



## Do students learn professional ethics? A pilot study of The Good Project Lesson Plans

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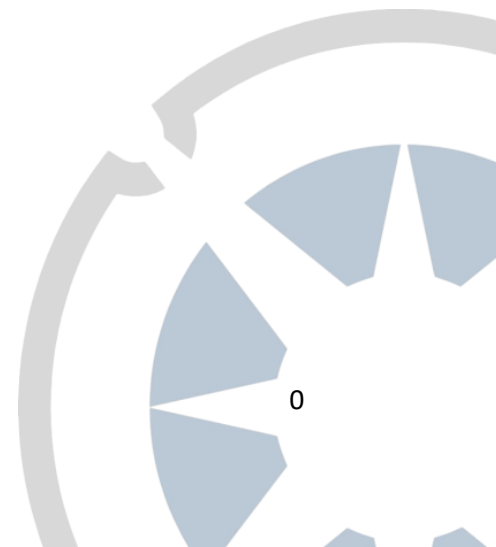
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**Do students learn professional ethics?: A pilot study of The Good Project Lesson Plans**

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## **Abstract**

Character will play a pivotal role in the future of the rapidly changing workplace. The Good Project has researched the world of work for over 25 years and built upon this knowledge to create a curriculum for secondary school students. This mixed-methods study draws upon data from a one-year pilot of the curriculum. The results reflect that students experience a lack of ethics education and have little time for reflection during school hours. Additionally, working with the curriculum increased the time spent on pedagogies connected to the "real world" outside the classroom. Finally, students gain an appreciation for some character strengths that are necessary in discussion and reflection about dilemmas and values.

## **Do students learn professional ethics?: A pilot study of The Good Project Lesson Plans**

The future of work is changing due to automation, the gig economy, a desire for purposeful careers, and a lack of needed skills among many employees (OECD, 2019a; OECD 2019b). Many current jobs are disappearing or being reconfigured due to the advent of automation and artificial intelligence; two-thirds of companies acknowledge that they plan to use more automation in the future, while customer service, sales, factory, and manufacturing jobs are slated to become more sparse (Lund, Smit, & Brown, 2021; Pew Research Center, 2016). The Millennial generation, now the largest generation in the labor force (Pew Research Center, 2019), also seeks more purposeful and socially conscious employment. In the United States, in particular, seeking a “job that makes a difference” was valued by more individuals than job security, autonomy, and maximizing income, in a global future of work survey (PwC, 2017).

Because work and employee desires are changing, the development of employee skills and workplace preparation also must change. Indeed, McKinsey (2019) has listed moral and intellectual character strengths such as creative and critical thinking, intellectual autonomy, and empathy as key to future success at work, while the OECD (2019) highlighted that “recent trends in technology have put ethics high on the education agenda” (p. 14). Similarly, of 49 business executives who reported their top “soft skills” for employees, integrity, defined as being “honest, ethical, [having] high morals, [having] personal values, [and doing] what’s right,” was one of the executives’ top ten (Robles, 2012). In agreement with this finding, billionaire Warren Buffet has stated that integrity is the number one element that leads to long term employee success (Lau, 2021).

Accordingly, the work landscape makes clear that intellectual, moral/ethical, and civic character strengths are going to be needed for the future worker; that is, these character strengths are the qualities of a good thinker (e.g., creative and critical thinking), a good neighbor (e.g., integrity and empathy), and a good citizen (e.g., social responsibility to wider society) (Baehr, 2017; Jubilee Centre, 2022). The present mixed-methods study drew upon data from a one-year pilot of an ethical curriculum to understand how students previously experienced ethics-related pedagogy and if students changed their understanding of work-related virtues after a year engaging with this new curriculum. Directions for future study are also explored.

### **Ethics Education**

Despite the clear emphasis among business leaders and employers regarding the need for ethical thinking and integrity in employees, research demonstrates that such character strengths are not being fostered in employees, nor are they being fostered earlier during the optimal time of adolescence.

Much of ethics education to date in workplaces has been relatively ineffectual. For example, a 2018 Gallup poll found that only one third of respondents found that their company's ethics training was impactful on their co-workers or their own behavior. In a survey of finance professionals, one law firm found that a quarter of those surveyed would engage in insider trading, a felony, in order to gain a large financial reward (Osnos, 2021). Furthermore, a 2019 Pew Research Center survey found that over 50% of Americans believe professionals from school principals to members of Congress are acting unethically "some to most of the time" (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Such widespread ethical failures might be due to a widespread lack of ethics training. Many workers, upon entering the workplace, do not have the opportunity to benefit from

effective ethical training programs. Indeed, Principia’s recent Ethics Study survey (2021) of over 750 business leaders worldwide found that only 42% offer ethics training for their employees, and only 47% felt confident that their employees would make ethical decisions when confronted with morally ambiguous situations. Moreover, when offered, employees tend to receive 2 hours or less per year of ethics training (Institute of Business Ethics, 2021).

The lack of ethical training in businesses could potentially be due to the public’s desire for students to learn about ethics during their adolescence. Indeed, 60% of Americans believe that public schools have “a lot of responsibility in making sure the American workforce has the right skills and education to be successful in today’s economy,” with only 49% believing that employers have this responsibility (Pew Research Center, 2016b). Such beliefs align with developmental psychologist Erikson’s (1993) proposition that adolescence is the ideal age at which to address issues of work values and identity, given that youth are in a life stage during which they are attempting to understand their own roles and place in society (Brown, Blanchard, & McGrath, 2020).

