

How Do We Create Positive Institutions?¹

Motivational Quote #1: "The children are always ours, every single one of them...
Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."
-- James Baldwin

Motivational Quote #2: "Character education depends on our relationship with our children and that character traits cannot be transmitted by words but must be conveyed by actions"
-- Haim Ginott

Motivational Quote #3: "Be the change."
-- Mohandas Gandhi

Motivational Quote #4: "People are like stained glass windows;
they shimmer and shine when the sun is out
but when darkness sets in their true beauty
can only be revealed if there is a light from within."
-- Elisabeth Kubler Ross

Motivational Quote #5: "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." -- Michaelangelo

Motivational Quote #6: "Child, give me your hand that I may walk in the light of your faith in me."
-- Hannah Kahn

Motivational Quote #7:



What would you consider the characteristics of a positive institution?

Section I: Overview

Session Objective:

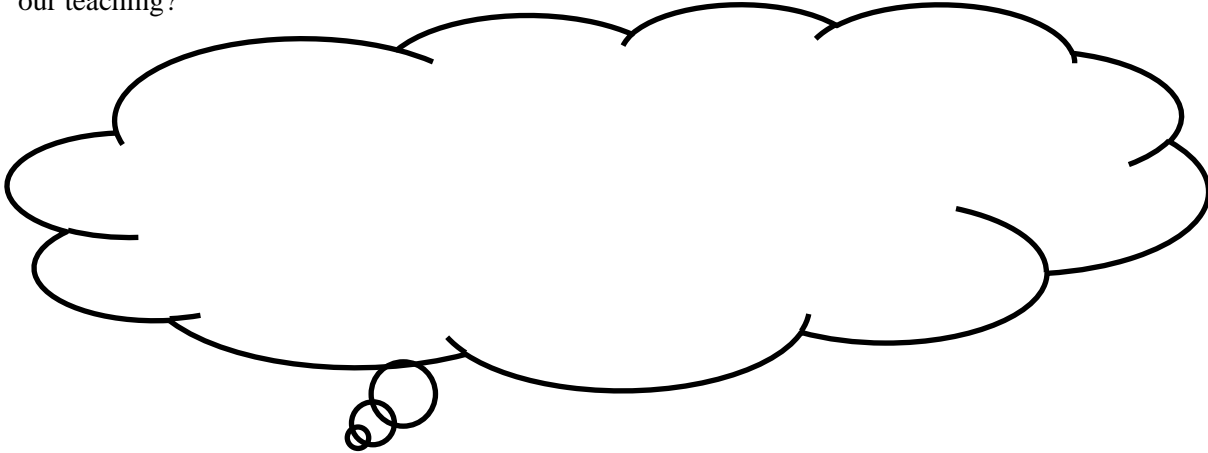
To generate two ways that what we're learning about character can improve our individual and collective work with our kids

¹ This session is rooted in the remarkable character strength research of Martin Seligman, Chris Peterson, and Angela Duckworth. Their research is largely credited with creating the field of positive psychology. In addition, this session represents a collaborative effort with some remarkable teachers – Mitch Brenner, Thomas Brunzell, Caleb Dolan, Mayme Hostetter, Brent Maddin, Joe Negron, Chi Tschang, and Mike Witter.

Section II: Looking in the mirror – Part I:

- a) Pick 1 or 2 of the behaviors and write a time during the past week when you used this indicator in your professional life.
- b) Pick 1 or 2 of the behaviors and write a time during the past week when you used this indicator in your personal life.

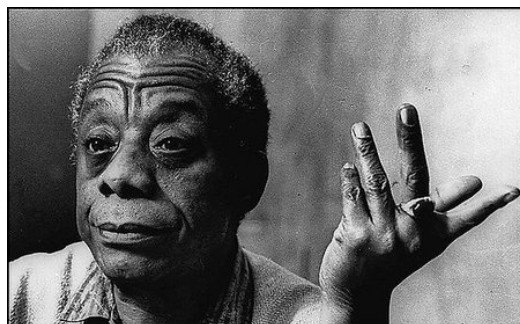
In reflecting upon these times, what is 1-2 key insight about how these behaviors could impact our lives and our teaching?



Looking in the mirror – Part II:

What has worked for your school in regards to character development?

Where has your school struggled the most in regards to character development?



If you had absolute power, what would you change tomorrow about your school’s approach to character?

So, why don’t you make this change? ☺

Section III: Seven Keys

Of the seven keys listed below to developing character, which are your schools currently doing in a structured and systematic way?

