diverse range of both closed and open-ended challenges for each of the boys. Some apparatus will require strength, others balance and courage, for example. Techniques are taught and different levels of difficulty are

demonstrated and explained for each working area and the boys are also asked to devise their own ideas for extension work. Boys are encouraged to attempt work in all areas but to work at a ‘level’ they think will challenge them. They set their own targets. At this stage they will be asked to consider and discuss reasonable targets for their work. Then, positioning himself so that the whole class can be seen, the teacher will simply observe the work for a good while. The boys set to work and aim to challenge themselves and use the teacher as a consultant. The teacher resists stepping in unless a boy is in danger. He will also advise boys about how much time is left. He may see an appropriate moment to celebrate the work of a particular boy, in which case all activity stops and the whole group will gather round. This is an integral part of any learning situation: the appreciation of a disposition, skill or technique performed to a high level by a contemporary. The teacher has to seize the moment, and may also intervene to ask a boy who does not seem to be working well what his target is.

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher will do a mental audit to ensure that every boy in the class has had a chance to ask him for advice. Before the apparatus is put away a plenary will involve a question and answer session, perhaps using the ‘own up answering’ technique (MacLeod, 2019) to visit the theme of the lesson and to celebrate successes and share feedback on sound or not so sound techniques. Each boy will be asked to reflect and perhaps to articulate to another his thoughts on his own work in terms of his personal targets. Show ups (rewards) may be awarded for especially pleasing work, not just to those who performed at a high level, and boys can be involved in this decision.

No one will leave until everything is put away swiftly and safely.

A VIEW FROM THE ETON COLLEGE CHAPLAINCY: CHRISTIAN THINKING ABOUT CHARACTER

Rupert Demery | Chaplain, Eton College

Virtue Windows

The idea of character education is quite literally built into the fabric of schools with a Christian ethos. In Lower Chapel at Eton College, for example, where 525 boys sit most mornings (and where thousands of other boys have sat in the years before them) they look up at a gallery of stained glass windows, each of which is dedicated to a particular virtue. St Francis looks down at us from the ‘Humilitas’ window, King David from the ‘Justitia’ window, St Martin from the ‘Caritas’ window, and so on. The promotion and exaltation of hard-won virtues is very near to the core of what a Christian education looks like.

Not at the core, however, because there is a deep conviction within the tradition that the cultivation of external moral character must proceed from somewhere deep within. What really lies at the core is a focus on submission to Jesus Christ as Lord and the reception of the inward transformation of the Holy Spirit.¹ That is why Christian character education comes after Christian doctrinal instruction; without the worldview there is neither the justification nor the proper motivation for aspiring to such high ideals. In other words, if all that young people hear from the pulpit is ‘Be Good, Don’t Be Bad’ they either reject it as nonsense or find themselves burdened with guilt: they need to know why we are to live well, and how we can enjoy living well.

Heavenly Character

All views of character are set within a worldview that defines what it means to be fully human: there is no such thing as a neutral approach to morality. For the Aristotelian, the virtuous person is a happiness-seeking member of the city-state, for the Stoic, she is a frustration-shunning mind in a law-governed nature. For the Christian, the ideal human life is one lived in the Kingdom of God, and the virtues fit a person living in the world as it will be, even if the present age is troubled, morally ambiguous and full of temptations. It is a life of self-giving love, driven by faith and inspired by hope; a life of doing the will of God on earth, as it is in heaven.

Christian educators have a deep well from which to draw their inspiration. The Thomist tradition is well-known, whether consciously or unconsciously, given that it dominated the Middle Ages and formed the atmosphere in which many of the older schools were founded. Aquinas combined the Aristotelian virtues of courage, temperance, prudence and justice with the virtues of faith, hope and love. The Bible itself provides a constellation of images and ideas to inspire the modern imagination with the vision of a flourishing human life. The New Testament speaks of joy, holiness, purity, tender-heartedness, contentment, peace, compassion, gratitude, kindness, hospitality, gentleness, humility, reverence, meekness, confidence, forgiveness,

patience and self-control.² Earlier texts, such as the Book of Proverbs in the Hebrew Bible give us figures such as the Sluggard, the Simpleton and the Drunkard to amuse or shame us out of our laziness, credulity and debauchery.³ Indeed, the whole genre of Wisdom Literature was written by the older generation for the young to learn the great virtue of wisdom: the way to apply knowledge to the manifold complexities of life. Above all, the figure of Jesus Christ as a moral exemplar rises out of the pages of Scripture to embody all that is envisaged by a perfect human life: to meditate on the Gospels is to encounter The Character from whom all the highest human notions of character are derived.

Action

Just as Aristotle taught that habits are essential to the development of virtue, we find the call to practice what is believed shot through Christian teaching:⁴ the life of virtue is caught as much as it is taught. To that end, as well as developing the disciplines of prayer and worship in regular Chapel services, Chaplains encourage boys to get involved with charitable activities (such as proposing and giving to the weekly Chapel collections, delivering Harvest Bags to members of the local community), engaging in social action programmes (such as Phab Club, a club for young people with and without disabilities to have fun together⁵), or making humanitarian trips abroad (visiting Zambia with Hands at Work,⁶ or Rwanda with REACH-Rwanda⁷).

The Chaplains recognise that we speak and act alongside numerous other views of human flourishing (including the very materialistic context in which we work) but hope to humbly and hospitably offer this way of life to all who will listen:

‘Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding. For she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.’ Proverbs 3:13

¹ See the Church of England publication on Character Education, called The Fruit of the Spirit https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/The%20Fruit%20of%20the%20Spirit_0.pdf

² Cf Rom. 5:2, 3, 1; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:6; Eph. 4:32; Phil 4:11-12; Phil. 4:7; Col 3:12; 1 Thess. 5:18; 2 Cor. 6:6; Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Cor. 9:11; Rom. 12:18; Eph. 4:15, 25; Phil 2:3; 2 Cor. 5:11; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; Jas. 1:21; Col 3:13; 1 Cor. 13:4; Gal 5:23.

³ Cf Proverbs 12:15-16; Proverbs 6:6-11, Proverbs 22:13; Proverbs 23:29-35

⁴ For example in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders: Matt 7:24-27

⁵ <https://www.phab.org.uk/phab-news/eton-college-phab-club-flourishing>

⁶ <https://www.handsatwork.org/>

⁷ <http://reach-rwanda.org/>

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT ETON COLLEGE: MEASURING ITS IMPACT ON YEAR 12 BOYS

Tom Arbuthnott | Deputy Head Partnerships, Eton College

With contributions from Haroon Shirwani | Head of Volunteering, Eton College

I have always known that community engagement was an important thing for Etonians to do. I know it intellectually, in thinking about Eton’s layers of privilege that boys need to navigate as they go through their lives. I know it emotionally, in that the enriching effects of doing something for others must make you a better person. And I know it from my own experience, as a boy, where I spent F Block (Year 9), E Block (Year 10), and D Block (Year 11) exclusively on Eton’s campus: I can remember clearly the liberating feeling when I cycled along the river on my way to a caravan park in Dedworth, where I used to visit an elderly Jehovah’s Witness who gave us lukewarm tea and soggy custard creams and invited us to read The Watchtower to him.

So it is obvious to me that ECCE (Eton College Community Engagement), or social services as it used to be called, has to be a good thing. It’s obvious to Etonians too, who make it very clear in the report published by CIRL in September 2019, that they relish the opportunities given to them through the Community Engagement programme.

Indeed, the early part of the report seems to be stating the obvious: that volunteering is a win-win situation for both the community and the individual. However, interestingly, the latter part of the report becomes very interesting indeed. It posits certain character virtues that are built through community volunteering, namely respect, openness to experience, teamwork, gratitude and empathy, and makes it clear that such volunteering is by far the best way of inculcating such virtues in young people.

As one boy puts it, ‘openness is especially important for a school like this, we are quite closed’.

Another:

‘It is easy to forget when you are within the Eton bubble and you are so focused on work and high performance that you don’t realise how you are behaving. It is nice to get out of the bubble, you leave the campus and you are in a different environment. You re-evaluate your position. At Eton, you are a number of things which mean nothing outside Eton. Through this, you almost start from the bottom and you develop who you are’.

IT IS NICE TO GET OUT OF THE BUBBLE, YOU LEAVE THE CAMPUS AND YOU ARE IN A DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT. YOU RE-EVALUATE YOUR POSITION.

So what are the useful findings of the report which can be applied in similar programmes across schools?

- 1) That the best placements involve a managed learning curve for students. The fact that some of them had never been involved in a similar activity meant that often they had to learn from scratch some of the skills that were needed for the job: for example, dealing with horses or teaching young kids. This meant that often boys felt some kind of embarrassment which was quickly forgotten as boys mentioned how they were made to feel very welcome and supported by the adults working in the various placements.
- 2) That Community Engagement provides boys with what the report calls ‘non-formal learning opportunities’, as the boys develop patience in doing tasks, sometimes repetitive tasks, that they have not been challenged by before.
- 3) That agency is really important: meaningful work needs to involve ‘student initiative and involvement in the design of projects.’ In other words, the more that students have the opportunity to shape the volunteering or social action programme, the more effectively it dovetails to their needs and priorities.
- 4) Finally, the report emphasises the importance of teaching Etonians how to navigate privilege in a privilege-conscious world. Several of them referred to the ‘bubble’ of Eton. They acknowledged their privileged education and were keen to not only be seen to be contributing to the community but make a meaningful contribution.