However, although character education (and its close sibling, social emotional learning) is on the rise in American education (Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019; Krachman & LaRocca, 2017), few of these programs focus specifically on how to develop the skills and stances needed to confront ethical or meaningful *work* challenges (Dusenbery et al. 2020). Similarly, recent research at Project Zero of the Harvard Graduate School of Education indicates that few college students in the U.S. identify learning about ethical issues as an important part of the college experience—even though many cite job preparation as the purpose of college education itself (Fischman & Gardner, 2022).

Thus, within the current environment, there are few outlets for students to grapple with the complex ethical terrain of the modern work world or to come to terms with their own

opinions and beliefs regarding how to create meaningful, excellent, and ethical work. For the contemporary student, what constitutes work is, in and of itself, a complex question. In line with Sizer's (2004) idea of "student as worker," it is most often academic tasks that are thought of as the work of students. However, many students today find meaning and purpose in extracurricular activities, often more than in the average "work" of the school day (Mehta & Fine, 2019). Accordingly, we employ here a broad definition of work that includes work in school (academic and extracurricular), as well as more traditional jobs and internships. Whatever the realm, students need time and guidance to reflect, create meaning, and develop purpose related to opportunities for "good work" in their own lives.

### **The Good Project Lesson Plans**

In 1995, Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon launched a study of how individuals can perform "good work" in an era of rapid workplace changes and technological advancement. Over the course of a decade, the research team performed in-depth interviews with professionals in a range of domains—namely law, medicine, journalism, theater, genetics, philanthropy, business, K-12 education, and higher education. During conversations with participants representing a variety of ages and career stages, the team asked informants to think about their formative influences, beliefs and values, supports, obstacles, responsibilities, ethical standards, and more.

Two main outcomes of this initial "Good Work Project" (now "The Good Project") inform the present study: 1) a variety of real-world ethical dilemmas that prompted discussions of what to do in difficult situations; and 2) a "Good Work Toolkit" (2010) oriented towards secondary educators that included dilemmas as well as specific activities, such as a Value Sort, to help teachers think with their students about good work in the classroom.

As a result of these studies, a framework of “good work” emerged in which good work features three attributes:

1. Excellence: good work is performed well and is of high quality;
2. Ethics: good work entails a recognition and nuanced handling of ethical dilemmas as they arise in the workplace; and
3. Engagement: individuals obtain purpose and meaning from their work.

These qualities are referred to as the “3 Es” of good work. Although these three elements are intertwined and of equal importance, The Good Project’s work with educators has primarily focused on ethics and ethical reasoning.

In response to this growing need for additional educational preparation regarding the nature of good work, as well as calls from educators for more formalized, sequential materials, The Good Project created sixteen lesson plans, which are specifically geared to adolescents in middle and high school.

The Good Project lesson plans expose students to dilemmas related to issues of good work, and ask students to reflect upon their identities, values, and purpose. In line with character education pedagogical best practices (e.g., Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lamb, Brant, & Brooks, 2021), the lesson plans were designed with the following undergirding principles in mind:

- **Reflection.** Each lesson includes individual student and group prompts, worksheets, and exercises that further explore “good work” concepts (e.g., responsibility, values, personal meaning) and ask students to reflect (usually in written form) on their own thoughts around this concept.



- **Group Work/Discussion.** Each lesson employs small or whole group discussion or small group activities, such as role-playing exercises or debates.
- **Collaborative Decision Making.** Students are given opportunities to think about how they would solve dilemmas together, or to think about their whole school or community mission.
- **Dilemmas/Case Studies.** Each dilemma is inspired by real-life situations in which an individual confronts a difficult decision entailing competing priorities.
- **Modeling.** Teachers are asked to model their own thinking for students, or students are asked to model for one another.
- **Seeing Multiple Perspectives.** Dilemma discussions are meant to surface potentially competing viewpoints in order for students to develop empathy and open-mindedness towards others.

The curriculum has four units, each paired with specific learning goals and assessment rubrics. The four student learning goals of the curriculum are: 1) to understand the term “good work” as defined by excellence, ethics, and engagement; 2) to develop habits of reflection through examination of external dilemmas and resources; 3) to articulate personal values and beliefs about work; and 4) to reflect upon active strategies to accomplish good work in the future. In addition, each of the sixteen lessons included an individual lesson goal, a set of outcomes, and assessment recommendations.

### ***The Good Project Lesson Plans Pilot Year***

During the 2021-2022 academic year, we piloted The Good Project lesson plans with 9 schools and school networks around the United States and Mexico. This pilot project built upon years of outreach and professional development with educators in our Good Project educator network whose philosophies align with The Good Project’s interest in ethics and youth development.

In response to educator requests for a more formalized curriculum, The Good Project team began transforming the existing Good Work Toolkit, mentioned above, into sixteen sequenced lesson plans in 2019. Subsequently, over the course of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, the team sought feedback on drafts of the lesson plans from seven educators and administrators within the GP educator network.