Seven Keys to Developing Character:

- 1. Believe It and Model It:** Breathe life into the James Baldwin quote that, “The children are ours. Every single one of them...children have never been very good at listening to their elders but have never failed to imitate them.”
- 2. Name It:** Give the intangible and often unnamed a name. Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson identified 24 character strengths that lead to happy, engaged, and meaningful lives. 8 of these strengths are ‘highly predictive’ strengths: zest, grit, self-control, hope, love, social intelligence, gratitude and curiosity.
- 3. Find It:** Introducing kids to real-world and fictional examples that display the various character strengths
- 4. Feel It:** Giving kids the opportunity to feel the positive effects of being character-full.
- 5. Integrate It:** Creating dual-purpose experiences and lessons that involve the character strengths
- 6. Encourage It:** Providing people with growth mindset praise (i.e. precise & descriptive) around character
- 7. Track It:** Recording and discussing regularly progress toward character goals

Can you generate at least two ways these keys and the structured and systematic use of the behaviors could improve how your school approaches character?

What concerns would you have about incorporating these keys and the behaviors into your work?

Section IV: Let's Feel It!

Avoidance and Approach Goals²:

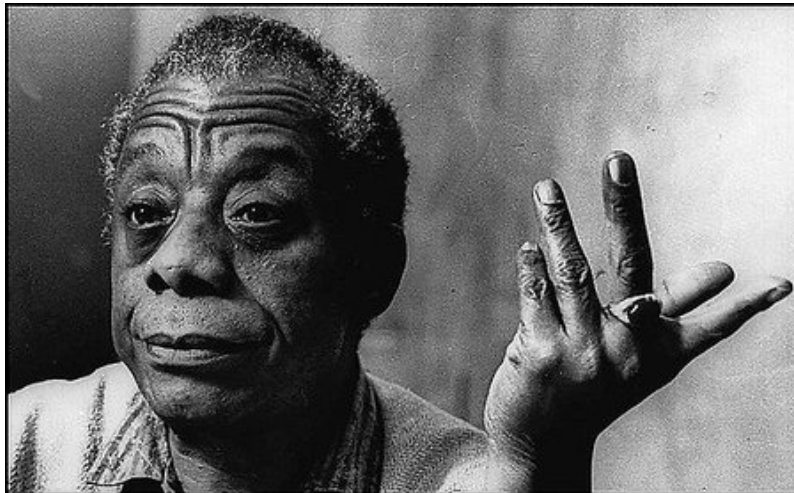
Please Jot down one of your 2012 New Year's Resolutions or one of your personal or professional goals.

Avoidance goals: _____

Approach goals: _____

If your resolution is an avoidance goal, please transform it into an approach goal here:

If your resolution is already an approach goal, great! Please transform *this* avoidance goal into an approach goal: "Students will not say my class is boring."



² These findings are from work by M. A. Church, A. J. Elliot, H. A. McGregor, and K. M. Sheldon, summarized in Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A new approach to getting the life you want*. New York: Penguin.

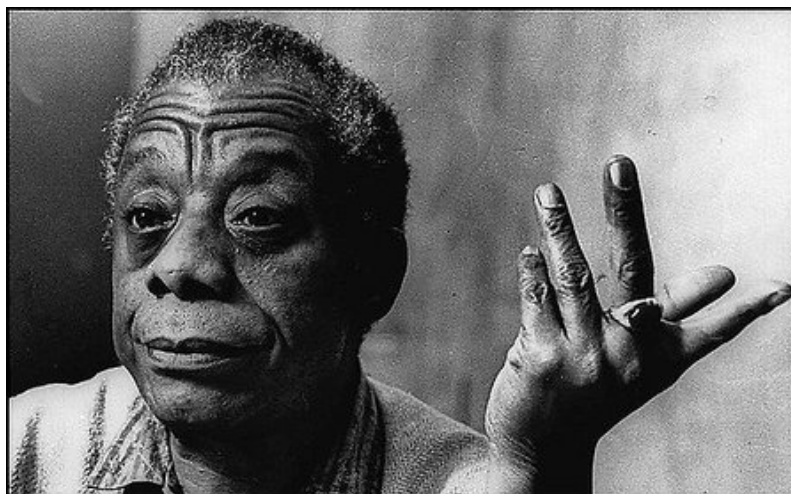
Strength Based Planning Document for you:

Your Student's Strengths and Goals: Choose one your students and write his / her name here: _____

Strength #1	Strength #2	Strength #3	Strength #4	Strength #5

Approach Goal: _____

Relevant Strengths	Ways You Could Use Your Strengths to Reach Goal	Progress Benchmarks
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.



