

Integrating Character and Wellbeing Education in Schools

A New Practical Model to Enhance Student Flourishing

First Edition

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The Jubilee Centre
for Character
& Virtues



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COLLEGE

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a unique and leading centre for the examination of how character and virtues impact upon individuals and society. The Centre was founded in 2012 by Professor James Arthur. Based at the University of Birmingham, it has a dedicated team of academics from a range of disciplines, researching the importance of character for individual and societal flourishing.

With its focus on excellence, the Centre has a robust, rigorous research and evidence-based approach that is objective and non-political. It offers world class research on the importance of developing good character and virtues and the benefits they bring to individuals and society. In undertaking its own innovative research, the Centre also seeks to partner with academics, policy makers and practitioners from around the world to develop strong strategic partnerships.

A key conviction underlying the existence of the Centre is that the virtues that make up good character can be 'caught', 'taught' and 'sought', but that these have been largely neglected in schools and in the professions. It is also a key conviction that the more people exhibit good character and virtues, the healthier our society. As such, the Centre undertakes development projects seeking to promote the practical applications of its research evidence.

Wellington College

Set within 400 acres of beautiful Berkshire parkland, Wellington College is a coeducational day and boarding school for students aged 13 to 18. Wellington College combines a bold, modern approach to education with a rich heritage rooted in character, service and ambition. As one of the world's leading schools, Wellington College are proud to offer a distinctive and future-facing learning experience that prepares young people for the future. Wellington College's pioneering curriculum is matched by an outstanding commitment to wellbeing, ensuring every student flourishes both academically and personally.





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Overview

Given the recent policy interest in balancing the overall aims of education to include a focus on student flourishing, a practical question arises of how to operationalise and execute this aim educationally, in school contexts.

Character education and wellbeing education both have a venerable theoretical provenance and a significant history of practical implementations. Both approaches bring salient theoretical and practical strengths to the table. Attempts to implement these approaches have typically run on separate tracks without much crossover work or collaboration. In this first edition of *Integrating Character and Wellbeing Education in Schools* we set out both theoretically and practically how the strengths of each approach can be maximised through synergic interactions – in the overall service of student flourishing. This publication complements *The Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools*ⁱ, from which much of the advice and guidance in this document is derived.

The *Integrated Character and Wellbeing Theoretical Model* and *RIPPLE* practical approach introduced here for the first time will inevitably require adaptation by researchers, educators, and other professionals to ensure they are responsive to the unique needs, priorities, and ethos of individual schools, as well as the students, families, and communities they serve. Although grounded in existing literature and research on character and wellbeing education, the approach itself will also need to be monitored and evaluated throughout implementation. Findings from this process should inform ongoing refinement and future iterations.

It is hoped that this first edition of *Integrating Character and Wellbeing Education in Schools: A New Practical Model to Enhance Student Flourishing* will support schools and other educational institutions in taking meaningful steps toward embedding character and wellbeing education, ultimately contributing to the flourishing of their students and the wider society.



From Education for Human Capital to Education for Human Flourishing

After a long period of relative, if uneasy, consensus in international educational policy circles about the main aim of education being the development of 'human capital', measured via objective parameters of knowledge acquisition and economic progress, the tide is now turning towards an ideal of student flourishing as the overarching educational aim. This change of compass has been suggested by major international policy makers, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)ⁱⁱ.

Motivation for these global policy moves is the current mental health epidemic among young people (esp. post-2010), and increased level of school disengagement, social disenfranchisement, and a general lack of purpose and sense of belonging among students from the primary to the tertiary levelsⁱⁱⁱ. Another driver is the changing nature of employment as well as attitudes towards what is important in a life well lived: for instance, in the balance between work and leisure. These reasons and others have motivated significant and fundamental debates, by researchers, policy makers, and practitioners, about the purpose of education. A movement of influential educational organisations is gathering in the UK and further afield making a convincing argument that the purpose of education is to enhance individual and societal flourishing through a focus on character and wellbeing education.

The Need for an Integrated Model of Character and Wellbeing Education

'Character education' and 'wellbeing education' have increasingly been seen as possible, if partial, remedies of the current situation. These two approaches have – despite obvious overlaps – mostly run on parallel tracks without significant theoretical or practical interaction^{iv}. The aim of the new practical model, proposed in this document, is to enrich neo-Aristotelian character education, through synergic interaction, with insights from the wellbeing

literature, insofar as the latter is educationally relevant. Perhaps even more prominently, such synergy may help complement the wellbeing literature with characterological insights, through a synthetic practical model.

