INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, education has had two primary goals: to instruct students intellectually and to develop good people by teaching virtues. Virtues education dates back to 4,000 B.C.

Our American Founders believed teaching virtues to students was essential, since democracy is governance by the people. This required citizens to be taught the "natural" virtues: honesty, kindness, courage, thriftiness, bravery, patriotism, and hard work.

More recently, during the 1970's and 1980's, character development of students in schools diminished. This triggered a federal response by the George Bush administration (1988-1992) to promote character education in the classroom. This was followed by Clinton administration (1993-2000) and G.W. Bush administration (2001-2009). Both Clinton and G.W. Bush requested that Congress triple the monies allotted to character education. President G.W. Bush expanded on the programs of the previous administration and made character education a major focus of his educational reform agenda. Congress allocated federal monies to the Department of Education (DOE) to study character education in public schools and measure its effectiveness, as well as provide grants to the states for the same purposes.

Faulty DOE Study – 2010

A 700-page study from The Social and Character Development (SACD) Research Consortium was performed from 2003-2007 and the report released in 2010 by the federal DOE. It concluded that the seven character education programs studied "did not improve students social and emotional competence, behavior, academic achievement and students and teacher perceptions of the school climate when compared to the large control group." The "control group" was fatally flawed.

The DOE, along with the leading foundations, academics, and many others read the headlines and concluded that character education did not work. This devastating result lead to the Obama Administration reallocating all monies for character to other programs.

Unfortunately, government and private funding for character declined immensely. Money for new studies vanished and character programs in schools diminished to the detriment of the students, teachers, parents and administrators. There have been no more recent federally-funded studies to ascertain the bonafide and effective character development initiatives that our schools are privately implementing, with positive results. See complete study below.

Monumental Schoolwide Student Improvement and Student Development System Created

The most comprehensive and effective, state-of-the-art school improvement and student development system was developed by Character Counts. CHARACTER COUNTS! 5.0 is the latest evolution of the CC! educational strategy. Introduced in 2016, CC! 5.0 has been enhanced to place greater emphasis on establishing a positive school climate and instilling critical academic, social and emotional skills, as well as core character traits. Introducing the concept of the Four Wheels of Success (identified in * The Josephson Institute's Model Standards for Academic, Social, Emotional and Character Development). This fully integrated student development framework incorporates the most critical research findings and current theories from all major research and evidence-based strategies. The framework instills academic, social, emotional and ethical values, mindsets and character traits to help students:

- Reach their academic potential and succeed in school

- Succeed in the workplace and their careers

- Live happy, worthy and fulfilling personal lives

- Become engaged, responsible and productive citizens

Character Evolution... Major Progress

Over the last decade, the word character development has grown to subsume character education while also adding many important advancements and developments, such as social emotional learning (SEL), interpersonal skills, positive psychology, positive youth development, whole child movement, positive school culture and climate, restorative practices, leadership, growth mindset, academic improvement, and workplace readiness. These very broad initiatives today are referred to as "comprehensive character development" initiatives and are intended to cover all important bases in a single program.

As a result, today's comprehensive character development initiatives, in response to scientific research and discoveries, as well as the needs of our schools and society, intentionally incorporate a much broader curriculum focus as well as utilizing greatly improved and more efficient and effective implementation technologies.

What We Provide

The results of the research and the key studies are provided below, in chronological order, from 1993 to today. We provide summaries along with links to the complete studies. Click the heading to view each study. Many of these studies look at character education, not the comprehensive character development frameworks of today.

We conclude with the History of Character Education, a chronological outline of character education from 4,000 B.C. through 2017.

RESEARCH, STUDIES, AND RESULTS

Character.org's National Schools of Character
Founded in 1993, Character.org is the largest non-profit organization in the world committed to fostering effective character education in schools and communities. Character.org is a national coalition of educators, parents, organizations, community groups, and companies and is the nation's leading advocate for improving the culture and social climate in schools.