Strength-Based Thinking: Take a moment to read the student description below and then jot down a couple of the student’s potential character strengths and a potential growth area.

“Jade is an enthusiastic and opinionated learner. Because she can be disruptive and occasionally disrespectful, I don’t think often about her character strengths. Once, when another student was excluded on the playground, she began to cry because she ‘could feel the hurt.’ Her mom told me that Jade often feels the pain of others and is quite troubled by it.”

Jade’s Strength #1	Jade’s Strength #2	Jade’s Growth Area

Characteristics of Effective Goals:

1. Specific
2. Measurable
3. Ambitious and Realistic
4. Timebound

Effective Character-Based Goal Addenda:

1. Approach-oriented
2. Aligned to key character strengths
3. Measurable OR Observable
4. Meaningful and Motivating → self-concordant

Effective Character-Based Approach Goals for Jade:

STARTER EXAMPLE:

STRONGER EXAMPLE:

Dual Purpose: The Marines are one of the world’s leaders in the concept of dual-purpose experiences. Every part of their training is designed to both train our Marines in the specific skill as well as the Marine’s core beliefs – unit, corp, God, and country. Great teachers do the same.

Dual Purpose Activity	Description / Examples
Academic + Academic	
Academic + Character	
Academic + Routines	
Character + Routines	
Multiple Combos	

Section V: Now what?

If any of what we discussed today inspired you for your school, let’s map out a plan.

- 1) Where would you want to begin?

- 2) Which of the “Seven Keys” from page p. 3 do you think you could tackle by June 2013?

- 3) What support from KIPP Foundation would you want?

Section V: Now what? (con't)

4) What from your current approach to character could improve what we're collectively doing?

5) What would prevent you from wanting to add some or all of the above to the work your school is currently doing around character?

Section VI: Private Victories and Public Victories:

What two insights from this session will change the way your school approaches character?

What could we collectively do as KIPP to improve the work we do around character with our kids?

What additional information or resources would you like to strengthen your approach to character?

Section VII: Additional Tools and Readings:

KIPP Character Growth Card and Supporting Materials³

OPTIMISM -- *approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated*

Gets over frustrations and setbacks quickly
Believes that effort will improve his or her future

ZEST – *approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated*

Actively participates
Shows enthusiasm
Invigorates others

GRIT -- *finishing what one starts; completing something despite obstacles; a combination of persistence and resilience.*

Finishes whatever he or she begins
Tries very hard even after experiencing failure
Works independently with focus

CURIOSITY -- *taking an interest in experience and learning new things for its own sake; finding things fascinating*

Is eager to explore new things
Asks and answers questions to deepen understanding
Actively listens to others

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE -- *being aware of motives and feelings of other people and oneself; including the ability to reason within large and small groups.*

Able to find solutions during conflicts with others
Demonstrates respect for feelings of others
Knows when and how to include others

GRATITUDE -- *being aware of and thankful for opportunities that one has and for good things that happen*

Recognizes and shows appreciation for others
Recognizes and shows appreciation for his/her opportunities

SELF-CONTROL – *regulating what one feels and does; being self-disciplined*

SELF-CONTROL – SCHOOL WORK

Comes to class prepared
Pays attention and resists distractions
Remembers and follows directions
Gets to work right away rather than procrastinating

SELF-CONTROL – INTERPERSONAL

Remains calm even when criticized or otherwise provoked
Allows others to speak without interruption
Is polite to adults and peers
Keeps temper in check

³ These behaviors were developed through a collaborative process that involved remarkable educators from KIPP and Riverdale Country School along with pioneering psychologists at the University of Pennsylvania and University of Michigan. Particular thanks are due to KIPP teachers -- Mitch Brenner, Tom Brunzell, Danielle Eisenberg, David Levin, Christine Vasconez, and Mike Witter; from Riverdale -- KC Cohen, Karen Fierst, and Dominic Randolph; from University of Pennsylvania -- Angela Duckworth and Martin Seligman; from University of Michigan -- Chris Peterson.