Synergies: Neo-Aristotelian Philosophy and Positive Education Psychology

The task of integrating character and wellbeing education is a tall order because wellbeing science has a decades' long history within psychology, much of which has focused on the prevention or remedy of serious psychological ailments, but without a distinct school-based educational focus: issues that lie beyond the scope or efficacy of any classroom strategies. However, in the last thirty years or so, the research lens in wellbeing science has turned increasingly towards educational issues, not least since the inception of so-called positive psychology around the turn of the century: a side-stream in wellbeing science that has its own bespoke educational incarnation: 'positive education'^v. While we acknowledge that wellbeing research in psychology is a broad and growing field that goes well beyond positive psychology, we will be drawing specifically on theoretical and practical insights from positive psychology/education in what follows because of some obvious parallels with neo-Aristotelian character education. In so doing, we note also some important and potentially fruitful overlaps between other approaches to wellbeing, such as those that come from other strands of psychology and the mental and physical health sciences^{vi} that are beyond the scope of this document. We suggest various ways in which the arsenal of the educational side of wellbeing science can be extended and enriched by incorporating insights from character education. For example, intellectual, moral, civic, and performative character traits can (i) act as a protective shield against mental ill health and (ii) support wider mental wellbeing^{vii}. This suggestion is also supported by recent neurobiological research into character and wellbeing^{viii}. At all events, we will not shirk from suggesting that some of the strategies proposed below may be relevant for the preservation of good mental health. However, the immediate focus remains on strategies to develop good character among students as one of the core ingredients of human flourishing^{ix}.

Character Education

‘Character’ refers to the morally evaluable, reason-responsive, and (at least partially) educable part of human personhood, which excludes, for instance, amoral and mostly genetically pre-programmed personality traits such as extraversion and introversion. Character manifests itself via stable traits, which trace their origin to early childhood, and some even further back: traits ranging from compassion and a sense of justice to curiosity, integrity and resilience. In *The Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools* the morally positive set of those traits is referred to as ‘virtues’, and those are typically divided up into intellectual, moral, civic, and performance virtues, with practical wisdom (*phronesis*) as a meta-virtue for

integration. ‘Character education’ refers to any conscious and systematic educational attempt to cultivate those virtues through ‘caught’, ‘taught’, and ‘sought’ methods. More specifically, the virtues can be caught from the school environment, developed through taught classroom content, or sought by the students themselves through various extra-curricular activities, inside or outside of school^x.

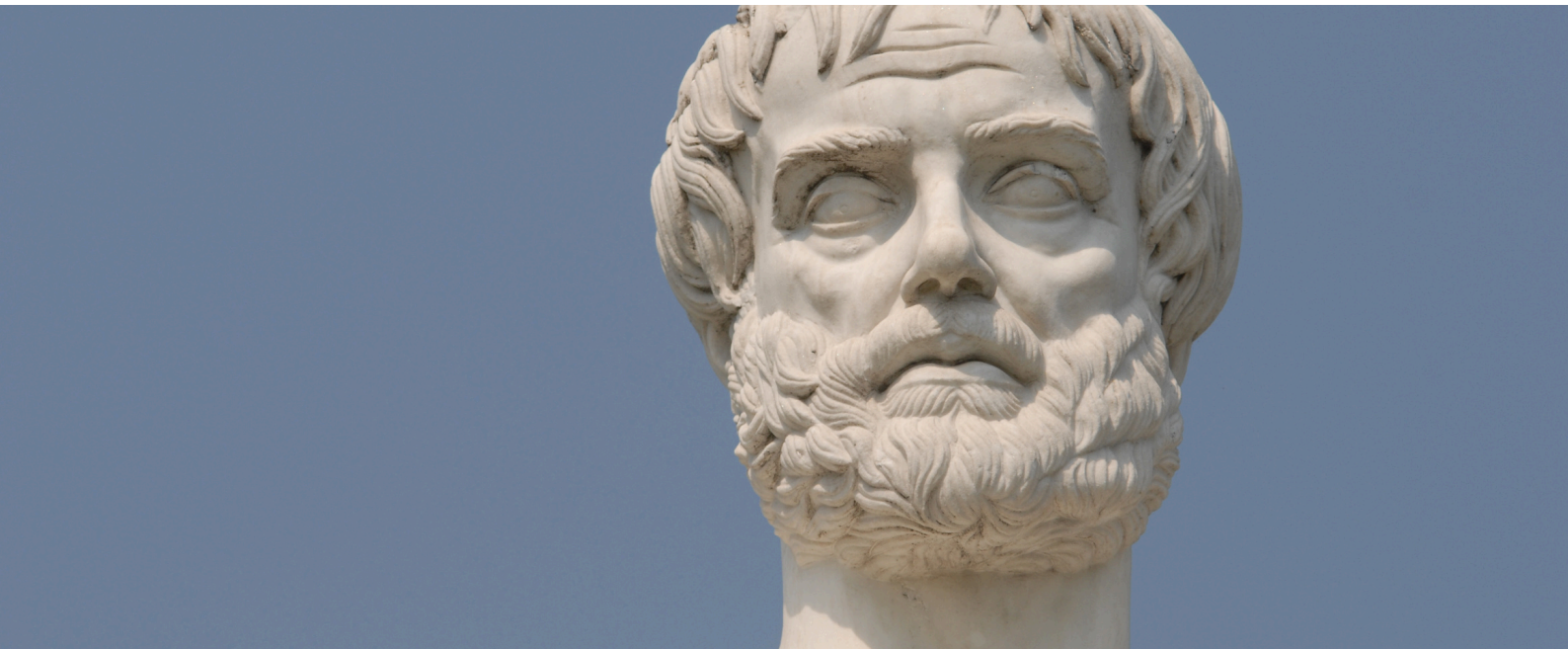
There are different approaches to character education competing for allegiance in the academic world, but the most prominent and widely accepted one in the current educational environment in the West is based on neo-Aristotelian virtue theory: namely, Aristotle’s original kind of virtue ethics complemented by recent social-scientific findings.

