

A Report to the Nation

Smart & Good High Schools

Developing 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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Smart & Good High Schools is a national study of American high schools—including site visits to 26 exemplary schools in diverse settings, 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 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 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 by placing character development at the center of their mission.
- ✓ In general, high schools have not embraced character development as central to their mission because **character has not been defined 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.**

✓ **Smart & Good High Schools** **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.

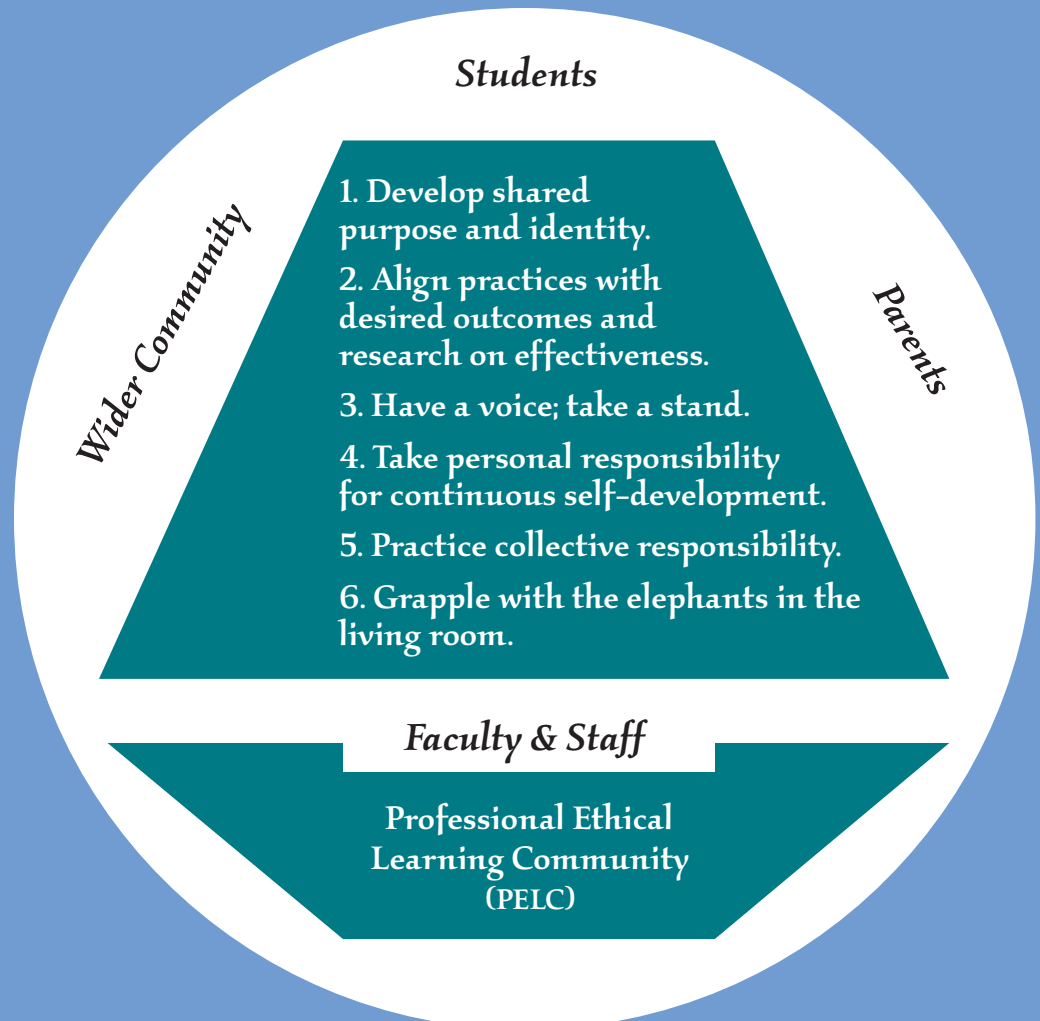
✓ **Smart and Good High Schools** create an ethical learning community where faculty and staff, students, parents, and the wider-community support and challenge each other in their quest for excellence and ethics.

✓ **Smart and Good High Schools** 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.