The whole report makes me realise that the self-evident truth above about the value of community engagement has become a truism: that it is so obvious that it is a good thing that it is easy to stop subjecting the idea to rigorous thinking or evaluation. Even ‘bad’ community service, by this definition, is a good thing: and, perhaps, it is easy to fill a programme with rather fluffy and unfocused programmes that are not really tailored around having the biggest possible impact on the pupils that they involve.

LAE X ETON LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME WITH THE OXFORD CHARACTER PROJECT

By students at the London Academy of Excellence and Eton College
Introduction by Dr Edward Brooks | Oxford Character Project
Interviews by Dr Iro Konstantinou | Eton College

What would a school curriculum look like that really did put service experience at the heart of boys' lives? I asked Haroon Shirwani, the Master in Charge of ECCE, how we can do this. Together, we have established the following:

First, the idea of service would be championed at all levels of the school and woven into the school's communications strategy, consistently articulated by the Leadership Team and others. Time for volunteering would be considered when planning out the school week. Boarding houses would be hubs of charity work and public service. Tutors would help pupils plan out and reflect upon volunteer placements. Heads of Academic and Co-Curricular departments would encourage outreach work by staff and boys. Individual boys with ideas for community service work would receive the mentoring and guidance needed to develop realistic and worthwhile projects.

Second, it would emphasise volunteering as an educational experience, based on the pillars of virtue ethics articulated in the report. Placements would be planned with the aim of nurturing key virtues, such as respect, patience, empathy, gratitude and openness. This would inform the nature of the volunteer work, the training received by the boys and, most importantly, the process of reflection afterwards, allowing participants to develop an awareness of the progress they have made.

Third, it would maintain a healthy relationship with the individuals and organisations that allow our boys to volunteer with them. (This is the thinking behind our use of the term 'Community Engagement'.) It would understand that this is a two-way process and that the boys learn at least as much as they give. The guidance, training and supervision provided by placement hosts is a significant part of the boys' education. We would liaise carefully with the local and broader community, understanding the needs that need to be met and expressing sincere appreciation for the opportunities provided.

Fourth, it would create opportunities for boys to volunteer in different ways throughout their time at school, with a clearly articulated pathway for service work from F Block (Year 9) to B Block (Year 13). It would find active and radical ways of getting Lower Boys involved in meaningful volunteering, with a broader range of options further up the school. The pathway would branch out into holiday-time volunteering, especially as the boys grow older and are able to make independent choices. For example, Etonians could be encouraged to join the National Citizen service, itself run by Michael Lynas, an OE, and develop ways of building strong relationships across social boundaries. It might even extend the pathway into prep school by suggesting that Eton considered service work as important in the admissions process.

I thank Iro Konstantinou and Tom Harrison for their work on the report 'Community Engagement: mapping its impact on character development in C Block boys'.

The formation of character virtues necessary for students to flourish in their personal lives and fulfil their responsibilities as citizens has been a foundational aspect of education since the ancient world. Concerns regarding the wellbeing of adolescents and the health of our democratic society have contributed to the renewal of character and leadership development as important emphases in contemporary education.

In both state and private sectors, character is firmly on the agenda. For example, in Ofsted's 2019 inspection framework, teachers are mandated to attend to 'developing pupils' character', preparing students with 'the qualities they need to flourish in society' (Ofsted 2019, p. 58). In an 'excellent' school, 'the way the school goes about developing pupils' character is exemplary and is worthy of being shared with others' (p. 62).

The Ofsted framework identifies the societal as well as personal importance of character formation. Virtues like justice, courage, honesty, humility, wisdom, empathy, compassion and service are vital for citizens to contribute to the health of our democratic society. They are particularly important for those who will occupy positions of responsibility and influence. As van Linden and Fertman (1999) highlight, there is a close relationship between the formation of character and the education of a new generation of leaders who will further the public good. 'For adolescents, positive leadership behavior is character education in action'.

Building on a methodology tested over several years in the OCP's Global Leadership Initiative (see Brooks et al., 2019), we are seeking to design an effective and scalable programme that will help Year 12 students to become leaders of character who will use the opportunities, abilities and resources that they possess to further the good of their communities and wider society.

Our aim is that students will grow in three important aspects of character and leadership development:

1. Intellectual understanding: knowledge of what characterizes good leadership in different contexts
2. Practices of leadership: habits of life that support good leadership
3. Moral formation: leadership identity (see Komives et al., 2005) and virtues of character

For this article we asked students to respond to 4 questions which are related to the first objective of this programme. A sample of the responses is given below.

Questions:

1. What did you think makes a good leader before the programme?
2. How has that thinking changed, if it has?
3. What character traits do you associate with good leadership?
4. What examples stuck with you as to what leadership looks like?

PLACEMENTS WOULD BE PLANNED WITH THE AIM OF NURTURING KEY VIRTUES, SUCH AS RESPECT, PATIENCE, EMPATHY, GRATITUDE AND OPENNESS.



PLACING CHARACTER AT THE CORE OF EDUCATION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE LAURUS TRUST

Tony Little | *President, WLSA Shanghai Academy; Chair, Laurus Trust (MAT)*

I thought that good leaders need to have charisma, determination and a loud voice. I was under the impression that good leaders need to be authoritative and be able to coordinate a large group of people. I now know that what makes a leader much more effective than having a power complex is being able to effectively communicate. The idea of a hierarchical system of power was something that I had just accepted; however, in this programme we discussed how servant leadership can be a possibility. I associate empathy, vision, determination, innovation and honesty with GOOD leadership. However bad leadership I associate with extreme concentrations of particular traits, for example, a leader who refuses to allow other members of a team to collaborate in providing ideas. I really enjoyed looking at Greta Thunberg in one of our sessions, however, and enjoyed researching her further and looking at the idea that she was an accidental leader. This brings up the idea that leadership qualities can be entirely personal to a person and make someone into a leader if they are truly passionate about it.

Before joining the OCP, I thought of a leader as a charismatic, confident person in position of authority who inspires people to believe in their ideas. I now realise that a leader does not need to have authority, nor do they need to be hierarchical. A leader can lead from within a group and need not impose their ideas. Instead, I now understand a leader as someone who is able to help a group help itself. A leader should enable the members of a group to contribute as much as possible to the group's goal. Though a leader need not be a god-like figure descended from the heavens to save their followers, a leader must still have charisma and be confident enough to say what they believe is best for a group even if it may be at times unpalatable for some in the group. This said, a leader should aim to bring all members into alignment with the group's ideas and goals so as to allow all members to function cohesively within the group. Additionally, the OCP taught me that a leader should guide a group through problems not necessarily by providing answers but by providing a framework through which the group can find the most effective solution. This altered my previous view of leaders as needing to have all the answers and being the most knowledgeable in a group. In fact, a good leader should be able to be humble and admit when someone else may be best placed to assist or contribute.

Before the programme, I thought that a good leader is an individual who led in a specific way to drive their team to achieve a specific aim. I saw leadership as having one boss and that they made the final decision on matters, with input of members of the team. Therefore, good leadership must involve delegation in a team, perhaps on a large scale. However, I did think that a good leader had a lot of responsibility, such as in a high place of authority such as a chief executive in the employment sector, or the prime minister for example. Finally, I believed good leadership generally involved no disagreements/conflicting ideas and questions, so there was a clear aim that all agreed on. I have learned a lot from the programme, especially that leadership and the quality of leadership is not relative to one boss in a team. Therefore, any individual in a team can lead, and lead specifically in areas they are strong at. Because essentially leadership is using listening and communication skills to help a group of individuals with a shared aim to achieve that goal. And leadership is not on a large scale only.

With many thanks to Tom Arbuthnott and Jonnie Noakes who enabled the programme to take place.

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Character Education has become a buzz phrase in the lexicon of modern schooling. As individual and school performances have become more subject to measurement, and the readily-measurable parts of the curriculum seen as more important, school experiences have become more constrained as a consequence. The quest for transparency and robust tracking of performance was born of noble intent, but has come at a cost. Those trickier elements to measure, like character, have tended to be sidelined – put into the too-difficult box. Yet teachers and parents intuitively feel there is a missing link and that rhetoric about a holistic education is empty without a genuine commitment to the development of character.

One hundred and fifty years ago there was relatively little talk of character education, but that was because it was a given, the evident foundation for schooling, the point of it all. Our recent obsession with the measurement of a particular type of intelligence, is just that – recent.

The best British independent schools, especially those that believe in the continuing relevance of a boarding tradition, have sustained a model that gives ample time outside the classroom for young people to learn a range of skills and habits that give them a more rounded view of the world and their place in it. Yet many of these schools would be hard pressed to articulate the benefits of what they do; team sports in proliferation, for example, are part of a mute legacy of 'character building' rather than an integral part of a thoughtful curriculum. Team sports are indeed valuable as part of a mix of opportunities, but if they are seen as the one true path to develop character, even more valuable alternatives for students are missed. Maybe the word 'character' in itself is a barrier, fraught as it is with a multiplicity of interpretations.

How refreshing, then, to find some schools thinking creatively about the development of character in a considered, thoughtful way and without the shackle of the 'c' word.