The Building Blocks of Character^{xi}

Intellectual Virtues	Moral Virtues	Civic Virtues	Performance Virtues
Character traits necessary for discernment, right action and the pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding.	Character traits that enable us to act well in situations that require an ethical response.	Character traits that are necessary for engaged responsible citizenship, contributing to the common good.	Character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the intellectual, moral and civic virtues.
Examples: Autonomy Critical Thinking Curiosity Judgement Reasoning Reflection Resourcefulness	Examples: Compassion Courage Gratitude Honesty Humility Integrity Justice Respect	Examples: Citizenship Civility Community Awareness Neighbourliness Service Volunteering	Examples: Confidence Determination Motivation Perseverance Resilience Leadership Teamwork

Strengths and Weaknesses of Neo-Aristotelian Character Education for an Integrated Practical Model

Neo-Aristotelian Character Education – Strengths for an Integrated Practical Model	Neo-Aristotelian Character Education – Weaknesses for an Integrated Practical Model
It is rooted in a theory of human flourishing as the ‘ungrounded grounder’ of all human strivings, including educational ones: a theory that is currently being adopted by the leading international policy maker in the field of education: OECD.	An excessive focus on the moral aspects of character and a lack of attention to the non-moral psychological strengths that are required for character development and general wellbeing.
It has a solid evidence basis from decades (and indeed centuries) of school-based implementations.	Limited engagement with current developmental and wellbeing psychology.
It puts strong emphasis on young people’s identity formation and highlights potential conflicts between virtues, such as compassion and honesty (not only between a virtue and a vice), to be resolved by the meta-virtue of practical wisdom (<i>phronesis</i>).	Under-appreciation of societal factors that help or hinder character development and influence wellbeing in various ways.
It is highly sensitive to situational (individual and cultural) variance.	The mixing up of objective facts and subjective values in promoting a contested conception of the good life as universally valuable, rather than simply relying on the views of the general public on what they happen to value.
It is practical and down-to-earth and tends to appeal to teachers and other practitioners, as well as students and parents.	Insufficient command of the tools of psychological measurements of character and its development.



Wellbeing Education

‘Wellbeing education’, as defined in this document, is a broad term, covering all educational implications of wellbeing science within psychology. For present purposes, we focus here specifically on ‘positive education’, which in turn can be characterised as the educational incarnation and application of so-called positive psychology. Positive psychology is an approach that arose at the beginning of this century as an antidote to the one-sided emphasis on human pathologies and other psychological ills. In contrast, positive psychology highlights research and interventions in the field of positive traits (character virtues and strengths, as well as mindfulness), positive emotions (pleasant experiences and ‘flow’ experiences) and positive institutions and leadership.

These three foci, in school contexts, are seen to contribute synergistically to student wellbeing. Apart from this side-stream of psychology, wellbeing science is now being pursued with great vigour within more mainstream areas of psychology, such as clinical psychology.