Next, our team used our GP educator network to recruit schools to implement the new lessons throughout the 2021-2022 academic year and to help us collect data via pre- and post-surveys. Through this outreach, the team discerned four primary reasons why educators were interested in working with the lesson plans: 1) mission alignment (e.g., resonance with a religious focus); 2) recognition of the need to prepare students for changing social conditions (e.g., addressing “21st century skills”); 3) a connection to ongoing trends in the field (e.g., civic literacy); and 4) relevance to existing school-specific programs (e.g., advisory period).

During the pilot period, a fluctuating group of 18-40 teachers from six to 18 schools signed up to participate by committing to use the lesson plans in their contexts. The teachers completed a professional development session prior to implementing the lesson plans but were otherwise given leniency regarding how they would integrate the lessons into their various settings. Teachers checked in with The Good Project team via email and Zoom calls throughout the year, and four virtual “Community of Practice” meetings were held throughout the year to help share professional development information with the teachers and to allow them to meet with one another. Teachers were also connected through an online private Facebook group where the GP team shared resources and answered questions.

The goal of this study was to investigate the effect of an ethics curriculum on students' conceptualizations of character strengths and whether any change occurred in students' reporting of their character strengths. Moreover, our team explored how to best facilitate an

ethics curriculum in a variety of on-the-ground settings and documented potential barriers and challenges.

## **Method**

### **Student Sample**

During our pilot work for the Good Project Lesson Plans, 608 students completed the pre-survey at the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year. Of these students, 55.6% identified as female, 24.8% identified as male, and 19.6% identified as non-binary, other, or preferred not to say their gender identity. The mean age of the participants was 17.7 years old, with the largest percentage of participants identifying as Hispanic or Latino/a (29%), white (27%), and/or Black (15%). On a socioeconomic status ladder with “1” representing the highest socioeconomic status and “10” representing the lowest socioeconomic status, students reported a mean status of 4.9. The largest percentage of students who completed the pre-survey were in 10th grade (26.5%), University (23.2%), or 9th grade (13.2%). When asked about their educational aspirations, the highest percentage of students wanted to obtain a Master’s degree (29.6%).

At the end of the 2021-2022 academic year, 346 students engaged in the pilot post-survey. Of these students, 35.8% identified as female, 37.6% identified as male, and 26.6% identified as non-binary, other, or preferred not to say. The mean age of the students was 18.9 years old, with the largest percentage of students identifying as white (49.4%). On the socioeconomic ladder described above, the reported mean status was 4.6. The largest percentage of students did not report their grade-level (33.5%); of those participants who did report their grade level, the most prevalent grade was 10th grade (27.5%), followed by 11th grade (12.4%).

### **School sample**

Six participating schools had their students complete the pre- and/or post-surveys. These schools ranged in size, type, and method of implementation of the lesson plans. One was a member of the religious charter school network serving low-income students, which implemented the lesson plans within their unique work study program that helps to prepare students for the working world. Another was an Italian university where students were in training to become teachers; these students were not only engaging with the lesson plans themselves but were planning to use the materials with their future students. Ethics teachers at a school in Mexico also participated, as did two other schools that completed the lesson plans during advisory periods or, at one international school, during middle school English classes.

Other schools participated in the pilot through lesson plan implementation and anecdotal reporting but did not complete pre- and post-surveys, including: a seventh grade financial literacy teacher; tenth grade homeroom teachers at a private school in Ohio; public school teachers in Wisconsin; staff at a one-to-one learning model school in Massachusetts; additional teachers at several other schools within the religious charter school network mentioned above; and a special education teacher at a school in Los Angeles. At each participating school, there was a “champion” who helped coordinate the project.

## **Procedure**

Students were asked to complete an approximately thirty-minute online mixed-methods survey via Qualtrics. Measures included:

- **Expectations:** Open-ended questions regarding the students goals and expectations for the curriculum (pre-survey) and whether these were met or

not (post-survey). For example, “What do you believe is the purpose of The Good Project Lesson Plans?”;

- **Good Work Concepts:** In both the pre- and post-surveys, open-ended questions regarding what the students knew about The Good Project’s core concepts, such as the 3Es, values, responsibility, and community. For example, “Think about your schoolwork and activities in which you participate at school. To whom or what do you feel responsible or loyal?”;
- **Classroom Pedagogy:** In both the pre- and post-surveys, a closed-ended question regarding how often students experienced certain forms of pedagogy in their classrooms. Students were asked to rate on a 0 (“never”) to 10 (“always”) scale how often they experienced pedagogies such as “opportunities for group discussion or debate with peers” or “opportunities to discuss real-life situations”;
- **Classroom Pedagogy–More or Less:** In the post-survey, students were asked to rate whether the curriculum needed “more” or “less” of each type of pedagogy strategy listed in the previous question;
- **Character Strengths Rank:** In both the pre- and post-surveys, based on the VIA Inventory of Strengths (24 character strength items) ([Diez et. al, 2022](#)), students were asked to choose six qualities that represented them and rank them from one to six, with one being the character strength that most represented them and six the least of those chosen;
- **Most Valuable:** In the post-survey, students were asked in a closed-ended question to identify up to three broad pedagogical elements of the curriculum that were most valuable to them, such as “writing reflections” and “learning about other’s perspectives”;