KIPP CHARACTER GROWTH CARD

Jane Smith Grade: 8		KIPP Imagine Date: 01/28/11	Q2	Q2					
OVERALL SCORE		4.30	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6	
Zest		4.28							
1	Actively participates	4.50	4	5	5	4	4	5	
2	Shows enthusiasm	4.17	5	4	3	4	4	5	
3	Invigorates others	4.17	3	4	5	4	5	4	
Grit		4.11							
4	Finishes whatever he or she begins	4.00	4	5	3	4	4	4	
5	Tries very hard even after experiencing failure	4.17	5	4	4	3	4	5	
6	Works independently with focus	4.17	4	4	3	4	5	5	
Self Control – School Work		4.33							
7	Comes to class prepared	4.50	4	5	5	5	4	4	
8	Pays attention and resists distractions	4.50	4	5	4	5	4	5	
9	Remembers and follows directions	4.17	4	5	5	4	3	4	
10	Gets to work right away rather than procrastinating	4.17	5	4	4	4	3	5	
Self Control – Interpersonal		4.54							
11	Remains calm even when criticized or otherwise provoked	4.50	4	5	4	5	5	4	
12	Allows others to speak without interruption	4.83	5	5	5	4	5	5	
13	Is polite to adults and peers	4.50	4	5	4	5	4	5	
14	Keeps his/her temper in check	4.33	4	5	4	4	5	4	
Optimism		4.25							
15	Gets over frustrations and setbacks quickly	4.33	5	4	4	4	5	4	
16	Believes that effort will improve his or her future	4.17	5	4	4	3	4	5	
Gratitude		4.25							
17	Recognizes and shows appreciation for others	4.17	4	4	5	4	5	3	
18	Recognizes and shows appreciation for his/her opportunities	4.33	5	4	5	3	4	5	
Social Intelligence		4.33							
19	Is able to find solutions during conflicts with others	4.17	4	4	3	5	4	5	
20	Demonstrates respect for feelings of others	4.50	5	4	4	4	5	5	
21	Knows when and how to include others	4.33	5	4	4	4	5	4	
Curiosity		4.28							
22	Is eager to explore new things	4.17	5	4	3	4	5	4	
23	Asks and answers questions to deepen understanding	4.50	5	4	5	4	4	5	
24	Actively listens to others	4.17	4	4	5	4	5	3	

SCALE

- 1= Very much unlike the student
- 2= Unlike the student
- 3= Somewhat like the student
- 4= Like the student
- 5= Very much like the student

Kindergarten UNITE Rubric⁴

4- Almost always demonstrates this

3- Frequently demonstrates this

2- Sometimes or with support demonstrates this

1- Rarely or only with teacher support demonstrates this

<p>Understand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Recognizes and shows appreciation for others (says thank you)- Demonstrates respects for our school and the feelings of others (body awareness, using hands in a safe way, asks for permission)- Able to find solutions during conflicts with others (uses the peace path, finds nice and safe solutions)- Remains calm even when criticized or provoked (Stays calm and moves on)- Knows when and how to include others (asks people to play)
<p>Never Give Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Finishes whatever he or she begins- Tries hard even after experiencing failure- Works independently with focus (works for 6-10 minutes)- Remembers and follows directions (is able to follow classroom routines, center directions)- Pays attention and resists distraction
<p>Imagine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gets over frustrations and setbacks quickly (goes to timeout calmly, transitions back to learning successfully after a consequence)- Believes that effort will improve his/her future
<p>Take a Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Actively participates (raises hand)- Tries new things (talking to a new friend, trying a new center)- Seeks out challenging tasks
<p>Explore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Actively listens to others (tracks speaker, reacts appropriately with hand signals, etc.)- Shows enthusiasm (body language and facial expressions show engagement)- Invigorates others (gives shoutouts and shine)- Eager to explore new things (makes connections)- Asks and answers questions to deepen understanding

⁴ Many thanks to the KIPP Infinity Elementary School team for all of their efforts on the creation of this.

1st Grade UNITE Rubric⁵

4- Almost always demonstrates this

3- Frequently demonstrates this

2- Sometimes or with support demonstrates this

1- Rarely or only with teacher support demonstrates this

<p>Understand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Recognizes and shows appreciation for others (says thank you, respects and appreciates differences or preferences of others)- Demonstrates respects for our school and the feelings of others (respects property, recognizes feelings of others and responds appropriately,)- Able to find solutions during conflicts with others (uses the peace path, finds nice and safe solutions)- Remains calm even when criticized or provoked (Stays calm and moves on)- Knows when and how to include others (asks people to play, able to initiate and/or maintain conversations on a single topic)
<p>Never Give Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Finishes whatever he or she begins (sets goal with teacher assistance, has a plan)- Tries hard even after experiencing failure (uses positive self talk, keeps trying even during a challenging task)- Works independently with focus (works for 10-15 minutes)- Remembers and follows directions (is able to follow classroom routines, center directions)- Pays attention and resists distraction
<p>Imagine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gets over frustrations and setbacks quickly (goes to timeout calmly, transitions back to learning successfully after a consequence)- Believes that effort will improve his/her future
<p>Take a Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Actively participates (raises hand, generates and shares ideas during turn and talks and group discussions)- Tries new things (talking to a new friend, trying a new center)- Seeks out challenging tasks
<p>Explore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Actively listens to others (tracks speaker, reacts appropriately with hand signals, etc.)- Shows enthusiasm (body language and facial expressions show engagement)- Invigorates others (gives shoutouts and shine, generates talk around learning)- Eager to explore new things (makes connections)- Asks and answers questions to deepen understanding

⁵ Many thanks to the KIPP Infinity Elementary School team for all of their efforts on the creation of this.