There are different points of emphasis among positive educationists, but since the publication of Martin Seligman’s (2011) book *Flourish*, the dominant model has moved closer to an objective understanding of flourishing as the aim of education, although subjective features (such as positively valenced emotions) are still highlighted to a greater extent than in character education.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Positive Psychology Wellbeing Education for an Integrated Practical Model

Positive Psychology Wellbeing Education – Strengths for an Integrated Practical Model	Positive Psychology Wellbeing Education – Weaknesses for an Integrated Practical Model
It has amassed a huge amount of empirical data on what people around the world value in terms of wellbeing and good character.	The tendency to individualise and psychologise young people’s moral and existential problems, thus instrumentalising virtues and eschewing their intrinsically valuable moral aspects.
It highlights various general psychological strengths that young people need in order to thrive, whatever their goals are.	The assumption that the more is the better for any virtue, failing to pay heed to the golden-mean architectonic of virtues where an excess (e.g., excessive gratitude) is no less of a vice than a deficiency (ingratitude).
It does not rely on any contested philosophical theory of value or the good life, but rather makes to do with prevalent lay views of what people consider valuable.	The missing metacognitive arbitrator of practical wisdom (<i>phronesis</i>) to resolve virtue conflicts.
It departs from the long tradition both within moral philosophy and mainstream psychology of ameliorating human weaknesses, replacing it with a focus on enhancing strengths.	The potentially defeatist philosophy of reducing the universally valuable to the universally valued.
It has created various tested interventions in school contexts and other educational settings that provide encouraging findings.	Failure to engage sufficiently with centuries of work on more traditional character education in schools.

The development of wellbeing/positive education, as an outgrowth of positive psychology, was originally meant to create a 'big tent' within the area of values education and personal development (in a broad sense), ideally incorporating approaches such as character education, social and emotional learning (SEL), citizenship education, peace education, human-rights education, etc. However, that goal has remained elusive and unrealised, as can be understood simply by considering the above-indicated differences in emphasis between wellbeing education and character education. This continued and, if anything, increasing fragmentation of values education and the lack of any comprehensive 'tent' within which its proponents can gather is a very unfortunate feature of the current theoretical and practical landscape, as it robs proponents of values education of any sustained and unified argumentative arsenal to counter those who still see the aims of education as consisting mainly or even exclusively in terms of grade attainment, job success, and overall narrow utilitarian/economic benefits. If it were possible to create a bigger tent, this could help facilitate the current OECD-driven transition from a human-capital theory of the aims of education to a flourishing model^{xii}.

Character Education and Wellbeing Education: Areas of Overlap

The current 'parallel tracks' situation is unhelpful for schools and teachers as it elides and overlooks significant areas of agreement and overlap between character education and wellbeing education. These areas include:

- A holistic view of education as involving moral and social as well as intellectual and performative competences. Also, the promotion of interdisciplinary research and intervention design involving educationists, educators, psychologists, and philosophers.
- An endorsement of a concept of wellbeing that is either predominantly objective (as in 'flourishing') or includes objective as well as subjective elements (as in positive psychological 'wellbeing').
- A focus on the role of character strengths and virtues in the good life.
- A keen interest in responding to the challenging situation, across the world, with regard to student mental wellbeing and school satisfaction, and in creating a more positive sense of identity and self-worth in young people.
- Emphasis on developing empirically validated measures and appropriately tested interventions.



Theoretical Paths to Integration and Foundations for the Model

Starting with the Geelong Grammar School in Australia^{xiii}, 'pure' wellbeing programmes have been implemented in various schools across the globe, including at Wellington College^{xiv}. The same applies to 'pure' character educational programmes in countries such as the UK and USA^{xv}. Both approaches have a recorded history of various examples of successful execution and the impression has been gathering pace among educators that they may be missing a trick by not synergising the efforts of wellbeing and character education, under an umbrella of human flourishing. This is particularly true in the current conditions of postmodernity, characterised by socio-political polarisation and 'culture wars', intrusive social media content, and a mental health epidemic among young people^{xvi}.

In order to unlock the potential of a combined model of character and wellbeing education, in the service of overall student flourishing, both approaches need to be ready to make concessions and enter into collaboration in a conciliatory spirit, which may sometimes require departures from dominant theoretical assumptions. By taking as a starting point, for instance, the well-known six-component model of human flourishing, proposed by the Harvard Flourishing Program^{xvii}, a combined wellbeing-character-education model would aim at promoting synergistically at least five of those components: health, happiness (or emotional wellbeing), meaning/purpose, good relationships, and character strengths and virtues. The sixth component, of economic stability, lies mostly outside of the remit of any values education programme. Both character education and wellbeing education already have strategies within their theoretical and methodological repertoires to contribute to those flourishing components, but they have so far implemented and prioritised those strategies differently.

A fully complete theoretical model of flourishing that combines character and wellbeing education is a taller order than can be executed in a short document such as this one; it requires substantial collaborative work. However, below we outline what a combined practical model would include and imply, beyond discrete character education or wellbeing models.