- **Most Impactful Activity- Multiple:** In the post-survey, students were asked in a closed-ended question to identify if any of the curricular activities had been helpful “for thinking about [their] own values, beliefs, and future goals?” For example, students could choose “an ethical dilemma” or “The Value Sort activity” amongst others;
- **Most Impactful Activity- One:** In the post-survey, students were then asked in a closed-ended follow-up question to indicate what their single most impactful activity had been from the answers chosen in the previous question;
- **Impact Reasoning:** In the post-survey, students were asked in a closed-ended question to explain why they had chosen the previous activity as their most impactful activity. Some possible reasons included, “I found it relevant to my social, academic, career, or personal identity,” or “I learned a lot about other students from this activity”;
- **Least Impactful Activity:** In the post-survey, students were then asked in a closed-ended question to indicate what their least impactful activity had been;
- **Least Impactful Reasoning:** In the post-survey, students were asked in a closed-ended question to explain why they had chosen the previous activity as their least impactful activity. Some possible reasons included, “I did not feel comfortable with the material,” or “I did not think world events or the contemporary social context made this session interesting ”;
- **Demographics:** In the pre- and post-survey, students were asked about their race, socioeconomic status, grade, age, gender, and highest level of education they expected to attain.

Outlined here are the measures in whole that were presented to the students during the pre- and post-surveys. The current study, however, focuses specifically on the pedagogical and character-focused measures.

### **Data Analysis**

For the purposes of the present study, we analyzed descriptive statistics from the student pre- and post-surveys using Stata 17.0. Our aim was to primarily understand how students understood the pedagogy in their schools regarding ethics and work both before and after engaging in The Good Project curriculum, as well as to analyze how students prioritized and ranked their character strengths before and after engaging in the curriculum. Such questions were answered through examination of the percentage of students who chose each answer, as well as the percentage change between the pre- and post-surveys. Although we originally intended to match data from the student pre- and post-surveys, due to the open-ended nature of the pilot project, matching is not possible at the current time as student identifying information is not overlapping.

In addition, open-ended questions on the surveys were qualitatively coded using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013), meaning that we used both a bottom-up, *emic* approach to coding as well as a top-down, *etic* approach. Primarily, our team began coding open-ended questions by reading through each respondent's answers to the questions and looking for general, "in-vivo" themes that came from the words of the participants themselves. For example, for the question "What does it mean to be a good worker?", the themes "putting in a lot of time" and "always going above and beyond" might have arisen. As we continued, certain themes might have been grouped together based upon our team's *etic* knowledge of the literature. For example, these two themes might become "effort." Alternatively, some questions were coded top-down from the beginning due to existing

coding schemes (e.g., “To whom or what are you responsible?” was coded based on our existing “Rings of Responsibility ” scheme; see [thegoodproject.org](http://thegoodproject.org)). However, the team was always open to alternative patterns and themes arising from the participants themselves.

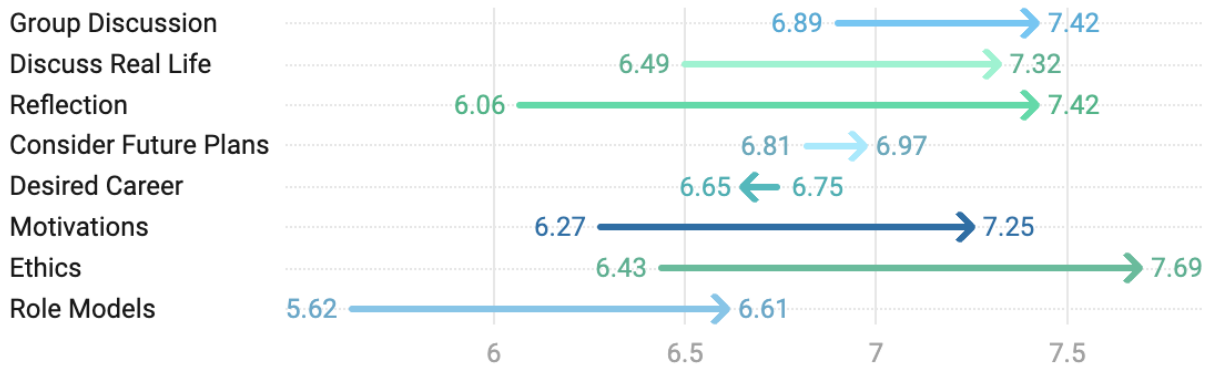
## **Results**

During the pre-survey and post-survey, students were asked to rate how often they experienced certain pedagogies on a scale from 0 (“Never”) to 10 (“Always”). On the pre-survey, students reported a mean overall score of 6 for activities including discussing real life activities, opportunities for reflection, opportunities to think about what motivates one’s schoolwork, discussing what is right and wrong, and interacting with role models. Higher mean scores (a mean score averaging 7) were given to opportunities for group discussion, opportunities to consider future plans, and thinking about a desired career. The greatest mean score changes between the students’ pre- and post-survey results were seen regarding “opportunities to discuss one’s motivations for schoolwork” (an increase of .98 points on average), “interacting with role models” (an increase of .99 points on average), “opportunities to discuss what is right or wrong or ethical” (an increase of 1.26 on average), and “discussing real life situations” (an increase of 1.36 points on average) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Average score for reported classroom pedagogies on pre- and post-surveys, 0 to 10 scale.*