CharacterPlus Way Monograph
This study was made possible with the support from the United States Department of Education under the Secretary's Fund for the Improvement of Education (2006)

- Because of the results of this federally-funded study, CharacterPlus (a leading national character development organization) has been registered on the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

- This detailed report describes the four federally funded 4-year studies outlining results for schools utilizing the CharacterPlus 10 Essentials for developing high quality schools of character. More than a diverse selection of 200 schools representing urban, rural and suburban communities from three different states achieved evidence-based results that showed dramatic improvement in school environment, prosocial and moral

behavior. Math scores increased as much as 54% and reading scores as much as 47%; school communities became more caring; and student discipline dropped significantly, particularly surrounding bullying. Baseline parallel results were found in all and studies, compared with no improvement in the control group.

[Impact of Social-Emotional and Character Development Program on School-Level Indicators of Academic Achievement, Absenteeism, and Disciplinary Outcomes](#)

This study reports the effects of a comprehensive elementary school-based social emotional and character education program on school-level achievement, absenteeism, and disciplinary outcomes utilizing a matched-pair, cluster randomized, controlled design. Compared to the baseline, reading and math scores increased dramatically, while having lower absenteeism and fewer suspensions and disciplinary outcomes. The results provide evidence that a comprehensive school-based program, specifically developed to target student behavior and character, can positively influence school-level achievement, attendance, and disciplinary outcomes concurrently. (2002/03 – 2005/06).

[Efficacy of Schoolwide Programs to Promote Social and Character Development and Reduce Problem Behavior in Elementary School Children (Federal Study) Report from the Social and Character Development Research Program October 2010](#)

The 2010 Institute of Education Services (IES) report concluded that, on average the seven programs that were implemented and assessed did not improve student's social and emotional competence, behavior, academic achievement and student and teacher perceptions of school climate.

CITRS Analysis:

The federal government conducted this 3-year study on whether character education as a curriculum component, is effective. Although some foundations are relying on this study, this study is fatally flawed. The study took place in 2003–2006, but curiously was not completed and released by the DOE until 2010. It concluded that the seven character education programs studied had "no better effect …than the control group".

- The Flaw… Buried in the study results is a description of the control group. Up to 90% of the Control Group was comprised of schools (teachers and principals) that were already doing character education programs. By definition, a true Control Group would be schools in the same geographic area which had no character education programs in place. Clearly this was a faulty control group.

- Industry experts noted the seven "character education" programs in the study were weak - limited and ineffective. It is also noteworthy that of the seven programs, the majority no longer even exist and the remainder have little or no credibility. In addition, none of the seven programs would meet Character.org's 11 Principles of Effective Character Education at that time, nor today.

- The conclusion of this study therefore is meaningless as a measurement of how effective character education works. Given the glaring limitations of the seven programs, it is obvious that the character education programs in the Control Group could be at least as effective as the seven programs or even better.

- Since the above flaws have not yet been adequately publicized, the impact of the DOE's 2010 conclusions still influence the thinking of many foundations, educators, donors, and others.

Character Compass: How powerful school culture can point towards success

In the book Character Compass, Scott Seider offers portraits of three high-performing urban schools in Boston, Massachusetts that have made character development central to their mission of supporting student success, yet define character in three very different ways. One school focuses on students' moral character development, another emphasizes civic character development, and the third prioritizes performance character development. Drawing on surveys, interviews, field notes, and student achievement data, Character Compass highlights the unique effects of these distinct approaches to character development as well as the implications for parents, educators, and policymakers committed to fostering powerful school culture in their own school communities.

Seider used his qualitative observations and interviews to identify and describe elements of school programing and culture that contributed to the results he uncovered. This work produces the most important finding in the research: success in character education is tied to school culture. Often, character education is implemented as a program imposed on top of a school culture. Unfortunately, the 2010 Institute of Education Services (IES) report (Federal Study discussed above) on a comprehensive study of seven such programs found that these programs had little in the way of measurable impacts on students. The emphasis on character in the schools Seider studies is central to the school's ethos. Therefore, Seider argues, the programming that emphasizes character is deeply contextualized and constructed to complement and support the particular culture and mission of the school. As Seider notes, "'copying and pasting' a character education program into a school's existing culture and practices is not likely to be successful."

Seider, S. (2012). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press (three charter schools prove efficacy, however also applicable to public, and independent schools).