Four Ways to Create Dual Purpose Experiences:

Smaller Lesson Elements (More Frequent?)	Larger Lesson Elements (Less Frequent?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Nows • Specific questions that incorporate character language • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic objectives that incorporate character • • • • •
Implicit Lesson Elements	Explicit Lesson Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word problems that incorporate students demonstrating character strengths • Long research essay that develops grit • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit “Be Nice” or other character language practice questions • Essay about conflict from another POV • • • •

Do Nows / Homework:

Science: Write down three things that you would like to know about The Solar System.

History: “An eye for an eye leaves the world blind.” – Gandhi

How does this quote demonstrate Gandhi’s value of love over vengeance?

Math: Brian won a jellybean contest by guessing the closest number of jellybeans in the jar. He won a total of 952 jellybeans. He decided to share the jellybeans with the other students in his class. There are 28 students in the class, including Brian.

How many jellybeans would each student receive if Brian shares the beans equally?

Which character strength is Brian demonstrating? _____

Writing: Write a thank you letter to _____ for _____

Reading: Which of the following best describes the protagonist’s choice? Why?

- a. Socially intelligent b. Grateful c. Curious d. Loving

Hooks:

“We’ve recently been building our stamina during independent reading. Good stamina requires lots of self-control, because you have to ignore distractions, and lots of grit, because it isn’t easy reading without stopping for ___ minutes. So today, we’re actually going to be practicing grit and self-control.”

“We’ve been discussing some of the attitudes and choices made by leaders during the Battle of Gettysburg. Why would hope and optimism be important qualities for the winning side?”

“Today we’re going to learn about the scientific method. Scientists are fueled by curiosity. They design experiments in order to investigate their own questions and interests and discover new things. Today, you’re going to have the opportunity to use your curiosity to design an experiment.”

Practice:

- a. Work with a colleague to brainstorm 2 or 3 questions you could place on a Do Now, homework assignment, or other spiraled review that incorporate a character strength or character-related vocabulary.

- b. Write a hook or connection to a lesson you recently taught or a lesson you are planning to teach soon. Select a character strength that you could work into that hook.

Sample Dual Purpose Objectives for Several Subjects

	Reading	Writing	Social Studies	Science	Math
Gratitude	To judge which characters in the story have the greatest sense of gratitude.	To compose a gratitude letter using appropriate adjectives and adverbs.	To evaluate whether or not the colonists were justified in revolting against the British or lacking gratitude.	Write a letter of gratitude to a scientist who made an important discovery that we should all be thankful for.	To design and analyze data from a gratitude survey based on 4 possible types of gratitude.
Optimism/Hope	To determine whether or not the author intended to create an optimistic or pessimistic ending to their story.	Write a literary essay on <u>To Kill a Mockingbird</u> based on the theme of hope.	Select two aspects of American society that you would improve and create a plan of changes would you make to the present government to make our country better.	Select a solution to a world problem that could be solved by science and address the way the world would be better as a result of such a scientific achievement.	Reflect on which skills you have mastered in our current unit and set goals for future improvements.
Curiosity	Identify two genres that are out of your comfort zone and create a reading plan to find a book within each genre.	Write a letter to a pen pal, focusing on asking lots of questions about aspects of their personal life and culture that you want to know more about.	Generate a list of questions about the topic of Ancient Egypt that will guide your independent research project.	To create a series of “curiosity questions” that will help you dig deeper into your inquiry project and satisfy your hunger for knowledge.	To use three different algorithms for long division and judge which one works the best for you.
Love	To describe how Holden Caulfield’s ability or inability to be loved affects his choices or happiness in <u>Catcher in the</u>	Write a love story.	Compare and contrast how two world leaders showed patriotic love.	Discuss the biology of love, address its origins and the biological benefits of being “in love.”	To use geometric shapes to create the perfect Valentine card for someone you love. 😊