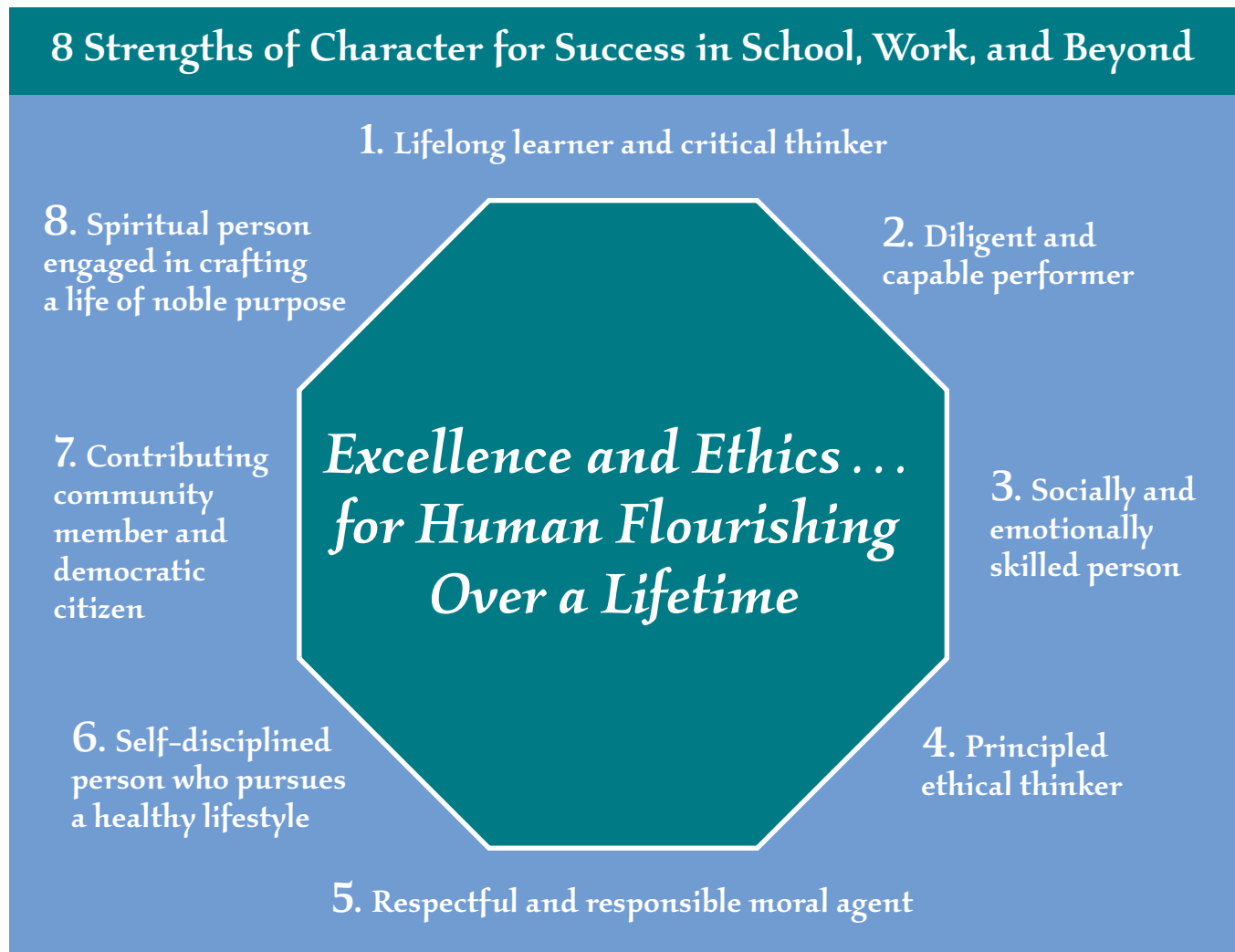
Ethical Learning Community (ELC)

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 organizes promising practices around eight developmental outcomes, or “strengths of character,” which define performance character and moral character.



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To pre-order a free digital copy of the full report go to www.cortland.edu/character.



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