The Laurus Trust, a multi-academy trust in the Manchester area, went back to basics in 2012 prompted by the imminent opening of new schools under their banner, and wrote their own framework. They settled on four Cornerstones which described their desired outcomes: academic aspiration (opening the door to the future of their choice); cultural engagement (with a particular stress on the arts and the power of language); competitive, physical endeavour (as a key to physical, social and emotional health); and leadership and service. 'By the time they leave the school', the Trust rubric runs, each student should 'have that true sense of self worth which will enable them to make wise choices, stand up for what is right and what they believe in and, in doing so, be of value to society'. That, at the least, seems a pretty good practical, working definition of 'character'.

These four cornerstones underpinned the Trust vision which was to enable young people, regardless of background or circumstance, to be inspired, to thrive in all environments, to recognise what it takes to succeed, to set aspirational goals and work hard to achieve them.

The rhetoric of aspiration is perhaps easy enough, but the Trust went further, placing the cornerstones at the heart of all development, planning, and engaging fulsome buy-in from the adults in the school community. This is the key to it. Each department maps their own development plan against the whole school desired outcomes so that opportunities often considered 'extra' curricular and a bolt-on to the mainstream of school life are rooted in the day-to-day work of subjects and are high profile.

An Electives programme builds on this foundation. Students are required to commit to a number of hours for each curriculum cycle. Experience has shown that the most effective routes are chosen when students are strongly encouraged to opt for an Elective that takes them out of their comfort zone. It has become an axiom of the Trust that challenge is the driver of character. This is particularly relevant in the Sixth Form when students are preparing for university or job interviews. Many students find one-to-one sessions with adults other than their teachers intimidating and a substantial block. The very act of encountering adults they have not met before and speaking with them is an alien experience to many young people. The liberation students say they feel, and their resulting sense of achievement as they lose their fears, stays with them well beyond the interview room.

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Adult staff are expected to think through how and where they help foster the qualities, attitudes and habits the Trust wishes to develop in young people. It is a considered, meaningful process, not just a general sense of outcome and an assumption that osmosis is enough. Nine words feature routinely in the shared language of the school so that the bedrock of what might be called ‘character education’ is understood by everyone. Borrowed from Peterson and Seligman (2004), these nine elements of character have been held up to the light, discussed, agreed, embedded in the whole curriculum and monitored.

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They are:

Courage (facing up to challenge; speaking up for what’s right)

Vitality (approaching life with excitement and energy: feeling alive and activated)

Self-control (regulating how one feels and how one behaves)

Social Intelligence (being aware of motives and feelings of other people and oneself)

Optimism (expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it)

Perseverance (finishing what one starts; overcoming obstacles with a combination of persistence and resilience)

Curiosity (taking an interest in things for their own sake; finding things fascinating)

Integrity (speaking the truth and presenting oneself sincerely and genuinely)

Gratitude (being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen)

Individually and collectively, developing these elements throughout the curriculum can be demonstrated significantly to enhance young people’s self-confidence, resilience and their ability to successfully chart the path of their choosing.

One commentator described the Laurus Trust approach as harking back to the past. Far from it. The era of Artificial Intelligence is upon us, with the prospect of the machine world becoming more adept than humans at many functions, from analysis to strategic thinking. This will shine a clearer light on uniquely human attributes which will become more significant than ever: compassion, curiosity, integrity, collaboration. The education of ‘character’ will be firmly and crucially at the centre of the school curriculum of the future.

DEVELOPING CHARACTER IN FUTURE ARMY OFFICERS AT WEST POINT

Major Scott Parsons | Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, United States Military Academy at West Point

The United States Military Academy at West Point, commonly referred to as West Point, is both a military academy, similar to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and a traditional university. Cadets attending West Point undergo a 47-month experience that culminates with both a commission as an officer in the United States Army, as well as a Bachelor of Science Degree. The cadet’s degree can be in a variety of academic disciplines that are offered in universities across, the US, the UK, and Europe.

West Point’s mission is ‘to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army’ (2016a).

From a pedagogical standpoint, it is not only important to learn military tactics and the core of the chosen academic field, but it must be intertwined and integrated through a character development program. The entire curriculum at West Point is infused with the idea of character through the Academy motto of ‘Duty, Honor, Country’ (2016b) and the ideals of the Seven Army Values consisting of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. While we might call them Army ‘Values’, they are in fact virtues that will allow cadets, soldiers, and officers to live honorably and flourish both as soldiers and as human beings. Integrating character education in the curriculum at West Point underpins the ethical standards of the Profession of Arms.

Character education is important because it will allow cadets and army officers to understand what is ethically important both in combat and in their daily lives, and to act not only rightly but for the right reasons. It is more than just rule-following. It is about who you are as a person when no one is watching to see if you are following the rules.

West Point has four developmental programs: Academic, Military, Physical, and Character. While it might seem like the four programs are distinct and unrelated to each other, the Character Development Program is interwoven throughout the other three programs. The Jubilee Centre’s ‘Framework for Character Education’ discusses the ‘Building Blocks of Character’ (2017). The Building Blocks of Character include Intellectual Virtues, Moral Virtues, Civic Virtues, and Performance Virtues. The Building Blocks of Character ultimately help students and soldiers develop practical wisdom which in turn leads individuals, and thus society, to flourish. The Jubilee Centre explains that Intellectual Virtues are character traits that are necessary for discernment and right action, such as critical thinking, judgement, and reasoning. They point out that Moral Virtues are character traits that enable us to act in ethical ways, such as courage, honesty, and integrity. Civic Virtues are character traits that are

necessary for engaged responsible citizenship such as neighbourliness, service, and volunteering. The Jubilee Centre further explains that Performance Virtues are character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the Intellectual, Moral, and Civic Virtues such as confidence, motivation, and resilience. West Point recognizes something similar. In addition to the four developmental programs, West Point focuses on five facets of character: Moral, Civic, Social, Performance, and Leadership, which align with the Jubilee Centre’s Building Blocks of Character.

Because virtues require practice and develop through habituation, West Point infuses character development throughout the 47-month experience using the Jubilee Centre’s notion of ‘Caught, Taught, and Sought’. Each opportunity to practise virtuous behaviour reinforces the idea of habituation. Part of the Character Development Curriculum at West Point includes the ‘Cadet Character Education Program’ also known as CCEP. CCEP provides cadets with three to five non-academic lessons each semester focused on virtuous living. During the cadets’ first two years at West Point, CCEP emphasizes virtuous living focused on personal growth and development. During the cadets’ final two years at West Point, CCEP emphasizes their character growth as leaders and aspiring military officers. One of the programs CCEP offers is ‘Leader’s Challenge’. Leader’s Challenge takes all of the cadets in their third and fourth year and has them meet in a small group setting of roughly 15 people. The cadets engage with a real life military moral dilemma in which an officer had to make a difficult leadership decision. The 15 cadets engage in the moral dilemma with one or two military faculty or staff to discuss the dilemma and decide what the virtuous decision could or should be. This is done to develop the cadet’s understanding of ethical leadership and to help develop practical wisdom.

The goal of developing leaders of character does not only lie in specific character programmes; West Point nurtures good character throughout the academic disciplines and courses offered at West Point. Cadets in their second year at the Academy take ‘Philosophy and Ethical Reasoning’. This course introduces the idea of Just War Theory and normative ethics to include Aristotelian Virtue Ethics. The course is intended to help cadets in their moral reasoning. In the cadets’ third year they take a psychology class called ‘Military Leadership’. This course focuses on developing leaders of character through ethical leadership and moral mentorship. Mentorship is critical to the development of junior leaders, so each cadet in the course is required to ask an army officer at the academy to be their mentor for the semester. This mentorship allows cadets to benefit from the army officer’s perspective on virtuous living and assist in the cadets’ leader growth.



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Through this course, most of the army officers at the academy are mentoring two to three cadets each semester. Often, the mentorship relationships continue through the cadets' remaining time at West Point. The final and capstone course of West Point's Character Program, is called 'Officership' that cadets take in their final year at the Academy. The emphasis is on each officer's duty to provide moral leadership and how to navigate the ethical challenges of the profession of arms.

Character development is not limited to the classrooms and the corridors, but takes place also on the playing fields. There is a saying at West Point that 'every cadet is an athlete'. Every cadet at West Point participates in athletics on an intercollegiate, club, or intramural team. Because each cadet participates on an athletics team, this presents an opportunity for us to infuse character training and character development in an additional way through sport.

Once a semester West Point halts all routine activities and holds an Honourable Living Day. Everyone at the Academy, including Cadets, Faculty, Staff, and Coaches, stop their daily routine, schedules, classes, meetings, and sporting events to participate in a Character Development day. The day includes multiple guest speakers who discuss character, small group character interactive sessions, and a character lunch where one member of the faculty and staff eat with 10 cadets and discuss what each cadet learned that day within the context of character. In addition to the Honourable Living Day, there is a Living Honourably Luncheon that occurs about two months after the Honourable Living Day where faculty and staff have lunch with a group of cadets to discuss how they have incorporated what they learned since the Honourable Living Day.

As soldiers, each of us will face moments when we will be required to act morally under duress, persevere under adversity, respond to setbacks, or suppress our own human desire to choose an easier path. Sometimes those moments will occur during combat, but most of them will not. During these moments, we will not suddenly flip a switch that enables us to do the right thing. Instead, our automatic response will reflect the habits of honorable living and developing practical wisdom during our time at West Point, becoming people of character. If we fail to develop strong character, fail to strive being moral exemplars, we have a greater chance of failing our soldiers and possibly resulting in the unnecessary loss of life.

