

A Report to the Nation

Smart & Good High Schools

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



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



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"Great study." "Can't wait to put this in place in my high school."

—participants, Smart & Good High Schools Regional Institute

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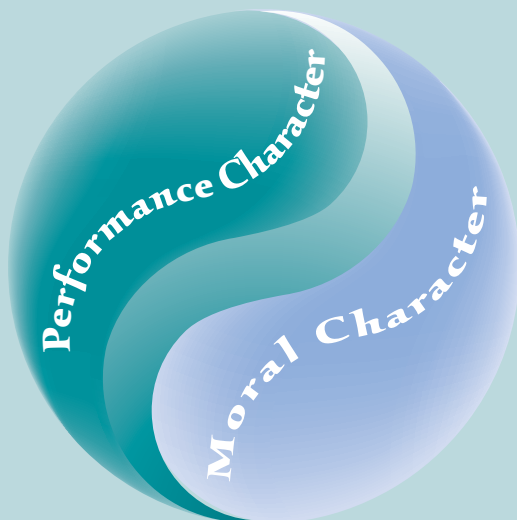
Smart & Good High Schools is a national study of American high schools—including site visits to 24 diverse schools, hundreds of interviews, a comprehensive research review, and the input of a National Experts Panel and a National Student Leaders Panel. The report offers a vision of educational excellence designed to foster human flourishing over a lifetime. From our research we draw two major conclusions:

1

There is national consensus regarding the need for character—doing our best work, doing the right thing, living a life of purpose.

Performance character is a mastery orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as diligence, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, perseverance, ingenuity, and self-discipline—needed to realize one’s potential for excellence in school, the workplace, or any area of endeavor.

Moral character is a relational orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as integrity, justice, caring, respect, responsibility, and cooperation—needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior.



✓ **Cultural indicators** from every sector of American life—political and military, business and education, sports and entertainment, families and communities—demonstrate the need to develop citizens of all ages who lead ethical and purposeful lives and contribute to a productive, just, and caring society.

✓ There has been a **growing response**—evidenced by public discourse about character, employers’ emphasis on character in the workplace, attention to character in educational research and social science, and a resurgence of character education in our schools and communities—to meet this need for character.

✓ To date, high schools **have not responded adequately** to these character challenges; one reason is that character education has not previously conceptualized character **to include both excellence and ethics**—performance character and moral character.

2

Smart & Good High Schools educate for character—both performance character and moral character.

Smart & Good High Schools:

✓ believe that both **performance character** and **moral character**—excellence and ethics—are essential for leading a productive, ethical, and fulfilling life.

✓ **utilize all things** in the life of the school—curriculum, discipline, co-curricular activities, rituals, and traditions—as opportunities to develop performance character and moral character.

✓ create an **ethical learning community** where faculty and staff, students, parents, and the wider community support and challenge each other in their quest for excellence and ethics.

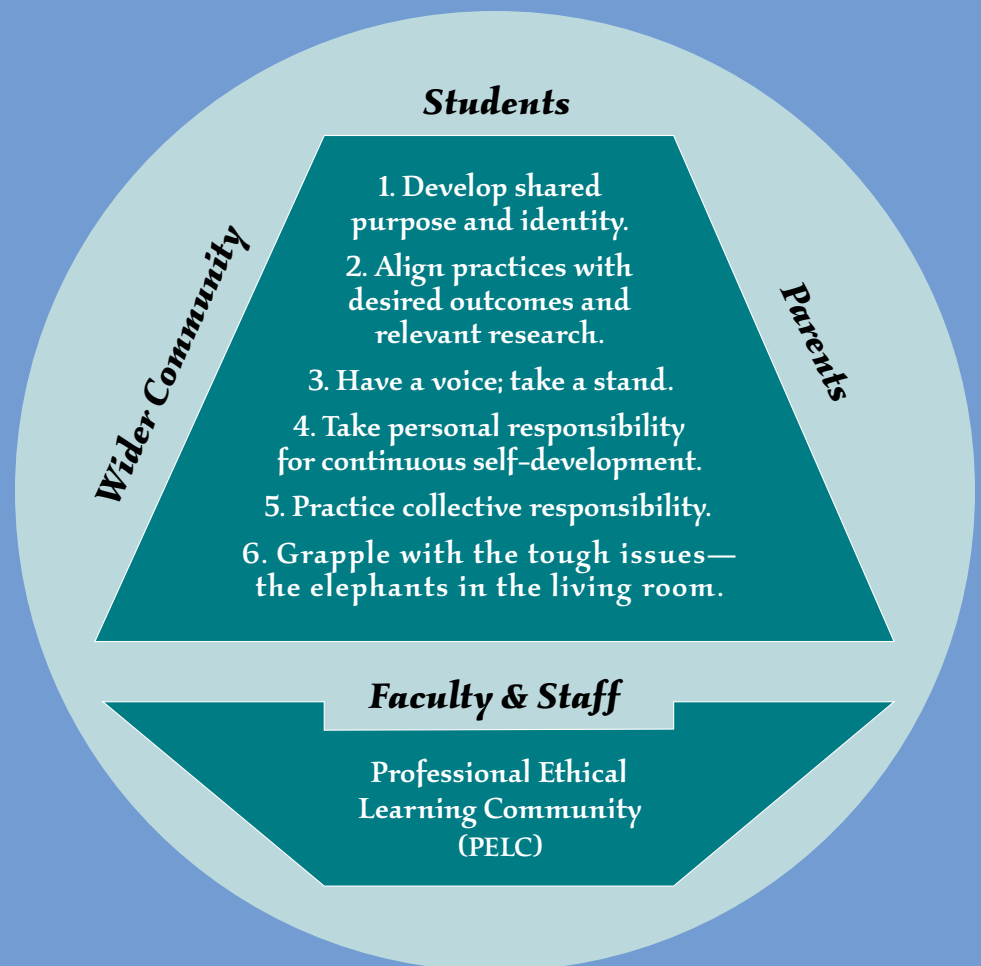
✓ create a **professional ethical learning community** where faculty, staff, and administrators are committed to continuous self-development and ongoing improvement of the practices used to develop performance character and moral character.