	<u>Rye.</u>				
Self-Control	To explain the relationship between self-control and success for a character in your book.	To write a memoir about a small moment when you failed to show good self-control and how you would relive it.	Analyze slave narratives and explain the ways that slaves were forced to show incredible self-control.	Design an experiment that measures self-control as it relates to biology, psychology, or ecology.	To use the strategy of guess and check to solve multiple step algebraic word problems (also grit)
Social-intelligence	To devise a book club rubric based on social intelligence and evaluate yourself and your partners using the rubric.	To write a personal essay based on a prompt relating to the importance of social intelligence in middle school.	To engage in a seminar style debate by following expectations for respectfully disagreeing with teammates.	To give honest but respectful feedback to teammates based on the design of their science experiments.	To work effectively in partnerships to complete multi-step story problems.
Zest	To perform a special book talk to share books that we loved and are excited to recommend.	To add emotional punch to our monologues by improving voice and word choice.	To design questions for a special edition of “History Jeopardy” and compete in teams for point.	To have fun mummifying dead chickens with our groups!	To use a special chant to roll your multiples of 3, 6, and 9.

Your Turn: Pick 2 strengths and complete the following objective chart

	Reading	Writing	Social Studies	Science	Math

Strength Based Planning Document:

Your Student's Strengths and Goals: Choose one your students and write his / her name here: _____

Student Strength #1	Student Strength #2	Student Strength #3	Student Strength #4	Student Growth Area

Academic or Character-Strength-Based Approach Goal: _____

Relevant Strengths	Ways Student Could Use His / Her Strengths to Reach Goal	Progress Benchmarks
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

How might this goal or process benefit your student beyond direct character-strength growth?

What are the three things you want to be sure to say to this student as you discuss his/her strengths, this goal, and how to get there?

Section VIII: Some Research:

In their landmark work, Character Strengths and Virtues⁶, Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson provided the research behind the six virtues and twenty four character traits that were demonstrated by successful and happy people across time and culture. In general they used ten Criteria to generate this list:

- Criteria 1 – Contributes to making a good life for oneself and others.
- Criteria 2 – Morally valuable in its own right, even in the absence of obvious (external) beneficial outcomes
- Criteria 3 – The display of a strength by one person does not diminish other people
- Criteria 4 – The “opposite” of the strength is generally negative
- Criteria 5 – Should show up in a variety of ways in the individual’s behavior
- Criteria 6 – Distinctiveness from other positive traits
- Criteria 7 – There are cultural role models, both real and fictional, that demonstrate the character strength
- Criteria 8 – Young people who achieve greatness demonstrate the character strength (prodigies)
- Criteria 9 -- There are “role” models, both real and fictional, that demonstrate the problems that result from the absence of the character trait
- Criteria 10 – Society has developed institutions and rituals for cultivating character strengths

In his most recent book Flourish⁷, Seligman uses **PERMA** as a way of expanding the definition of a fulfilled life:

Positive Emotions (happiness)
Engagement
Relationships
Meaning
Accomplishment

In A Primer in Positive Psychology⁸ Peterson argues that a positive life is created by the intersection of positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. At its most basic, “*Positive institutions facilitate the development and display of positive traits, which in turn facilitate positive subjective experiences.*” In other words, if we can ensure that our schools and classrooms become and remain positive institutions we can have an extremely profound impact on the lives of our kids.

The 24 Character Strengths⁹:

1. **Creativity:** coming up with new and productive ways to think about and do things
2. **Curiosity:** taking an interest in experience for its own sake; finding things fascinating
3. **Open-mindedness:** examining things from all sides and not jumping to conclusions
4. **Love of learning:** mastering new skills and topics on one’s own or in school
5. **Wisdom:** being able to provide good advice to others
6. **Bravery:** not running from threat, challenge, or pain; speaking up for what’s right
7. **Grit:** finishing what one starts; completing something despite obstacles
8. **Integrity:** speaking the truth and presenting oneself sincerely and genuinely
9. **Zest:** approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated
10. **Love:** valuing close relationships with others; being close to people
11. **Kindness:** doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
12. **Social intelligence:** being aware of motives and feelings of other people and oneself
13. **Citizenship:** working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group
14. **Fairness:** treating all people the same; giving everyone a fair chance
15. **Leadership:** encouraging a group of which one is a valued member to accomplish

⁶ Peterson, C. and Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

⁷ Seligman, Martin (2010). *Flourish*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

⁸ Peterson, C (2006). *A Primer on Positive Psychology*.