As a faculty member at West Point, I have a certain perspective of West Point's Character Development Program. However, I wanted to see if my perspective was on par with that of the cadets. I spoke with several cadets in their final year at the Academy to get their perspective on West Point's Character Development Program. The responses are given below:

How has West Point help cadets develop character?

Michael Deegan

'It's ingrained in everything we do whether it's athletics, academics, or military development—character is the cornerstone of each pillar of performance because it is so vital to our development as future leaders and officers.'

Olivia Agee

'Through difficult conversations and though reflection time, West Point facilitates character growth and moral courage in leading others and setting a positive, healthier organizational culture for future army officers.'

Jacob Wells

'CCEP provides cadets with an opportunity to discuss our values, character, and how we should live our lives. We are able to talk with each other about healthy relationships, respect, and the honor code. It gives us an opportunity to bring up questions about grey areas where the right answer is not obvious and see how other cadets would act in that situation.'

Where do cadets encounter character and virtue training?

Jacob Wells

'Leader's Challenge allows us deal with the harder part of leadership. Often, we look at leadership in situations where everything is simple and clear. Leader's Challenge forces us to look at situations where there is no right answer or where there is no way to prepare for it. By listening to actual army officers' experiences in groups, we are able to critically think about the situation and try to decide how we should act as a group. We can then think back to these challenges when we are in the force. When I was shadowing a lieutenant, I used one of the Leader's Challenge discussions to make the decision to intervene when a soldier was being unsafe.'

Maggie Petersen

'In the Leader's Challenge scenarios that we are presented with, we all seem to ask, 'How could someone let this happen?' But we, collectively, let it happen through time as we sit idle. In being presented with life-altering scenarios in a Leader's Challenge, or being asked to write a paper prompted with, 'Who are you?', we as cadets are constantly reminded of the importance of our character and the role it plays in the decisions we make. In being mindful of our integrity, we create our character.'

Do you think that character development is central to leadership at West Point and in the army?

Sam Reichenthal

'West Point understands and teaches us that an officer is more than just the competent soldier that many may think we are; an officer is first and foremost a leader of character as building trust and respect in a team is vital to mission success.'

Maggie Petersen

'I'm grateful for the opportunities West Point provides for true reflection. While we move at such a quick pace on a day-to-day basis, there are certainly times set aside to slow down, take a step back, and really reflect on our character and how to live a virtuous life. It's a vital part of growth.'

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CHARACTER AT BEDALES

Alistair McConville | Director of Learning and Innovation, Bedales School

Bedales has a strong non-conformist heritage, which has influenced its attitude to character. It was founded by John Badley as a reaction against the emphases of traditional English public schools, with their in-built hierarchies and endless appetite for competition, on and off the playing fields. Rather than seek to develop an attitude of getting one over one's opponents by a show of superiority, Badley aimed to develop in his charges an attitude of positive co-operation. One of the school's mottos is 'Work of Each for Weal of All' – 'weal' in the old fashioned sense of wellbeing. Thus there has been a distinct whiff of socialist ideology hanging around Bedales for most of its history. Cohorts of students of different ages have worked the land alongside their teachers, whom they address by their first names as a symbol of the desired mutual respect and non-authoritarian relationships. There are separate boarding houses for girls and boys, but only one of each, no matter how large they grow, lest the evil of inter-house competition should spring up! Boys and girls share a boarding house in their final year.

Bedales grew up with close links to the Fabian Society and the Arts and Crafts movement. These communitarian and aesthetic biases informed the school's aims for character development as it grew. For most of the school's history, the only formal aim of the school was 'the appreciation of the beautiful'. High falutin, one might think, but reflective of the idea that Bedalians should grow up with a directness of engagement with the subject matter of their studies that goes beyond its instrumental use. This was the sort of practical spirituality that Badley sought, finding it eminently compatible with his own non-denominational Christianity. In modern parlance, the aim of the school was to develop learners with 'intrinsic motivation', appreciating the value of learning for its own sake, and especially appreciating the joys of nature. The spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement has imbued the school's attitude to developmentally worthwhile activities: direct contact with the land; use of natural materials; old-fashioned tools and techniques to ensure a direct connection with that which is produced through careful craftsmanship.

Bedales has never been entirely explicit about character. The idea of prescribing certain traits doesn't sit easily with our ethos. Alongside our communitarian and agrarian tendencies has been a wide tolerance of difference. Individuality, rather than individualism, has always been prized, though there's an inevitable tension between those two attitudes, which we're always navigating. When does holding up a set of 'ideal' human qualities spill over into something controlling, discriminatory or judgemental? And when does individuality become self-absorption?

We have done our fair share of hand-wringing about the sorts of qualities we want in the young people we're attempting to turn out, and how we might constructively generalise about them in order to communicate with clarity about our expectations and aspirations. The idea of a Bedales 'learner profile' has been in the air for a number of years, but has never (yet) made it out of draft, because, I think, of a perfectly healthy suspicion amongst students of anything homogenising.

We do have some clear shared values, though, which at least imply certain desirable directions for character formation. Our other motto is 'Head, Hand and Heart', which implies a holistic development, where attention to the physical, mental and ethical realms are given equal priority in a person's life, and as we tinker with our offering, the desirability of this balance is always to the fore of our thinking. More recent iterations of the school aims speak of 'inquisitive thinkers' with a 'love of learning' and who 'cherish independent thought'. We aspire to 'foster individuality' alongside 'creativity and the appreciation of the beautiful', which still makes the cut!

In 2012, we engaged in a research project with Research Schools International to establish the sorts of factors that were most likely to contribute to the development of these hoped-for independent, inquisitive lovers of learning, and then to see whether we were embedding any of them successfully. This process helped us better understand the sorts of institutional levers we have to inculcate inquisitiveness and love of learning, which particularly revolve around sustaining the quality of relationships, levels of autonomy, opportunities for collaboration and meta-cognitive habits.

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In recent times we have watched with interest the development of other evidenced-informed work around character, and this year have taken tentative steps to align ourselves with the language of the Round Square organisation, inspired by Kurt Hahn, a correspondent of John Badley. The Round Square network of 200 schools from around the world has developed a shared framework for talking about character education, which blends what are clearly 'character traits' in the traditional sense with desirable 'skills'. Their 'Discovery Framework' encompasses the following: inquisitiveness; tenacity; sense of responsibility; ability to solve problems; commitment to sustainability; courage; self-awareness; compassion; inventiveness; communication skills; appreciation of diversity; teamwork skills. We have found that this list resonates sufficiently with our values and aspirations for young people that we are seeking to join this network of like-minded schools. They also speak in terms of 6 IDEALS in a way that we find helpful: Internationalism; Democracy; Environmentalism; Adventure; Leadership and Service. These are very much about attitudes and dispositions of character, and as a framework for structuring our core activities as a school, we think they will crystallise and enhance the language and clarity of purpose around some of the work that we already do. Taking our relationship further with Round Square is an experiment in character education. We are especially excited about strengthening our emphasis on 'service', which we have under-emphasised in recent years. In the words of our founder: 'We are poor creatures if we are content to live for ourselves and what we can get. It is a great day when we discover the happiness of giving. I do not mean money only, but time, thought, effort, for the welfare of those about us – the happiness of service'.

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BUILDING MORAL IDENTITY WITHIN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Jonathan Mace | House Master, Cheltenham College

Over the course of the last academic year I have been trying to build and develop greater ‘moral identity’ within a boarding house. A building block of this thinking was the mission statement of Boston Prep School – ‘An environment structured around scholarship and personal growth which cultivates students’ virtues of courage, compassion, integrity, perseverance and respect’. The intervention to change the culture in the house initially built on a character education leadership day where the primary objective was to build pupil awareness of Aristotelian character virtues, including the Golden Mean, and, in turn, to give them the autonomy as a group to choose the specific virtues that they wanted to harness in the house during the academic year 2018/19. This piece will consider the background to the intervention and evaluate whether these ‘caught’ and ‘taught’ culture features can be enhanced through a conscious and planned intervention within an educational setting and, in turn, identify areas to improve and build upon moving forwards.

Bennett, Ryan and Bolin (1983) talk about the need for schools to become ‘communities of virtues’. They argue that a school ethos based on core values, which are clear and well communicated, can provide purpose, motivation and direction for both teachers and students. Likewise, McLaughlin and Halstead (1999) state that character education is ‘a deliberate effort by schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values’. Therefore, the intervention discussed within this piece hoped to begin the process of changing the culture (the ‘hidden curriculum’) within my boarding house to one that is more values/virtues led, rather than one that measures the success of the house via traditional routes of events won, exam grades gained etc.