# Classroom Pedagogies

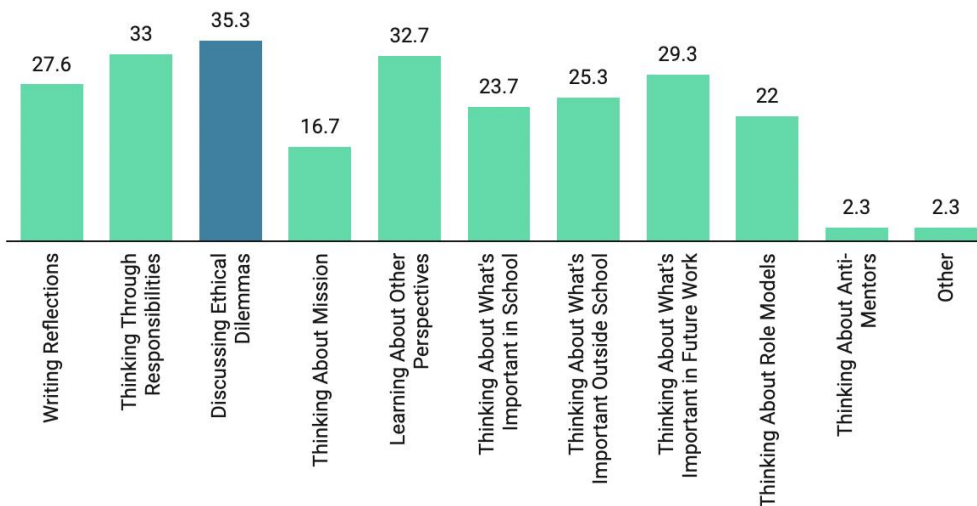


Furthermore, in their post-surveys, 35% of students reported that discussing ethical dilemmas was the most valuable portion of the broad pedagogies drawn upon in The Good Project lesson plans (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The most valuable broad pedagogies present in The Good Project Lesson Plans.

## What was most valuable to you?

Percentage of Respondents on Post-Survey



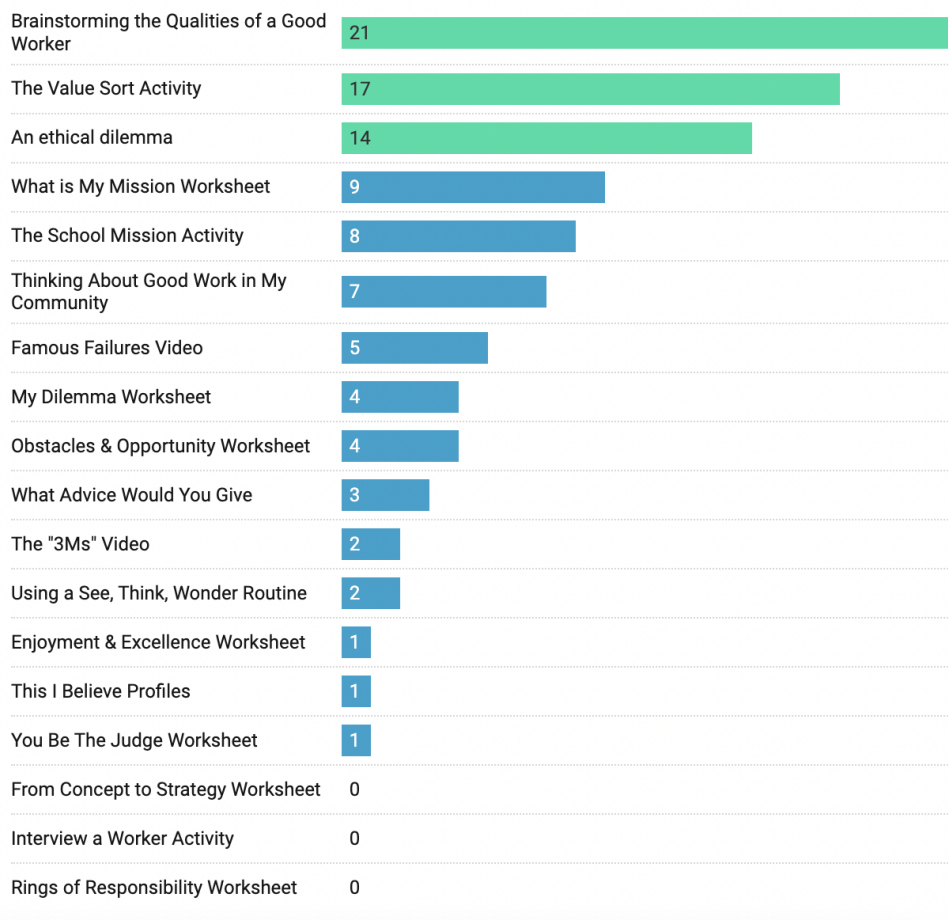
When asked to further identify the specific activities that were most impactful, 21% of students chose the “Brainstorming the Qualities of a Good Worker” activity, which asks

students to consider what qualities, attributes, values, and character strengths might define a “good worker;” 17% of students chose The Good Project Value Sort activity, which asks students to grapple with their own values and beliefs about who they are and how their values intersect with their sense of the type of person they would like to be (the character strengths they would like to embody); and 14% specifically chose an ethical dilemma as one of their most impactful activities.