The pre-conditions for a complete practical model would include:

- Prioritising and concretising the focus on character strengths and virtues more than standard wellbeing models do. Yet, at the same time, the model would cultivate 'subjectification'^{xviii} more than mainstream Aristotelian character education does, by helping students to form their own identity and become free subjects of their own lives, through post-Enlightenment virtues such as autonomy and authenticity.
- It would go beyond Aristotelian character education in nourishing self-transcendent positive emotions such as awe and deep wonder.
- It would synthesise psychological and philosophical resources to counter psycho-moral ills, departing from the current tendency in character education to moralise the psychological and in wellbeing education to psychologise moral issues^{xix}.
- It would rectify the individualistic bias in positive psychology and some other areas of wellbeing science and consider combined wellbeing and character education as a socio-moral endeavour.
- It would include character education's (or at least forms of character education inspired by Aristotle) golden-mean architectonic into the specification of individual virtues and prioritise the cultivation of an integrative, adjudicative meta-virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) among adolescents.
- It would recognise the importance to wellbeing education of positive feelings, such as joy and a sense of gratitude, more than mainstream character education does, while avoiding the reduction of the new model into mere 'happiology'.
- It would highlight the role of performance virtues in helping students bounce back from difficult experiences.
- It would draw on the state of the art in psychology and utilise the most advanced kinds of measurements to record progress in the implementation of interventions.

All in all, a combined character and wellbeing education practical model would use the flourishing of students^{xx} as its overarching lodestar. While the standard understanding of 'flourishing' is less subjective than the standard understanding of 'wellbeing' in wellbeing education, the content of any educational programmes would need to draw both on resources from wellbeing and character education. The theoretical assumptions driving these two approaches are not too remote from one another to render this goal impossible. However, a tree is known by its fruit, and much more needs to be said below about how to put such a conciliatory theoretical aim into practice.

It is on these theoretical foundations, and an acknowledgment of their limitations, that the following practical approach to integrating character education and wellbeing education rests.

“

'...a combined character and wellbeing education practical model would use the flourishing of students as its overarching lodestar.'

A Practical Model: Inspire

Shaped by the pre-conditions above, the *New Practical Model to Enhance Student Flourishing* that follows seeks to **INSPIRE** through being:

Informed

Grounded in knowledge, evidence, and expert judgement to inform educational practice orientated towards human flourishing.

Nuanced

Recognises the complexities and challenges of life, the diversity of individual experiences, and a commitment to the flourishing of all.

Socially-Oriented

Situates individual flourishing as dependent on societal flourishing.

Preventative

Emphasises that character and wellbeing are about living a good life, contributing to the common good and flourishing rather than solely about 'fixing problems'.

Intersubjective

Balances what it means to live an ethical 'good' life with individual experiences and autonomy.