Bennett et al. (1983) have proposed that the most effective character development entails introducing young people to time honoured virtues such as respect, patriotism, courage, honesty and kindness. It is important, they argue, to help students develop knowledge of ‘good’, so that they can ‘learn to choose well among competing and attractive options in life’. The development of this ‘moral literacy’ was the starting point for not only the character education leadership day but also the longer-term cultural shift that we hoped to achieve within the boarding house. A common feature of all of the schools highlighted in the Jubilee Centre Schools of Character Report (2014) is that time is created for personal reflection; reflection that allows pupils to discuss and reflect upon their own behavior relative to the specific school led virtues. The Jubilee Centre Schools of Virtue Report (2017) goes a little further in its guidance and recommends that character education should look to develop the intellectual virtue of Critical Thinking as an important part of the neo-Aristotelian character education toolkit. The proposed intervention over the course of the 2018/19 academic year of regular ‘reflective’ family meetings should allow the boys the opportunity to develop these critical thinking skills, especially if these discussions are centered around a specific virtue relative to its own Golden Mean. Caution does though have to be exercised and a landmark 2010 US study conclusively demonstrated that ‘copying and pasting’ a character education program into a school’s existing culture and practices is not likely to be successful; context matters. This gives weight to the proposed intervention of placing the boys at the heart of the decision-making process with regards to the virtues that, they themselves, want to put particular weight on over the course of the next academic year.

The intervention – the Character Education Workshop – was designed for Lower Sixth students as they were preparing to take on their leadership roles in the boarding house in the following academic year. the objectives were:

- For the pupils to gain an understanding of neo-Aristotelian character virtues and an understanding of the accompanying concept of the Golden Mean
- To understand the importance of virtues relative to moral identity, moral emotions and moral reasoning
- For the pupils to decide upon a particular ‘set’ of virtues that they wish to underpin the boarding house culture in 2018/19.

Implementation of Character Education Intervention

The ‘Character Education Workshop’ took place in June 2018 and was attended by all of the fourteen Lower Sixth boys in my boarding house. The boys were paired up and worked through the following tasks:

- Defining virtue.
- Discussion of what, in their opinion, constitutes ‘good character’.
- The boys then completed more individualised tasks where they were reflecting upon which character traits they felt would best describe their own character.
- This was then developed into selecting particular qualities that they thought were most important to them as a person and to decide collectively which virtues that they wanted to underpin the moral identity of the boarding house with in 2018/19.
- Boys then researched the question ‘What is meant by the Aristotelian concept of the Golden Mean?’
- This was followed by the task applying their understanding of the Golden Mean to the chosen House virtues to create a spectrum for each virtue.

For 2018/19 the boys decided they wanted to underpin the ‘moral identity’ of the boarding house with the following character traits:

- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Reflectiveness
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Inclusivity
- ✓ Respectfulness
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Ambitiousness

Teenagers are often reported as having values rooted in materialism, narcissism and a lack of ambition (Twenge, 2014). However, throughout the discussions observed and the resulting virtues decided upon, these do not appear to be in line with this trend. Furthermore, having been involved in senior boys’ boarding houses since the start of my career, I had expected to see values like bravery, competitiveness, independence and confidence at the fore of their discussions and written responses. The list displayed above is therefore somewhat enlightening and refreshing and not necessarily in line with preconceived ideals. Giving the boys ownership enabled them to become facilitators and empowered them in their own learning. Explaining to the boys that their chosen virtues would be on the fabric of the building (literally painting them on the walls), further embedded the culture, but also through repeatedly seeing them, day in day out, has enabled them to become more common place in their psyche, and hopefully in their moral decision making.

GIVING THE BOYS OWNERSHIP
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THEM IN THEIR OWN LEARNING.

A SCHOOL ETHOS BASED ON CORE VALUES, WHICH ARE
CLEAR AND WELL COMMUNICATED, CAN PROVIDE PURPOSE,
MOTIVATION AND DIRECTION FOR BOTH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.

Summary and Recommendations

The intervention allowed the boys to:

- Gain an embedded understanding of character virtues, traits of ‘good’ character and the Golden Mean.
- Establish the core virtues that will underpin the boarding house culture in 2018/19.
- Put in place a ‘Reflective Families System’ in house for 2018/19 – a system which allowed the boys to regularly reflect upon how the chosen virtues underpin their school, house, family and wider social life.

There is potentially plenty of material from this ongoing pilot study for future projects but caution must be taken in terms of branching out into much larger scale settings, unless of course there are effective and meaningful ways for the pupils involved to take ownership of their learning and the virtues that they wish to develop in a specific culture.

I was fortunate to be able to reflect upon the model outlined above with Christian Miller, author of The Character Gap, and to consider some of the wider lessons with regards to strategies that could be used to foster virtue within an educational setting:

1. It is vital that students build their understanding, from the outset, of the concepts of virtue, character and an awareness of what might constitute a virtuous life. It is important that students undertake their own research – this research could be where they seek out virtuous role models and reflect about virtues that they find particularly appealing from the individual in question.
2. It is important that students have ownership in the decision-making process as to which virtues they are going to place most prominence on. It is unrealistic to consider a large list of virtues and assume that they will be able to meaningfully engage with them, from both an understanding and behavioural perspective. Consideration should also be given to the wider school community and values i.e. how do the virtues fit within the context of a Christian community.
3. Ensure that students have visual reminders of their ‘chosen’ virtues – are there ways to display on the fabric of the building? Are there ways to display ‘moral reminders’ within the school setting.
4. Encourage students to actually practice virtuous behaviour – habit is important in building and instilling more permanence of the virtue.
5. The importance of regular reflective sessions to enable students to develop greater understanding of their own character flaws. These sessions also provide the opportunity for students to reflect and learn

from particular situations that may have arisen and to consider cognitive biases that may have encouraged, or contributed to, non-virtuous behaviour (the difference between A Virtuous Character and Our Actual Character – The Character Gap).

6. The importance of role models – i.e. there has to be buy in from staff who, themselves, have to have an understanding and reflective approach to ‘character’ and character education. For the culture to fully permeate, rather than exist in discrete pockets, the Headteacher and senior teachers have to be fully invested in the process.
7. Short term focus on virtues is not necessarily effective and, therefore, moving from one academic year to the next does not require a wholesale change in the list of virtues but more a more nuanced approach which will still allow the next set of students to feel they have equal ownership of the virtues.

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For me the purpose of education has always been first and foremost about human flourishing, drawing out the best in young people. If they live well they will enjoy their childhood and be good citizens, economic agents, and parents influencing the world for the better. This, of course, chimes with much repeated commentary on the need for schools to focus on wellbeing and on those skills and qualities that set human beings apart from the complex of technologies that will affect our futures.

Cranleigh’s motto Ex Cultu Robur, from culture comes strength, has largely been understood as a combination of learning about our western cultural heritage and learning from the experiences of a broad education. In that sense the education of character has always been a guiding purpose. Our culture appeared to be aligned with current needs; yet in practice we were in danger of assuming that our ethos was developing character without knowing for sure and we were facing the same societal issues as all schools around mental health, identity, exam stress, social media, family breakdown etc.

How then could we ensure that pupils could come through these challenges strengthened not weakened? And how could we ensure that are delivering on our values: Service, Relationships, Leadership, Excellence?

We identified several areas for further scrutiny mainly because we thought they would benefit from further development:

- Leadership: was the vision for leadership clearly understood by all members of the community and how successful were we in developing it?
- Co-education: Cranleigh has been fully co-educational for 20 years and increasing girls’ numbers towards parity had been a structural aim in the 2014–18 period; how successful were we in ensuring equality of opportunity? More importantly, do the attitudes of men and women, boys and girls, align with our desire to encourage mutual respect and empathy and support?

Closely linked and often stemming from the above we also looked at:

- Wellbeing: how successful are we at supporting pupil and staff wellbeing? What are people’s attitudes to it?
- Independence: in the academic sphere, were the initiatives to encourage independent learning and thinking we had put in place working? More generally, was the school encouraging people to stand on their own two feet?
- Initiative overload: like many schools of our type, there is a tendency to add and not to take away. What was truly making a difference?

FOR ME THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN FIRST AND FOREMOST ABOUT HUMAN FLOURISHING, DRAWING OUT THE BEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE.

In order to gain a more accurate picture so that any change was appropriately channelled, we commissioned two pieces of independent audit research, one on leadership and one on co-education. In each, the researcher was residential and fully immersed in the school, interviewing pupils and staff and observing lessons, activities, boarding etc. Independence was vital not only so that those interviewed felt sufficient confidentiality to be open but also to prevent our own bias acting as a filter. Simultaneously we ensured that we thoroughly scrutinised our safeguarding culture. Put simply, the greatest threats to character development are likely to be safeguarding matters. Safeguarding is cultural; it is not compliance.

The full details of the research are beyond the scope of this article but at a strategic level the following became clear:

- Ethos and vision were understood implicitly but there needed to be a much clearer articulation for all to be aligned, especially in understanding what the school understood leadership to be;
- some pupils interviewed claimed that they knew what bad behaviour looked like; they were not always sure what good behaviour looked like;
- there were many excellent individual activities, opportunities and examples of leadership and character development but their purpose needed to be better understood to measure how valuable they were for personal development;
- professional development opportunities were not consistently aligned to school direction;
- curation not creation needed to be the order of the day for busy staff and pupils;
- boys and girls needed more opportunities to reflect together on the matters that were important to them to gain greater empathy and understanding.

As a result, from 2019 we will be articulating and extending our culture and ethos to strengthen character (Ex Cultu Robur) we are redefining our aspirations for the character we wish to encourage: we want Cranleighans to be thinking, being, giving people.

- Cranleigh Thinking is thinking beyond the test;
- Cranleigh Being is who we are and how we are in the communities in which we find ourselves;
- Cranleigh Giving is thinking beyond ourselves.