Figure 3. *Most Impactful Project Activities*

### What Project Activity Was Most Impactful?

Percentage of Respondents on Post-Survey



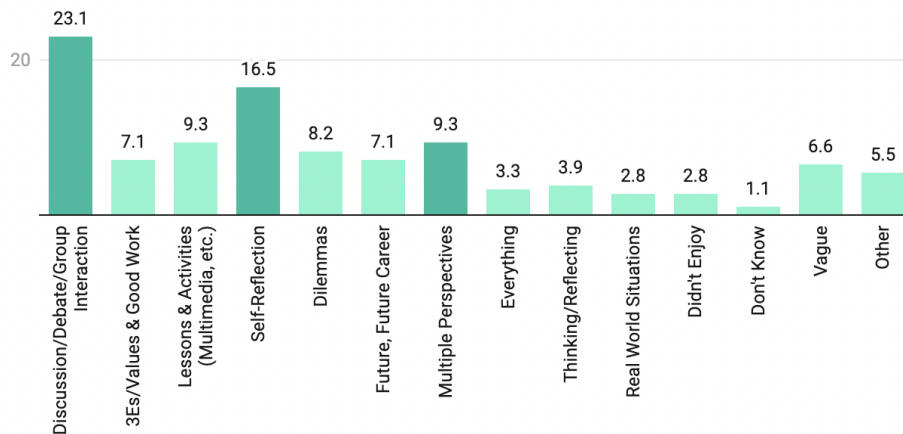
When asked to describe in an open-ended manner what they enjoyed about the lesson plans, students self-identified several elements such as group discussion, dilemma-based

discussion, and perspective-taking—all hallmarks of ethical and moral education (Rest et al., 2000).

Figure 4. *Students’ Qualitative Report of Most Enjoyed Elements of Lessons*

### What Did You Enjoy Most About The Lessons?

Percentage of Respondents. Open-Ended Question on Post-Survey.