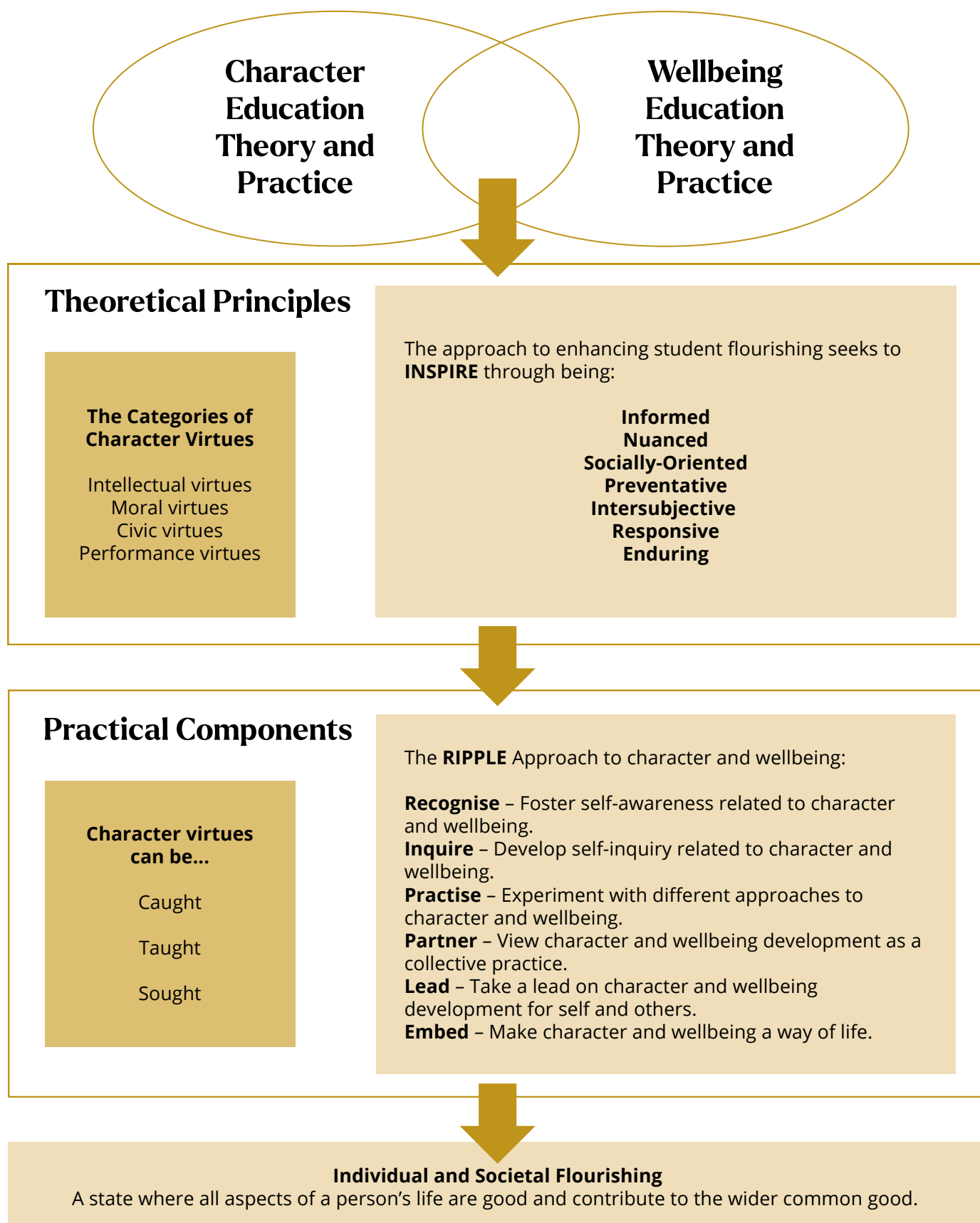
Responsive

Adaptable to different contexts and societal changes.

Enduring

Provides a foundation for long term character development, wellbeing and flourishing.

Integrating Character and Wellbeing Education in Schools: A New Practical Model to Enhance Student Flourishing



Practical Components

There now exists a variety of research-informed practical texts or frameworks for supporting either character or wellbeing in schools. With regards specifically to wellbeing education, those frameworks that exist typically outline key aspects of a whole school approach to wellbeing rather than offering clear and specific strategies and approaches to teaching about, and *for*, wellbeing^{xxi}. This said, a number of texts exist that provide more explicit and focused activities and resources for teaching wellbeing^{xxii} and organisations, such as #BeeWell^{xxiii}, provide valuable insights about what affects young people's wellbeing and what can be done to improve it.

The purpose of this section is to offer a frame for connecting various aspects of educational provision for character and wellbeing. The practical matters set out here are not offered as a blueprint or a catch-all for all that might be possible in schools.

Rather, the text and ideas that follow can be used as a basis from which to frame discussions and dialogue within (and possibly between) schools regarding how schools do – and can – integrate character and wellbeing within their school, their curriculum, and their community.

In seeking to *integrate* character education and wellbeing education, this section is influenced by and draws upon various sources of inspiration^{xxiv}. Primarily this section and the approach taken is informed by the 'caught, taught, sought' categorisation of pedagogical approaches to character education central to *The Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools*, which includes key teaching and learning strategies through *The Character Teaching Inventory*.

As with character education and wellbeing education individually, a holistic and comprehensive education for character and wellbeing will pay concerted attention to a caught, taught, and sought typology:

Character and wellbeing caught	Character and wellbeing, including the virtues necessary for wellbeing and flourishing, lie at the heart of the school's mission and vision, and these are articulated clearly in the daily life of the school as a community. A clear language of character, wellbeing, and flourishing is in place within the school, is actively used by and within the school community, and provides the basis for critical reflection and dialogue about living a good and happy life. Relationships within the school are caring, and a strong sense of belonging to the school community, the local community and beyond is supported in students, staff, and families.
Character and wellbeing taught	The virtues that underpin the school's vision of, and for, character, wellbeing, and flourishing are taught explicitly within the formal curriculum (including taking account of connected mandatory requirements). Key concepts involved are identified and explored, and in turn are understood and practised through active and reflective pedagogies and relationships. Opportunities are available for students to engage in discussion about issues and matters that are relevant to their own lives and to their sense of who they are and wish to be. Teaching and learning approaches are attentive to character and wellbeing and seek to promote dialogue, positive classroom climates and enquiry-based learning – all underpinned by core knowledge, understanding, and skills.
Character and wellbeing sought	A range of opportunities and experiences are provided for all students to engage in enrichment and other activities through which they can develop their character and sense of wellbeing, coming together with others to build a sense of community, purpose and belonging. Through such activities and experiences students can develop a sense of positive community and come to view themselves and their wellbeing as both individual and social, as well as an understanding of how they can seek their own character, wellbeing, and flourishing.