Each acts as a strategic intent giving direction to the operational actions which are set annually; as such they operate separately. Broadly speaking, Cranleigh Thinking is associated with ‘academic’ initiatives, and Being with pastoral, boarding, co-education, co-curricular, and spiritual aspects. This enables us to curate what we do more effectively and in time to evaluate what really works. However, they are clearly all interconnected, as exemplified by Cranleigh Giving. Acting as a strategic intent, it articulates strategic actions to further enhance existing partnerships with local schools and the community and to raise funds for Foundation bursaries, increase the number of Royal Springboard children etc. We need thinking, being, giving individuals. As Thomas Carlyle writes in ‘Signs of the Times’:

To reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake and all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on himself.

Sometimes innovation is not discovering something new, but a new way of looking at things in a moment in time. Lindblom’s paper, The Science of ‘Muddling Through’ (1959), though now sixty years old, still resonates. When writing about the future of planning, he claims that a ‘new order’ of planning is required within an environment unsuited to linear plans:

Thus plans will not be made and implemented. Rather they will be made

and remade endlessly as the school proceeds through a process of successive approximations to agreed objectives derived from policy, both of which may change before being achieved (quoted in Bell, 1998, p.458)

I think most school innovation demonstrates how we ‘muddle through’ with an ‘intended plan’. The character of leadership for change is no different: it just requires research, a little imagination, an identified purpose, and the willingness to try something that may or may not work.

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HAPPINESS STARTS FROM WITHIN. HOW DO WE GET MORE HAPPY PEOPLE?

Elke Edwards | Founder and Creative Director, Ivy House

Let me ask you a question: how many happy people do you know? I am not talking about skipping through the daisies happy, or the ‘happy shiny people’ kind of happy. I am talking about the really solid kind of happy. The happy that comes from feeling comfortable in your own skin, being in relationships that are kind and respectful, studying what you are passionate about, doing work you love and feeling valued while you do it.

In my opinion, fostering happiness is the principal purpose of character education, underpinned by a belief that confident, collaborative and curious people will have happier and more successful lives.

Yet what I find fascinating about the need for character education is that it is closely linked to the human condition. Anyone that has spent time with toddlers will testify to their innate confidence. We are born confident, curious and collaborative. We are also born with the ability to communicate and commit to what we are interested in. I recently watched a 5-year-old, Katie, building a dam in a stream... nothing would get in her way. She was oblivious to her mum calling her in for tea and nor did she care that she was knee-deep in cold and muddy water for hours because she was in ‘her element’. She was in ‘the zone’. Until that dam could withstand a minor tsunami, she wasn’t shifting, and, in that moment, she was an engineer and a craftsman.

The fact is, these skills and ways of thinking make a cognitive, emotional, and material difference to how people’s lives turn out. The question is how do we help people access them? For me, having worked as a senior executive coach for twenty-five years, there are three things that make a standout difference.

First, we need to recognise that, instead of these attributes being found outside of us, they are already within every one of us. Our job as educators, as facilitators of human potential, is to help people to reconnect and build from what already exists. What this means is that instead of starting with a position of ‘lacking’, e.g. ‘I am just not a confident person’ we start from a place of abundance, e.g. ‘I was born confident; all I need to do is choose the thinking and behaviour that accesses it’.

Just a few months ago, I was working with Jon, a senior leader who told me in no uncertain terms that his problem was that he had always been shy. He therefore absolutely couldn’t do the kind of public addresses required of him. After working with him, however, I saw him stand up in front of over 5,000 people, speak for 30 minutes with a single mind-map as a guide and, at the end, get a standing ovation. What happened? First, he had understood that ‘shy’, like so many things, was actually just set of feelings and behaviours generated from the thoughts he was choosing to focus on.

And, if he wanted, he could change the focus of his thinking at any moment and produce a different result.

This brings me to the second key thing which makes all the difference. The learning needs to be relevant. Jon was able to learn how to change his thinking around being shy because it mattered to him. He was interested in being able to present well so could perform in his job. Therefore, curiosity in new things, ideas, and behaviours is usually seen about the things that interest us.

And finally, if we want to support people to live their best lives, we need to show them how to live from a place of ‘core strength’. Core strength is a set of personal identifiers that make up our unique blueprint. So, when we talk about giving students’ ‘character’ in order that they can go on and live their best lives, we have to help them find their character, their values, their beliefs, their vision and discover what puts them in their element. Like curiosity, character is not a one size fits all thing. It is something we need to discover within us and then bolster by learning a set of skills that matter to us. When people understand how to live from their core strength they show up as their best selves, they are grounded and able to realign easily when things get out of balance.

So, here’s the good news. Teenagers love it when they discover this. The moment they realise that all these great attributes are already inside them AND they can access them at any point, they sit up and listen. In my experience character is something that must be discovered, supported and above all facilitated. When we take the time to do this, we create more happy people and, in doing that, we begin to change the world.

#DIGITALCHARACTER @CHELTCOLL: A STUDY ON DIGITAL CHARACTER

Rebecca Mace | Head of Digital Character, Cheltenham College

As schools look to develop resilience, grit, and personal flourishing, they should also look to do the same with regards to digital intelligence and character; encouraging digital resilience, principled interdependence and personal flourishing using digital tools. Therefore, inspired by the notion that ideal character traits need nurture in order to become established the #digitalcharacter project aimed to develop student moral character in an online setting.

Emphasising the school's values, education in digital ethics, and effective role modelling the project was designed with a focus upon practical action and intervention with both online and offline strategies being implemented. The project had a multimodal approach, with staff to staff education, student to student teaching and learning, as well as staff and student collaborative learning. This article will focus upon one aspect of this taken from the 'Student/ Staff shared Space' depicted in the diagram above – a student led Instagram used as a vehicle to develop character school wide.

'TO EDUCATE A PERSON IN MIND AND NOT IN MORALS IS TO EDUCATE A MENACE TO SOCIETY'

Instagram Pilot Project

The Instagram pilot was designed to reach the pupils in a range of ways in order to highlight and educate the community regarding desirable online values and character traits, thereby improving their digital ethic and ability to make informed moral decisions when necessary in light of the digital risks they face.

The character values that were championed through Instagram were identified by the house collectively through a process of Values Clarification (Superka & Ahrens, 1976) and these were overtly shared, reiterated throughout and posted on both virtual and real-life walls. They were the values the students believed to be worthwhile, as opposed to staff or the school, and they were not considered to be relativistic but believed to be achievable and relevant to all. Having established these character traits/values the boys then looked to influence their wider audience to uphold/ endorse the same behaviours and those impacted via the feed were involved in a further process of inculcation (ibid.).

Having started some really interesting conversations the project took a new turn when the Influencers decided it would be good to set up a second account; there is a fairly established global culture for young people to have at least two parallel accounts on Instagram. These are often referred to as a R-insta (Real Instagram) and a F-insta (Fake Instagram). Ironically the F-instagram is the one on which they are more likely to post the sillier, less curated, and therefore more real, versions of themselves, and the R-instagram is designed to look more clearly curated and polished (and is therefore probably less 'real').

Rinstagram

The Rinstagram has 108 followers, mostly current students, but also old boys, younger siblings and parents. The content is more sensible and curated to ensure that the values they are looking to educate about are clearly signposted – e.g. the value of 'Happy' being highlighted in the post #InternationalDayOfHappiness or 'Empathetic' being reflected in the post of the Mental Health Awareness Foundation #MHFQuestionTime asking 'What mental health advice would you give to your younger self?'

Finstagram

The Finstagram has 445 followers (and rising), mostly current students, a handful of parents, some prep school boys (siblings/boys due to join etc), and some old boys. Given the size of College this means that roughly half of the people in the school will have seen the content first hand. The F-insta is meant to provide a more 'real', less curated 'warts and all' version of house life, but as is the case with all social media, this has more to do with a genre of editing than a reality. 'Happy' and 'Inclusive' are the virtues that continually run through this account.

Evaluation

By changing the conversation from one that focused upon the quantity of screen-time, to one which considered quality, the #digitalcharacter project built upon elements from three strands of Character Education:

- 1) Seeking to develop Eudaimonism, students were asked to consider the use of social media to improve flourishing. The boys considered a range of media and decided upon the one which they felt had the most reach in their social ecology. They then looked to curate content that would be useful for others to access and followed these accounts. This meant that all those who in turn followed their account would have a ready-made list of curated content on mental health, eating disorders, body image, men's health and so on. It also enabled anyone who follows the account to help their friends more easily as they have a resource bank that is easily accessible, informal and non-threatening. They felt that by publically emphasising these messages it would improve the community life of the school, thereby facilitating flourishing. This had a positive effect as people were able to use the content to inform upon real-life discussions, some of which started from stimulus content shared online and some began offline but then moved online with people pointing one another to the suggested resources in both instances. Empathy, one of the values/character traits identified at the outset as important, was clearly being lived out and those who were acting in line with this were held up as good role models within their online community.
- 2) Social media naturally lends itself to the observation of others, and in line with agent-based theory, the project sought to highlight positive values, guiding students towards those who are judged to have admirable traits. The curated content on the Rinsta account pointed people towards those who were well known to have admirable traits, celebrities, sports and television personalities the boys admired and so on, but more interestingly the content on the Rinsta held up people from within the school and a variety of year groups and

social groupings as well. This had a positive effect with people feeling able to follow certain positive trends of behaviour as they were coming from within their own peer group.