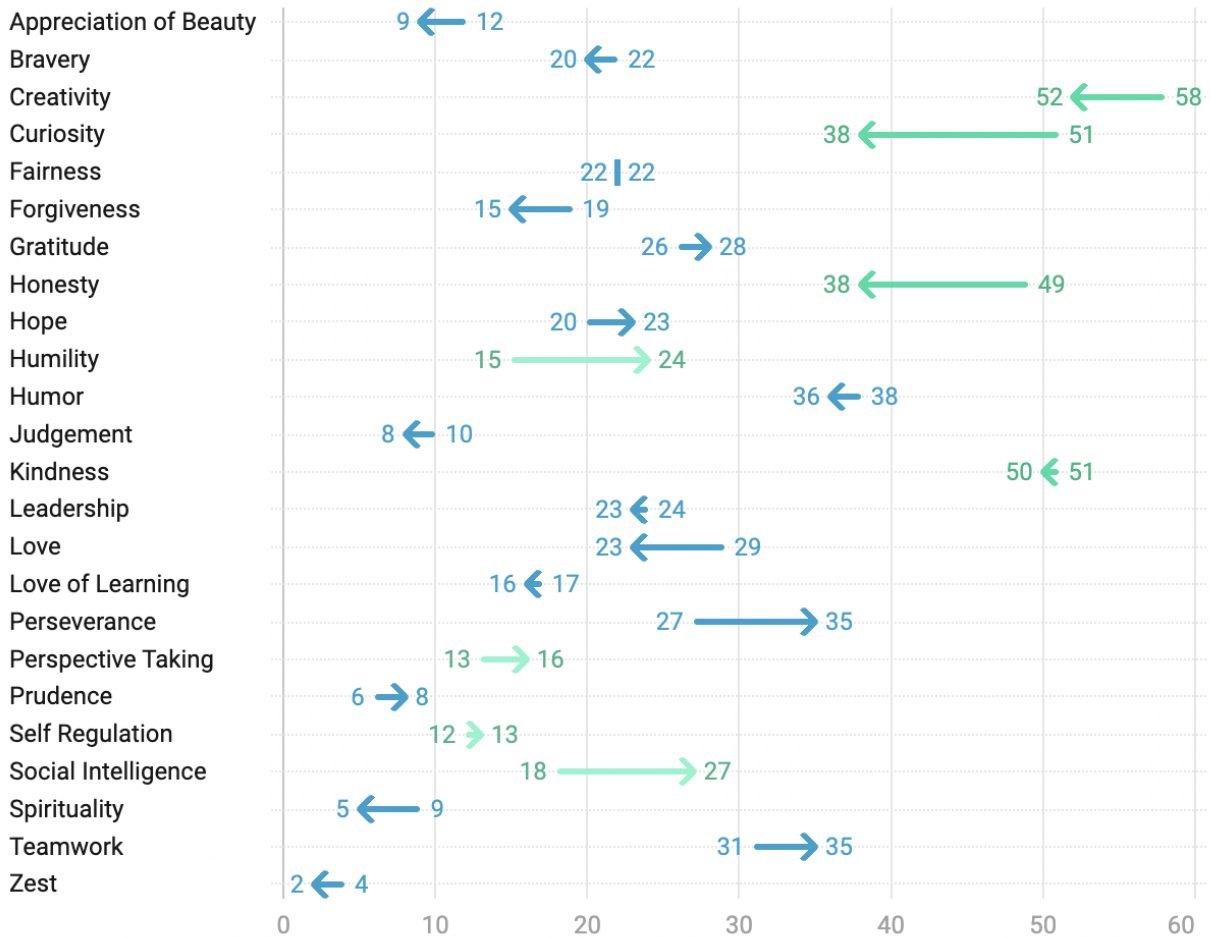


Given that students identified the group-based dilemma discussion element of the lesson plans as the most valuable and impactful element for their education, it is perhaps not surprising that this aspect of the pedagogy may have influenced how students identified and ranked their character strengths over the course of the year. As noted above, students were asked to look at a list of 24 character strengths and to choose their top six qualities on the pre- and post-surveys. On the pre-survey, 58% of students chose creativity, 51% curiosity, 51% kindness, and 49% honesty ranked somewhere within their list of six values. These were the most chosen character strengths. On the post-survey, endorsement of all of these qualities decreased, yet gains—some admittedly quite small—were seen in other character strengths required for engaging in ethical dilemma discussions, such as humility, social intelligence, perspective-taking, and self-regulation.

Figure 5. *Percentage Change in Chosen Character Strengths*

# Percentage Change in Chosen Character Strengths

Between Pre-Survey (Fall 2021; Left #) and Post-Survey (Spring 2022; Right #)



After students chose their top six character strengths, they were then asked to rank these qualities from most important (a rank of 1) to least important (a rank of 6). On the pre-survey, 9% of students ranked kindness as most important; this was followed by honesty at 8%, curiosity at 7%, and creativity at 7%. On the post-survey, the qualities that were selected and ranked of highest importance were kindness and honesty – both at 8% – but also ranked highly were creativity (at 7%) and perseverance (at 6%).

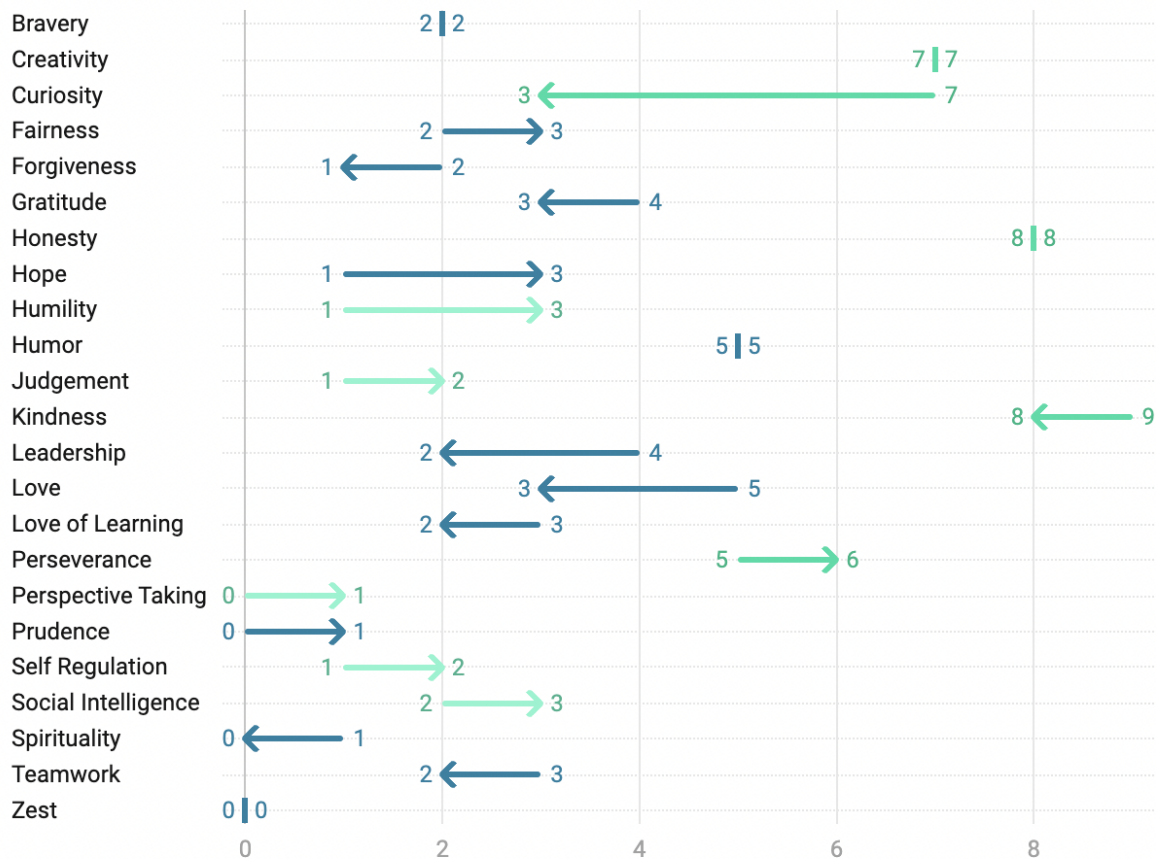
Notably, a similar pattern was again witnessed as when students were asked to choose their 6 most important character strengths: on the post-survey, a higher percentage of top

rankings were given to character strengths involved in dilemma discussions—such as self-regulation and perspective taking—than had previously been seen on the student pre-survey (where some had received no number one rankings). In other words, there were consistent gains, however slight, in character strengths associated with grappling with ethical dilemmas.

