

"Smart & good high schools" report: Integrating excellence and ethics for success in school, work and beyond. (2005). Cortland, NY: Center for the 4th and 5th Rs and Character Education Partnership. A free copy of Smart & Good High Schools and additional information on the project are available at www.cortland.edu/character/highschool.

**Reviewed by
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Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson maintain that the best high schools have two great goals: to help students become smart and to help students become good, otherwise defined as the pursuit of excellence and ethics. In their *Report to the Nation: Smart & Good High Schools*, they identify character as the means to achieve both of these goals. Specifically, *performance character* is "the diligence, strong work ethic, positive attitude and perseverance needed to realize a student's potential for excellence in performance or achievement," and *moral character* is "the integrity, respect, cooperation and justice needed to be ethical and fulfilled in relationships." It is likely that all educators will see familiar ground in these two tenets, as they struggle with the need to balance students' academic achievement with their development as honest, caring, responsible young people. The authors have created a model that starts with the formation of ethical learning communities, where all stakeholders--faculty and staff, students, parents and the community--are committed to both academic excellence and ethics. The integration of these goals is supported by six principles: shared purpose and identity, alignment of practices with desired outcomes and relevant research, creation of a democratic community, continuous self-development, collective responsibility and a willingness to deal with the tough issues. Multiple "promising practices" are described for each of the six principles, such as developing an honor code, creating a student leadership team, and providing students with a demanding and meaningful curriculum. A similar format is used to present the reader with principles and promising practices for creating a *professional* ethical learning community, encompassing not only administrators and teachers, but all adults who come in contact with students in the school. These practices provide the adults with an enhanced professional environment by offering supportive strategies such as time to study new pedagogies or, opportunities to engage in data driven instruction.

The second half of this attractive, hands-on manual is devoted to an in-depth discussion of student performance outcomes that the authors call "8 strengths of character." They include: 1) the lifelong learner and critical thinker, 2) the diligent and capable performer, 3) the socially and emotionally skilled person, 4) the ethical thinker, 5) the respectful and responsible moral agent, 6) the self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle, 7) the contributing community member and democratic citizen, and 8) the spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose. As in the first half, promising practices range from the pursuit of excellence (e.g., "use a pedagogy that requires all students to achieve a specified level of mastery), to the development of ethics (e.g., "help students develop an ability to make well-reasoned ethical decisions.") Along with numerous activities, this book offers "go-to" references for each of the principles, with additional on-line contacts. Readers are invited to visit their website (www.cortland.edu/character/highschool) for an updated list of practices, or to share their own ideas.

Smart & Good High Schools is designed as a working manual for practitioners who seek to redesign secondary schools with the dual goals of helping students reach their academic potential while becoming ethical, responsible, contributing members of society. It provides a framework for educators to create high schools in which excellence and ethics are fully integrated. Supported by research and extensive visits to 24 diverse schools that have received external recognition, along with guidance from a national experts panel and a national student leaders panel, Lickona and Davidson have succeeded in producing a book that can be used to implement a comprehensive program or dissected into useful bits and pieces according to the needs of the school. The first time I picked up the book, I found myself flipping to the sections that applied to current needs of my school, such as school advisories and mission statements. Once I had absorbed the suggestions in these areas, I was compelled to read the entire book to get the "big picture" for building a learning community that fosters excellence and ethics. Although some readers may be affronted by the section on spirituality and the soul, it is unlikely that they will challenge many of the specific principles in this unit, such as the value of self-reflection in the quest to live a life of meaning. With a little personal editing, this section can be useful even to those who believe that religion should not be discussed in public schools. The authors maintain their focus on guiding students to be the best that they can be in both personal endeavors and interpersonal relationships. Certainly, the high school years are a critical time for a young person to develop his/her sense of self in relation to others. At a time when secondary educators are searching for ways to connect youth to both academic achievement and admirable character development, Lickona and Davidson give educators a useful resource for integrating values education in a high school community.