Implementing the Model: Strategic Considerations

It is important to make explicit certain strategic considerations that are well attested to in the literatures on character education and wellbeing education. These are that:

- **A whole-school approach** is necessary for any meaningful integration of character education and wellbeing education in pursuit of flourishing. A whole-school approach must not only pursue a holistic and human education in its fullest sense, but must also view wellbeing, the cultivation of virtues and, ultimately, human flourishing as a core aim and purpose of education and schooling. A whole-school approach is vital for countering individualistic and siloed approaches to character and wellbeing.
- **A vision is in place of who the students are, who they might be, and might become – generally for the student body as a whole and individually for each student.** Through engaging with and shaping this vision – including exploring how the vision relates to their identity as a student, a community member, and a person – students are able to better know themselves. Such a vision blends general human qualities and goals with a recognition of individual differences between students.
- **Committed and collaborative leadership** is a prerequisite for the practical implementation of character and wellbeing education, including having dedicated staff to lead and oversee this aspect of a school's work and curriculum. As well as providing strategic direction and connections, committed and collaborative leadership is essential for (i) the development and implementation of a planned, intentional and explicit approach that moves beyond piecemeal and expedient ways of working and (ii) ensuring a preventative and protective approach in addition to one that is purely responsive.
- **Interventions for character and wellbeing must be continuously monitored and evaluated** if character and wellbeing are to be implemented effectively and sustainably. While recognising various challenges and pitfalls in “assessing” wellbeing and character, it is essential that the impact, outcomes, and experiences of interventions and programmes implemented in schools are monitored and evaluated in a way that draws on a range of data sources – including validated measurement tools, and feedback from students, staff, and parents.
- **Regular and focused professional development and education** is required to ensure staff are supported, feel valued, and have access to up-to-date knowledge and understanding. A core aspect of professional development and education includes how to know and understand boundaries and limitations in expertise, including when and how to refer to specialist help and services within and beyond the school.
- **Staff character and wellbeing are prioritised** and viewed as a necessary conduit for student character, wellbeing and flourishing^{xxv}.
- **Character and wellbeing are connected to students' homes and homelives, and are based on a partnership with families.** Such partnerships prioritise mutual support and shared commitments to students' character and wellbeing.
- **Character and wellbeing beyond the school are engaged with and drawn upon to shape character and wellbeing within the school.** While noting the challenges involved, partnership work, collaboration, and working with communities, services and professionals is vital for a connected and holistic experience for students.

The RIPPLE Approach to Character and Wellbeing in Schools

The RIPPLE Approach to Character and Wellbeing in Schools provides a tool through which school leaders and teachers can structure, think through, and reflect on the integration of character education and wellbeing in practice. The approach encourages attention to various constituent and necessary elements of an integrated approach to wellbeing and character, namely: for students to be able to **R**ecognise, to **I**nquire, to **P**ractise, to **P**artner, to **L**ead, and to **E**mbed and flourish. Woven into the Approach are various enabling teaching and learning strategies, including: role-modelling, learning from stories, learning from moral exemplars, developing positive relationships with others – including through social action, drama/role-playing, reflection, and dialogue.



RIPPLE Stage	Example Virtue	Examples of Student Actions Across Caught, Taught and Sought
<p>Recognise <i>Fostering self-awareness related to character and wellbeing.</i></p> <p>Where are students now in their character and wellbeing development, and where do they wish to be?</p> <p>How does this idea/concept/activity have meaning to students?</p> <p>What personal development goals do students have?</p>	<p>Intellectual Virtues</p> <p>Curiosity – Ask "Why do I feel this way?"</p> <p>Reflection – Recognise the diversity of abilities, interests and values one holds.</p>	<p>Engage with stories and narratives that highlight characters who are curious about their thoughts and feelings, and who are attentive to the character and wellbeing development of themselves and others.</p> <p>Reflect critically to increase self-awareness and identify when help and support is needed in relation to character and wellbeing development.</p>
	<p>Moral Virtues</p> <p>Honesty – Recognise strengths and areas for growth.</p> <p>Humility – Acknowledge specific constraints of one's individuality that are less malleable.</p>	<p>Seek out trusted adults and peers who can role-model and verbalise honest self-reflection about their own character and wellbeing development.</p> <p>Journal about personal strengths, challenges, emotions, experiences, and motivations (for example, through gratitude journaling).</p>
	<p>Civic Virtues</p> <p>Open-mindedness – Explore different perspectives on character and wellbeing.</p> <p>Mutual Respect – Recognise the richness of diversity.</p>	<p>Take part in active listening exercises and role playing activities that encourage perspective-taking.</p> <p>Seek out opportunities to learn about the day-to-day experience of others including those outside of our immediate communities.</p>
	<p>Performance Virtues</p> <p>Self-awareness – Identify emotions and the impact of actions.</p> <p>Diligence – Regularly reflect on thoughts, feelings, and actions.</p>	<p>Observe and learn from exemplars who demonstrate determination and effort in tackling challenging tasks.</p> <p>Undertake age-appropriate personality/character assessments (e.g., VIA Youth etc.) to increase self-awareness and as a formative tool for character and wellbeing development.</p>