Students from all year groups, house matrons, and teaching staff were all involved and people who were not the obvious choices for promotion developed a media presence by virtue of their behaviour. The smaller boys, or ones from the less cool social groupings, those who had anxiety issues, or struggled to get it right on occasion, were all brought to the fore for a positive reason at one point or another. The nature of the media form enabled participation in a way they felt comfortable with, as they were able to re-shoot, edit, choose whether it was static photo or video content. The values that were highlighted through the interviews or activities highlighted the importance of charitable activity, inclusivity, respect, and ambition, failure also being a point of learning; grit, social awareness and empathy were all demonstrated to be good character traits within the online community they developed. Although some of it was clearly a parody, the values they were promoting still came through strongly.

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3) Involving an ethics of care allowed for increased reflectivity as the influence students had on one another online was placed under greater scrutiny. ‘The curation of information to tell a story creates a sense of responsibility for the curator’ (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013) and the reflectivity involved in deciding what to post and on which page (or not at all) was a version of practising moral decisions in low stakes settings in preparation for a larger moral issues. Virtues of character and good conduct arise from habits that in turn can only be acquired by repeated action and correction. This moment of reflectivity before posting was a really important act to embed, so in the background of both accounts, was a ‘sleeper’/member of staff whose role was to facilitate quality reflection. The ‘Sleeper’ introduced suggestions for postings/topics that the Influencers may want to focus upon, facilitated education with regards to digital risk/ethics, and ensured that there was a safety net with regards to child protection. On top of this, the Influencers met weekly with the Sleeper to talk through the successes and failures of the previous week and decide upon the next few postings. Reflecting upon whom they had influenced and speculating upon why certain posts had more of an effect than others provoked many interesting conversations, both with the staff and students directly involved, but also the wider school community. Initially the Influencers were interested in simple numbers but soon they started looking at who acted and how, comparing the value of one post against another. They were able to reflect upon why fewer people were liking the content on the Rinsta, rather than the Finsta, although the reach was often the same given they were re-posting from one account to another. The sleeper would then follow the weekly meeting up with an email containing links and hashtags to highlight certain things that would be coming up as part of the wider world/community that they may want to bring into their posts, but the Influencers were free to ignore the suggestions if they wanted. Emailing these items to the Influencers, rather than use social media to share them, ensured a sense of digital distance was maintained as moving from one media form to another requires a more deliberate process than a ‘re-share’, thereby re-enforcing the moment of reflectivity before posting.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OFTEN ‘TECH SAVVY’ BUT DIGITALLY NAÏVE, ABLE TO USE THE TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE TO THEM BUT UNAWARE OF WHAT THE RISKS ARE OR HOW THEY MIGHT SPECIFICALLY APPLY TO THEM.

Conclusion

To present the internet as a merely dangerous place, putting the potential harms at the forefront of learning about its potential, is as inappropriate as it is ineffective. Research has repeatedly shown that young people are more likely to listen to one another than adults and if schools promote the dangers and risks in isolation from the benefits the response is one of three things: students will ignore everything that is said; they will become fearful and reluctant users of the internet; or they will actively seek out the risks as an exciting challenge. A few years ago the main digital risks were cyber-bullying, pornography, and violent content, whereas nowadays they are things like fake news, datafication of children, profiling, sexting/revenge porn, and radicalisation (Livingstone, 2019). Young people are often ‘tech savvy’ but digitally naïve, able to use the technologies available to them but unaware of what the risks are or how they might specifically apply to them. Therefore, it is important they understand the benefits but are also able to use online tools and apps responsibly, not only being made aware of the impact that it has on them, but also the way their behaviour can influence others. The Instagram Pilot Project has made it clear that online social spaces have the opportunity to be at the heart of character development, providing an augmented social climate which is foundational for moral development. After all, online spaces are simply the new playground.

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THE ETONX APPROACH TO CHARACTER EDUCATION

Catherine Whitaker | CEO and Head of Learning at EtonX

EtonX is an education technology business wholly owned by Eton College. Our remit is to create technology and courses to develop the skills that teenagers need in order to reach their full potential. Our Future Skills Programme is a portfolio of short online courses in skills which could be seen as part of character education: Resilience, Verbal Communication, Making an Impact, Creative Problem Solving, and also more career or employment focused courses such as Interview Skills, Public Speaking and Entrepreneurship. Since we tend to use the term ‘soft skills’ as an umbrella term for the skills we cover, I will use it here too. We are usually working with students overseas aged 14-20, and even though we have been particularly active in South East Asia and the Arabian Gulf, we have had students from over 30 countries and from six continents take an EtonX course.

One question that we are frequently asked is whether it is possible to teach soft skills. In schools such as Eton, these skills are developed through a broad-based education and the opportunities for leadership and personal growth afforded by the house system and the very rich co-curricular life of the school. Courses which explicitly focus on a specific soft skill are a rarity.

When we began work on the Future Skills programme, the first challenge we met was that there was no agreement on what we should call these skills (‘soft skills’, ‘twenty-first century skills’, ‘non-cognitive skills’, ‘social and emotional skills’?) nor how to categorise the various skills under these umbrella terms. There are also multiple different frameworks and no agreement on standards (see Lucas). As Whitehurst (2016) concludes ‘The embrace of soft skills by education reformers is well in advance of the development of conceptual, instructional, measurement, and accountability models’.

One reason we believe that it is possible to teach soft skills is that for any given skill there are proven techniques which students need to be introduced to, internalise and then apply to their everyday lives. In our Verbal Communication course, for example, we introduce the ‘Baseball’ method, which is a communication technique to help students to verify their own interpretation of a disagreement and to share responsibility to find a solution. The four steps to follow are: (1) First Base: open the discussion; (2) Second Base: listen carefully without judgement and then establish if you’ve understood correctly; (3) Third Base: verify your interpretation or offer your own version; (4) Fourth Base: share responsibility for finding a solution and be prepared to compromise. We present the concept in an animated video using instructional graphics and realistic examples. Students then consolidate their learning in an interactive activity in which they identify the different steps (or ‘bases’)

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in an example. Next, they are asked to try applying the method by deciding what they would do in various scenarios and share their answers with their peers on the discussion forum. In the group class students engage in several role-plays in which they practise applying the technique and finally they personalise the topic by discussing examples of confrontations from their own lives.

The pedagogy we employ is also conducive to the development of soft skills. Our courses are delivered through a virtual classroom we have created expressly for the purpose of helping students communicate, work collaboratively and learn from one another. Our students meet once a week for a live group class with up to eight students and an EtonX tutor. Between classes, they follow the course through self-study and peer learning activities. We employ a flipped online learning model where students come to class to practise the techniques they have been introduced to through the self-study sections. The lessons in the virtual classroom involve role plays, discussions, debates and presentations with the tutor as facilitator rather than teacher. Students study in the same group through the course but those students can come from anywhere. Students are therefore developing intercultural awareness while learning to navigate online technologies which are used in workplaces across the world with distributed teams. We also regard every team as multi-ability, recognising that not all students come from the same ‘ground floor’.

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But we don't only believe that we are demonstrating that soft skills can be taught explicitly, we also want to ensure that students make progress and the efficacy of the course is measured. In order to do this we take multiple approaches to assessment:

- Situational judgement assessments – by asking students what they would do in a given situation at the start and end of the course, we can establish whether completing our course has had an impact on their likely behaviour.
- Self-assessment – by asking students to take a confidence survey at the beginning and the end of our courses: confidence that you can do something is an important factor in applying a skill to everyday life.
- Knowledge Test – to check retention of core concepts.
- Tutor assessment – the most important form of assessment: tutors assess student's skills either through a submitted assignment or through a practical assessment within the virtual classroom.

Assessment is an area where we are still innovating and as the number of students taking our courses grows, we will have greater levels of data on what works. We may begin to pinpoint variations between regions, age or gender. Interestingly, so far, we have seen a clear interest in soft skills across the world, and particularly in Asian countries where a different educational system is implemented. In the future, we aim to develop courses which cover these skills and to be able to contribute to the ongoing debate about how to define, develop and measure soft skills.

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DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RUPTURE: TRAUMA LITERATURE AS AN EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL

David Gibbons | English teacher, Eton College

When you tell a parent or colleague you're interested in the beneficial effects of trauma, reactions are (unsurprisingly) not always positive. Only few might associate this with resilience or character building. Pain can be an austere but excellent teacher. On the playing fields, being dropped to a lower team; in the classroom, failing a test; in life, loss: these events are where we learn most about ourselves, principally because we begin to turn our gaze inward.

As an English teacher conducting a study, my main interest was in literature. My focus was on emotional development, a fundamental aspect of character. And my main tool became a curriculum containing the genre that has come to dominate the book market in 21st century but with many antecedents – trauma literature – a genre centring on themes of loss and suffering, its content often shocking and violent (Luckhurst, 2013).

Since the work of Arnold (1864/1964) literature has been a core subject based on the presumption that reading helps build values, meaning and autobiographical certainties through offering narrative structures through which readers can, in Bakhtin's words, 'author the self' (Holquist, 1990, p. 84). Government policy echoes the Arnoldian concept that through reading students, 'develop... emotionally. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development' ('National curriculum in England: secondary curriculum', 2019, p.14).