Figure 6. *Percentage Change in Ranked #1 Character Strengths*

## Percentage Change in Ranked #1 Character Strengths

Percentage Ranked #1 at Pre-Survey (Fall 2021, Left #) and Post-Survey (Spring 2022, Right #)



## Discussion

We are hopeful that this study will help inform educators and others about 1) the way that students rate ethics pedagogy in schools; 2) students’ thoughts and choices regarding character virtues as they relate to work; and 3) a new curriculum aimed at teaching students more about ethics as it relates to “good work.”

There is clearly a need for ethics education, and, as outlined earlier, although character education and social emotional learning are on the rise, there is a lack of focus on the skills needed to navigate ethical challenges, in school and in work. The results of this study reflect this lack: students felt that ethics education was not featured prominently in their school days. Additionally, students also expressed that they lacked time for reflection in school. As reported, one of the elements of the lesson plans that students found most impactful was the opportunity to reflect and discuss; as a result, the lack of consistent attention to providing space for these activities is especially notable. Interestingly, the results show that students enjoyed and found ethics education impactful, particularly when they were able to engage in discussions and reflect on their own personal values and character strength. The Good Project’s curriculum emphasizes not only the importance of excellent (high quality) and ethical (responsible) work, but also the importance of engaging (meaningful) work. Students found the work engaging, and this may in part be due to its connection to “real-world” elements. The results suggest that students found that the pilot curriculum provided them with the greatest increases in their daily school experiences in pedagogies that are connected to the “real world”: motivation for schoolwork, considering their role models, discussing what is right and wrong, and grappling with real-life situations.

Results with respect to student understandings about the types of character strengths that most represent them and that they find most important are modest. Nonetheless, they are informative and suggest that engaging in this type of curriculum has the potential to change student thinking. Following an increase in discussions and reflection about dilemmas and values, students gain an appreciation for some character strengths that are necessary in these activities. It’s possible that student engagement in this reflective work may involve a recognition that being humble, exhibiting social intelligence, taking perspective, and self-regulation are valuable skills. Of course, these skills are not only important with respect to

classroom discussions but are in fact some of the highly prized “soft skills” most sought-after in the job market.

These results have already informed the development of The Good Project curriculum. Our team at The Good Project is now involved in a three year mixed-methods study investigating the impact of the Good Project lesson plans on students’ potential character growth. Key to the study is the participation of the 95 educators (half domestic, half international) who are implementing the lessons in a community of practice in order to share their learnings and challenges. In moving beyond the pilot stage to this more formal study, there are a number of features of the lessons that have been adapted, informed by the experiences of this pilot work. As is the case in any classroom setting, educators are continually adapting lessons, sometimes on a daily basis. These adaptations are to be expected: tracking changes, learning from them, and noting what works best are critically important. In order to more fully understand fidelity to the lesson plans, virtual classroom observations will be carried out. To track more details about the impact of lessons on students’ character development *throughout* the year, “mini” surveys are being used after each lesson. In combination with pre- and post-survey results across the year, the data should result in a more complete understanding of impact. There are multiple additional variables that have affected the lesson plan implementation that have yet to be examined (for example, type of classroom where the lessons are taught, the impact of multiple educators in one institution working together). In many ways, the pilot program described here not only laid the groundwork for a larger study; it also identified key questions for further investigation by The Good Project and others regarding effective ethics education and strategies for implementation.

### **Limitations**

As with all studies, this study has limitations. The study is correlational in nature and cannot make any causal claims. We report here only descriptive statistics on the study data. Furthermore, given the ad hoc nature of the pilot study implementation and sample, matching the data in order to create a longitudinal data set between the pre- and post-surveys was not possible. Accordingly, we were limited in the analyses we could perform and do not report on longitudinal results beyond percentage changes here. Finally, these results are restricted to an adolescent and college-aged student sample and should not be generalized universally.

### **Conclusion**

The rapidly changing world of work needs good workers: those who are able to do high quality work, work that is responsible, and work that keeps its practitioners engaged. Despite a clear need for ethical thinking and integrity in employees, intellectual, moral/ethical, and civic character strengths are rarely fostered in the workplace. Likewise, although character education and social emotional learning are on the rise, specific curricula that address skills to grapple with ethical dilemmas are rare. Drawing upon 25 years of research, The Good Project Team developed a curriculum designed for middle and high school classrooms. These lesson plans were piloted during the 2021-2022 academic year, and results of this pilot study helped guide the direction of a formal research investigation of the curriculum set for 2022-2025.

Results of this study indicate that students feel there is a lack of ethics education in school as well as a lack of time for reflection. Students are engaged by reflection and discussion about values and dilemmas; in part, this may be due to the relationship of these ideas to the “real world” beyond the classroom. The practices that engaged students present promise, as students will hopefully translate the skills acquired in the classroom to the world of work as a critical next piece. Results also point to small gains in the way students rated the



importance of character strengths such as humility, social intelligence, perspective-taking and self-regulation. Further examination of these character strengths, in particular with respect to their relationship to and importance in the working world, would be beneficial. In addition, and taking into account these learnings, future research could involve targeting specific character strengths. Finally, the pilot study has greatly impacted the development of the GP curriculum.

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