⁹ Peterson, C. and Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

16. **Forgiveness:** forgiving those who've done wrong; accepting people's shortcomings
17. **Modesty:** letting one's victories speak for themselves; *not* seeking the spotlights
18. **Prudence:** being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks
19. **Self-control:** regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined
20. **Appreciation of beauty:** noticing and appreciating all kinds of beauty and excellence
21. **Gratitude:** being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen
22. **Hope:** expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it
23. **Humor:** liking to laugh; bringing smiles to other people; seeing a light side
24. **Spirituality:** having beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe

Another Take on Why: Please read this excerpt from T.D. Wilson's 2006 essay in *Science*¹⁰:

Some readers will undoubtedly be surprised, or even incredulous, that a 15-min intervention can reduce the racial achievement gap by 40%. Yet this is precisely what Cohen *et al.* report [in the Sept 1, 2006 issue of *Science*]. African American seventh graders randomly assigned to write about their most important values achieved significantly better end-of-semester grades than students in a control condition. How can this be?

Students in the treatment condition spent 15 min writing about why certain values, such as relationships with other people, were important to them. Students in the control condition wrote about why specific values were important to other people. African American students in the treatment condition achieved better end-of-semester grades than did African American students in the control condition. These results are especially encouraging given how intractable a problem the racial achievement gap has appeared to be.

As the authors note, these results are not unpre-cedented. Previous studies have found results of similar magnitude in samples of

Social psychological interventions		
Participants	Intervention	Increase in GPA
African American 7th graders (1)	Students wrote about why a selected value was important to them	0.30
First year college students (2)	Information that grades improve after the first year	0.27
College students (3)	Information that intelligence is malleable	0.23
African American college students (4)	Information that worries about social belonging lessen over time	0.34

Better grades. Brief theory-based interventions improved students' grades [increases shown on a four-point grade point average (GPA) scale, relative to randomly assigned control groups].

United States college students (see the table). These studies share important features: Each drew on social psychological theories to change people's self- and social perceptions (i.e., people's explanations for their poor performance, their views of the malleability of their own intelligence, or their sense of social connectedness). Each did so with brief, inexpensive interventions. In each study, people in the treatment conditions achieved better grades than people in the control conditions. These increases were modest, averaging .29 on a grade-point average (GPA) scale (where A = 4, B = 3, and so on; see the table). Nonetheless, these gains are impressive, given that grades were assessed from several weeks to several months after the interventions.

What's your answer to Wilson's closing question in the paragraph at the bottom of the previous page: "How can this be?"

¹⁰ from Wilson, T.D. (2006). The power of social psychological interventions. *Science*, Sept 1, 2006. 1251-1252.

Research Excerpt: “Asking ‘How strengths work’ rather than ‘Do strengths work’”¹¹

Traditionally, strengths researchers have been primarily concerned with establishing evidence that strengths use is a valuable endeavour, leading to such desirable outcomes as happiness (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Seligman et al., 2005) and better performance at work (Clifton & Harter, 2003). This exploratory approach makes sense for a nascent science that must be established as legitimate and worthwhile. Further, this outcome-based approach is of interest to coaching psychologists, coaches, therapists, organisational consultants, and other practitioners who are interested in the positive results associated with strengths use (Lyons & Linley, 2008). Missing from this approach, however, is a crucial understanding of how, specifically, using strengths leads to wellbeing or other desirable outcomes. Among the most important questions in positive psychology, and related to strengths specifically, is whether or not using our signature strengths helps us to achieve our goals and whether this, in turn, helps satisfy our psychological needs and leads to greater well-being. Little is known about the mechanisms by which strengths use might lead to psychological benefits such as enhanced well-being and goal progress. The primary goal of the current research is to examine possible ways in which strengths use produces higher well-being and how this may enhance goal progress.

One possible answer lies in understanding the relationship between strengths and motivation. Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) criteria for strengths to be included in the VIA taxonomy suggest that strengths use is largely intrinsically motivated. Criterion One, for instance, defines signature strengths as those strengths that an individual considers to be very much their own. These strengths convey a sense of ownership and authenticity in their use, an intrinsic yearning to use them and a feeling of inevitability in doing so. Hence, using one’s signature strengths is considered to be concordant with one’s intrinsic interests and values. In addition, using one’s signature strengths is considered to serve well-being and basic psychological needs, such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness. There is, as yet, no firm theory of the processes that may explain how signature strengths contribute to these outcomes. In fact, we are unaware of any published research specifically testing the mechanisms by which using strengths leads to positive changes in wellbeing.

One way that signature strengths may work to promote beneficial outcomes is through their use in the pursuit of personal goals. Previous research has linked goal pursuit and progress with a range of well-being outcomes (e.g. Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). In this paper we specifically examine the link between strengths use and well-being, paying particular attention to the role of goal pursuit and attainment.