Trauma literature may well lead to the outcomes government policy expects but through an unexpected route. Reading trauma literature does not lead to Arnoldian edification but instead to autobiographical, epistemological and emotional rupture. My study explores the premise that emotional development does not occur only through building identity on seemingly stable categories (of values, meaning, and narrative), but by recognising such categories are unstable, and limited in their ability to represent an individual, a life, or the nuanced and complex nature of experience. Acknowledging the role of 'rupture' in experience is a breakthrough in emotional development. What trauma literature leads to is a sort of negative capability, an inability to sit comfortably with complexity, with life events which do not make sense, that normal narrative cannot treat (Onega, 2011).

Method

My intervention involved 8 sixth-form students (4 in Year 12; 4 in Year 13) reading a trauma literature curriculum¹ over a period of 13 weeks in Spring 2019. Before reading the trauma curriculum, I interviewed each student one-to-one to explore their understanding of identity. The trauma curriculum was devised by using prevalidated trauma curriculums derived from previous studies of this kind, and in conversation with colleagues and participants.

After reading the trauma curriculum, I then re-interviewed students one-to-one exploring if, and how, their perceptions of identity may have changed.

Using traumatic experience filtered through narrative has been explored previously in education as a potential avenue for developing students' empathy and resilience (Farrell, 1998; Felman, 1991; Tribunella, 2014), but no study had focused exclusively on students' emotional development.

Summary of findings

Summary of pre-intervention interviews

In my first interviews, my sixth form participants appeared to be reflexively aware about how their identities are shaped and maintained. What emerged from the interview was that participants seemed to use common tools for constructing their identity and mastering experience. One of the main tools for constructing identity was reading literature. Students took literary techniques like narratives and characterisation, even interpretative strategies derived from looking closely at texts, and applied them confidently to their lives' shape and meaning. Because of literature's importance in shaping, and thereby mastering, experiences in participants' lives, comparisons between its effects on identity and trauma literature's were possible. Two other tools emerged from interviews as being used by participants for identity construction – language and role models.

Summary of post-intervention interviews

The second interview which took part after participants had read the trauma literature curriculum found that reading trauma literature led to realising previous tools for identity formation derived from conventional literature were imprecise. In order to compensate for the insufficiency of previous tools for identity construction, participants improvised – enhancing previous tools and creating new ones. For example, reading more conventional literature had been indicated in the first interview as offering participants ways to shape their experiences along straightforward narratological lines. However, the interventions' heavy traumatic content, challenged previous strategies of reading and interpretation which participants had had such confidence in previously. As a result of the intervention, participants enhanced former strategies of interpretation by not just reading trauma texts once, but by rereading traumatic texts, sometimes even going further, reading them aloud to others to gain their analytical support. This engagement with the traumatic content, allowed participants to also see the limitations of their previous tools for identity construction and maintenance. They were, as a result of reading the trauma curriculum, much more aware of the potential unstable and uncertain categories they had built their identity on and were therefore able to temper their identity, in some cases becoming more comfortable with aporia, or a state of negative capability (Onega, 2011).

¹ Foxe's The Book of Martyrs (1563); Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (1596), and King Lear (1606); Milton's Samson Agonistes (1671); Marvell's 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's return from Ireland' (1650, pub. 1681); Melville's Moby Dick (1851)

THE JOURNEY OF CHARACTER EDUCATION AT ST RONAN’S

Richard Vassar-Smith | *Assistant Deputy Headmaster, St Ronan’s*

Conclusion

Considering why emotional development as identity is important to learning and teaching is a good ending point. Shulman (2002) has been used by other theorists working in the trauma-education field to explain why identity formation and emotional development is the bedrock of learning (Murphy, Muckerheide & Roen, 2006). For Shulman (2002), without identity learning cannot occur because information must find a place within an autobiographical schema we call identity.

That learning is inextricably part of an ability to narrativise, to represent and order, has frequently been claimed (Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1995). And this same ability to order knowledge into narrative, is the same ability required to order experience into identity. Reading trauma literature can demonstrate how students will be better able to cope with the challenges of all types of abstraction, traumatic, mathematic, scientific or literary put in their way as they go through life. Trauma narratives may be the most useful of narratives for demonstrating how to make new narrative tools, and for testing, tempering, even annealing identity – an identity formed through self-narration (Luckhurst, 2013).

And it this idea of annealing identity on which I want to end. Trauma literature helps create an identity by tempering it – colliding what trauma literature engenders – ‘uncertainty’, ‘unpredictability’, ‘doubts’ – with more conventional attributes of identity – ‘values’, ‘faith’, ‘love’. Trauma narratives, more than conventional ones, make readers aware of the structural instability of their own autobiographical narratives, and epistemological categories. By rupturing previous tools of mastery and identity construction, participants in my study found themselves in a disquieted state of negative capability, leading them to search for and create better tools for understanding their own identity.

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Character education has always been at the heart of Saint Ronan’s mission. In his book ‘The Master and his Boys’ (published in 1924) Stanley S. Harris, headmaster at the time, dedicated a chapter specifically to the development of his charges’ character. The challenge in 2019 is to apply this vision – in the context of a modern co-educational prep school – to a rapidly changing world and decide which types of character skills will make our children successful and happy 21st century adults, with the capacity to innovate, lead and make significant contributions.

Our journey of enquiry at Saint Ronan’s began five years ago. As a whole staff, we identified the ‘Ronian’ values that we thought represented our school and our vision for the children; namely Perseverance, Imagination, Co-operation, Awareness, Empathy, Curiosity. We were assisted by Jane Simister, author of ‘The Future Smart school’. Having identified our core values, we presented them to the children using school and year group assemblies, posters, school literature etc. These strategies will be, in all likelihood, familiar to any teacher and school leader. However, despite our best efforts, we were forced to acknowledge that the values did not seem to be becoming embedded in a way that was sufficiently meaningful for the children. They were simply not part of the school’s vernacular to the extent that we had hoped.

So, the question remained: how we could make the values an integral feature of the children’s day-to-day experience? We were mindful not to overburden teachers with yet another initiative during the already busy days!

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We considered whether we needed to introduce an ‘off-the-peg’ solution such as the ‘7 Cs of Communication’. The 7 Cs has a degree of commonality with our ‘Ronian’ values and is a model that has been successfully applied in other schools in the south-east. However, we decided that we are proud of our school’s particular values – the challenge was to how to make it more relevant to the children. In addition, we wanted to reflect the pedagogic journey that we have been on over the last three years. In that time, we have introduced graduated success criteria (to provide additional academic stretch for all pupils), focused on higher-order thinking skills, and continued to foster Growth Mindset and mindfulness. How could our values best support these important initiatives?

Having gone back to the drawing board, we decided that our solution needed to be: a) bespoke; b) manageable; c) delivered according to the framework for character teaching in school (as set out by the Jubilee Centre; d) above all, relevant to the children.

We decided that in addition to the usual strategies (such as assemblies) we needed a ‘delivery system’ to give the values a sense of currency. Each child in the school has a planner in which they record their prep and achievements. In the centre of this year’s planners, we reproduced a beautiful pen and ink illustration of the school site. Various locations in the school and grounds were ascribed a value (from the now expanded list). Stickers were created; these showed the location as well as having one of values written on it. The system now works thus:

- i. Teachers and school prefects award stickers that relate to a particular value when they see evidence of it in practice, e.g. kindness.
- ii. Pupils affix the sticker to their jumper (so as not to interrupt lessons locating planners). They then stick it into the planner in the correct location.
- iii. Once a certain number of stickers have been collected, the children can present their planners to the headmaster. A ‘full house’ – quite an achievement – results in a letter home from the Head.

To further support this initiative, bespoke metal signs (in the school’s colours) were placed in the relevant locations. The pupils have also been encouraged to colour the pen and ink illustration in their planners. To support this, the Art department created a large, beautifully coloured poster of the illustration. This has been framed and placed in the school’s foyer, so it is seen every day by the whole school community.

As anyone involved in education knows, no strategy retains its currency for ever! Therefore, we planned to introduce some changes in order to keep the children focused. The Music department is in the process of producing its own stickers in order to complement the approach.

Other changes are more thematic. Creative thinking – due to be assessed by PISA in 2021 – is a hot topic in schools. As creativity is one of our core values, we are having a focus on it at the start of the next academic year. To support this, stickers associated with the Centre for Real-World Learning's five dimensional model of creativity have been created. Collecting all five of these will be worthy of a special reward. This will allow us to encourage creative endeavour, which brings with it benefits such as increasing pupil achievement and the positive association with social and emotional factors without launching a totally new programme, or any additional burden on teachers.

An award based on the 'knightly virtues' is being considered, using resources from 'Knightly Virtues: Enhancing virtue literacy through stories' by Arthur, et al. (2014). Other research-based ideas, such as Yale University's RULER system, are also being considered.

One of the things we pride ourselves on is pastoral care. A key feature of the sticker rewards system is the positive interaction between the child receiving the sticker and the prefect, teacher, form tutor, and headmaster. We have noticed that children have started to comment on their peers' behaviour and even recommend awards. There was evidence of this in an end-of-term survey. 44% of pupils were able to say why an award should be made to another child.

In conclusion, it is possible to design a bespoke system using evidence-based research to help foster and develop positive character traits. As a school, we are still working on assessing and improving the impact of the programme, as well as ways to keep it relevant and exciting for the most important consumers, the pupils.

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*OTHER RESEARCH-
BASED IDEAS, SUCH
AS YALE UNIVERSITY'S
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