Why We Lie – Dan Ariely: Where's the Line Between Cheating a Little and Cheating a Lot?
Discusses studies that depict intentional, conscious discussions of ethics and morality such as cheating will reduce bad incidences of cheating. NPR Radio TED talk on "Why we Lie" with distinguished speaker Dr. Dan Ariely from Duke University. Even though it's close to 50 minutes long, the first 7 minutes speaks volumes in that even though Dr. Ariely enticed people to cheat/lie in an experiment, once they brought up honor code or moral principles/integrity concepts, cheating went to zero! (a metric for why Character and Leadership training works) (2014).

The Development of a Tool to Assess the Fidelity of School-Wide Implementation of a Character Education Initiative
The Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE), at Iowa State University, conducted a study to determine the level of implementation of the Character Counts initiative in Iowa schools. Study results suggest that Character Counts is associated with decreases in disciplinary referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and student participation in criminal behavior (e.g., using drugs or alcohol, getting into fights, stealing, and vandalism). Preliminary research results indicate that CC! is effective in raising test scores and academic performance and increasing graduation rates, attendance, and participation in extracurricular activities. One of the keys to successfully implementing the CC! framework is transforming the classroom and school environment (2014).

Promise and Paradox: Measuring Students' Non-Cognitive Skills and the Impact of Schooling (2014)
Research on a broad set of non-cognitive skills from 1,368 eighth graders attending Boston public schools and linked this information to administrative data on their demographics and test scores. At the student level, scales measuring conscientiousness, self-control, grit, and growth mindset are positively correlated with attendance, behavior, and test-score gains between fourth grade and eighth grade.

Angela Duckworth has stated, "Today there is scientific evidence that positive character traits are more important for academic achievement than IQ or socioeconomic background."

Angela Duckworth, PhD, University of Pennsylvania researcher and professor was the recipient of the MacArthur 'Genius' Award. Acquiring the positive character traits, such as self-discipline, perseverance, diligence, growth mindset, grit, and integrity, is necessary to achieve academic improvement. (2016)

Empirical study: A tripartite taxonomy of character: Evidence for intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intellectual competencies in children
Across studies, positive peer relations were most consistently predicted by interpersonal character, class participation by intellectual character, and report card grades by intrapersonal character. Collectively, our findings support a tripartite taxonomy (three-part classification) of character in the school context. Contemporary Educational Psychology 48 · August 2016

The role of character and character education in fostering student success at school
A review of the extant research literature on character education and school success through the lens of these three types of character strengths: moral character, performance character and civic character. Includes research-based practices through which educators can successfully foster these various types of character in youth and adolescents.

Handbook on social influences on social-emotional, motivational and cognitive outcomes in school contexts (pp. 293-311). Seider, S., Soutter, M. & Clark, S. (2016).

Theoretical and empirical bases of character development in adolescence: A view of the issues
The work of philosophers and educators, on the one hand, and the research of developmental scientists, on the other, indicate that character development can be both a foundation for an individual's positive development and a key basis for enabling every young person to contribute positively during their own lives to the betterment of their families, schools, and communities. In short, character development constitutes a pathway for a thriving young person and for a flourishing civil society (Journal of Youth Adolescence 2017).

The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning
This meta-analysis study of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs involving 270,034, K-12 students demonstrates that SEL (an important domain of the CHARACTER COUNTS! framework) significantly improved not only students' social emotional skills, attitudes, and behavior, but also improved academic performance - reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement. This study demonstrated numerous impacts of social and emotional learning and remains a landmark for the field. Six years later, a team that includes authors of the 2011 meta-analysis, has completed a new meta-analysis. The new findings were published on July 12, 2017 in the peer-reviewed Journal Child Development:

[2017 Meta-Analysis – Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions](#)
[The Meta-Analysis of Follow-up Effects](#) – study enhances initial numerous positive impacts of social and emotional learning and remains a landmark study for the field.

[Nucci Argues for Comprehensive Character Development](#)

Scholarly research coming out of Cal Berkley by Dr. Larry Nucci asserts that to achieve successful character outcomes, character development needs to be viewed in a holistic, comprehensive way. He argues that character is not merely a collection of virtues or personality traits. Rather character is best developed in a unified, interconnected system in which multiple factors work together to bring about the greatest overall impact for student success.

CITRS's framework focuses on the development of the whole-child. Our comprehensive character development is a multi-faceted and coherent system which covers all bases to foster sustained character growth for young people.

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