Previous research suggests that it is not simply goal progress or attainment that leads to well-being but, rather, the types of goals pursued and the motivation for pursuit. The Self-Concordance Model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999) elaborates the motivational sequence of goal inception, pursuit, and attainment. **In essence, people who pursue self-concordant goals (those that are consistent with their developing interests and values) put more sustained effort into achieving those goals, and hence are more likely to attain them.** Interestingly, achieving well-being, in this case, appears to be more than simply a function of goal progress. Instead, goal attainment effects on well-being are moderated by the self-concordance of goals. Sheldon and Kasser (1998), for example, found that attaining self-concordant goals leads to greater well-being than does attaining goals that are not self-concordant. Sheldon and Kasser suggest that concordant goal attainment leads to need satisfaction which, in turn, mediates changes in wellbeing. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) tested this hypothesis, and found that need satisfaction partially mediated concordant goal attainment effects on well-being: part, but not all, of the change in well-being could be accounted for by need- satisfying experiences.

¹¹ “Using signature strengths in pursuit of goals: Effects on goal progress, need satisfaction, and well-being, and implications for coaching psychologists” by P. Alex Linley, Karina M. Nielsen, Raphael Gillett & Robert Biswas-Diener. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, March 2010

Building on the Sheldon and Elliot (1999) and Sheldon and Kasser (1998) studies, together with work demonstrating the effect of coaching on self-concordance of goals (Burke & Linley, 2007), we hypothesized that using one's signature strengths (i.e. acting self-concordantly) will contribute to goal progress, leading to need-satisfying experiences and greater well-being.

The link between strengths and wellbeing is especially important because it is possible that well-being, as a cognitive and affective legacy of self-concordant motivation and goal pursuit, provides motivational reinforcement. Therefore, for managers, coaching psychologists, coaches, organizational consultants, educators and others interested in facilitating high performance a better understanding of the mechanisms by which strengths use leads to goal attainment and well-being may offer insight into learning, growth and motivation.

Research Excerpt: *Positive Affect and the Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing. Is There a Critical Positivity Ratio?*¹²

Four distinct lines of evidence suggest that high ratios of positive to negative affect would distinguish individuals who flourish from those who do not. First, studies show that mild positive affect characterizes the modal human experience (Diener & Diener, 1996). This positivity offset equips individuals with the adaptive bias to approach and explore novel objects, people, or situations (Cacioppo, Marcial F. Losada 680 October 2005. American Psychologist. Gardner, & Berntson, 1999). Second, several recent research reviews have concurred that “bad is stronger than good” (e.g., Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). The implication is that to overcome the toxicity of negative affect and to promote flourishing, experiences of positivity may need to outnumber experiences of negativity, perhaps at ratios appreciably higher than those typically represented in the modal positivity offset. Third, on the basis of a mathematical model of consciousness rooted in Boolean algebra, the reformulated balanced states of mind model (Schwartz, 1997) suggests that optimal mental health is associated with high ratios of positive to negative affect. According to this model, normal functioning is characterized by ratios near 2.5: 1 whereas optimal functioning is characterized by ratios near 4.3 (Schwartz et al., 2002). Fourth, summarizing two decades of observational research on marriages, Gottman (1994) concluded that unless a couple is able to maintain a high ratio of positive to negative affect (~5), it is highly likely that their marriage will end.

Consistent with this earlier evidence, our suggestion that individuals or groups must meet or surpass a specific positivity ratio to flourish derives from a nonlinear dynamics model empirically validated by Losada (1999), who studied the interpersonal dynamics of business teams. From behind one-way mirrors, trained coders observed 60 management teams crafting their annual strategic plans and rated every speech act. Utterances were coded as positive if speakers showed support, encouragement, or appreciation, and they were coded as negative if speakers showed disapproval, sarcasm, or cynicism. They were coded as inquiry if they offered questions aimed at exploring a position and as advocacy if they offered arguments in favor of the speaker's viewpoint. They were coded as self if they referred to the person speaking, the group present, or the company, and they were coded as other if they referenced a person or group who was neither present nor part of the company.

Later, Losada (1999) identified 15 flourishing teams, defined as showing uniformly high performance across three behaviors: profitability, customer satisfaction, and evaluations by superiors, peers, and subordinates. Other teams had mixed (n=26) or uniformly low performance (n=19). Observation of the structural characteristics (i.e., amplitude, frequency, and phase) of the time series of the empirical data for these three performance categories led Losada to write a set of coupled differential equations to match each of the structural characteristics of the empirical time series.

¹² Barbara L. Fredrickson and Marcial F. Losada. “Positive Affect and the Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing.” October 2005. American Psychologist.