✓ establish **the necessary preconditions**—such as strong leadership, optimal school size, time for planning and reflection, supportive scheduling, manageable teaching loads, a safe and orderly environment, trusting and respectful relationships, and adequate budgetary resources—that make it possible to implement the Smart & Good High Schools vision.

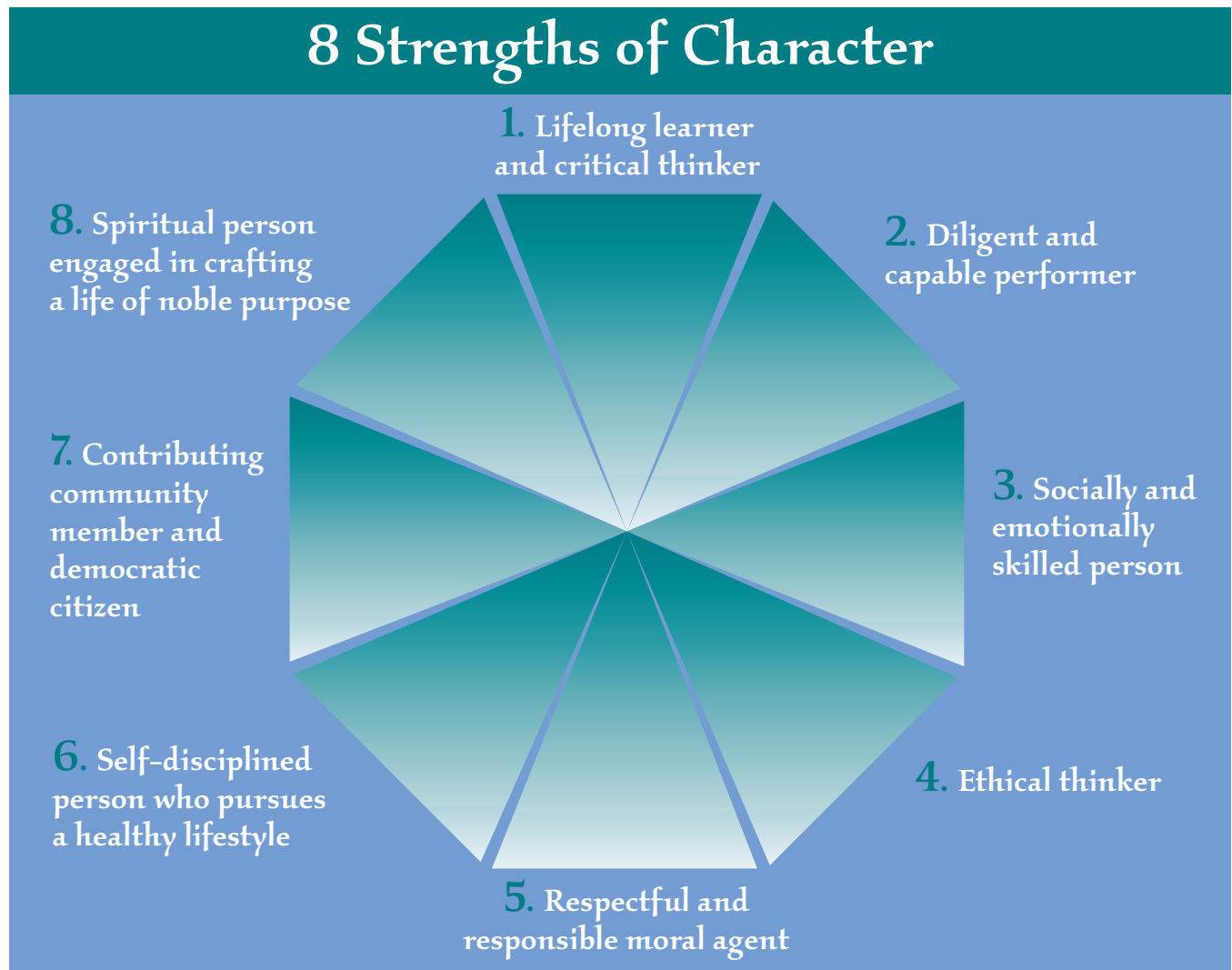
Ethical Learning Community (ELC)

Developing Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics

In an **ethical learning community**, faculty and staff, students, parents and the wider community support and challenge each other to do their best work (performance character) and be their best ethical self (moral character).



The **Smart & Good High Schools** report defines performance character and moral character in terms of **8 strengths of character** and describes promising practices for each of these developmental outcomes.



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To download a copy of the full report, go to www.cortland.edu/character/highschool



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