RIPPLE Stage	Example Virtue	Examples of Student Actions Across Caught, Taught and Sought
Inquire <i>Developing self-inquiry related to character and wellbeing.</i> What do students need to learn and do? What is my motivation and the motivation of students? Why do/should students care? How can students be/become more curious?	Intellectual Virtues Critical Thinking – Evaluate what contributes to character and wellbeing development. Intellectual Courage – Apply knowledge about what works for character and wellbeing development.	Engage with a ‘Curious Questions’ wall, where students post open-ended questions related to character and wellbeing. Participate in ‘Think Like a Philosopher’ workshops, exploring ethical and existential questions.
	Moral Virtues Courage – Take ownership of actions and hopes for the future. Forgiveness – Practise forgiveness (for self and others) where past events are impacting character and wellbeing development.	Gain insight from group discussions/debates around forgiveness and its impact on wellbeing. Set courageous personal goals that are challenging and meaningful for character and wellbeing development.
	Civic Virtues Engagement – Explore how character and wellbeing development links to wider current social issues. Justice – Strive for fairness and equality for self and others.	Reflect on what makes a “good” society – looking at diverse cultures, governance, and social justice movements. Seek out opportunities for community service or volunteering and reflect on the impact on the character and wellbeing development of themselves and others (the double benefit).
	Performance Virtues Perseverance – Build resilience and resourcefulness through effort. Self-regulation – Make a choice to do something or not do something in the moment.	Celebrate exemplars who have modelled resourcefulness and self-regulation in the face of adversity. Try new activities and experiences that challenge comfort zones and build resilience.

RIPPLE Stage	Example Virtue	Examples of Student Actions Across Caught, Taught and Sought
<p>Practise <i>Experimenting with different approaches to character and wellbeing.</i></p> <p>How do, and can, students...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...connect with others? • ...prioritise what is important to themselves and their communities? • ...view themselves as active citizens? 	<p>Intellectual Virtues</p> <p>Reason – Use a reasoned approach to looking after own character and wellbeing development.</p> <p>Intellectual Humility – Accept the limits of one's own knowledge and understanding.</p>	<p>Engage with experiences and activities (e.g. moral dilemmas) to support the understanding and development of practical wisdom (<i>phronesis</i>).</p> <p>Practise 'active listening' in conversations and debates to explore viewpoints alternative to one's own.</p>
	<p>Moral Virtues</p> <p>Compassion – Respond to others, and self, with care and kindness.</p> <p>Gratitude – Consistently feel gratitude for the support of others and appreciate life's good things.</p>	<p>Contribute to a 'Random Acts of Kindness' wall to reinforce moral action and provide examples of character in action.</p> <p>Understand practices related to the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' and other evidence-based approaches such as gratitude journaling.</p>
	<p>Civic Virtues</p> <p>Fairness – Listen to others' perspectives and attempt to resolve conflict.</p> <p>Citizenship – Understand and address needs and question injustice, learning to disagree agreeably.</p>	<p>Engage with and challenge representatives and community leaders on questions of fairness.</p> <p>Learn how to employ restorative approaches to repair examples of injustice and/or harm after conflict.</p>
	<p>Performance Virtues</p> <p>Self-control – Understand own values and form habits accordingly.</p> <p>Patience – Look after wellbeing through sustained effort and understand change takes time.</p>	<p>Experience environments that reward perseverance and effort whilst developing an understanding that change takes time.</p> <p>Share character and wellbeing development goals with peers for mutual accountability.</p>

RIPPLE Stage	Example Virtue	Examples of Student Actions Across Caught, Taught and Sought
<p>Partner <i>Viewing character and wellbeing development as a collective practice.</i></p> <p>How do students learn to support others?</p> <p>How is students' personal wellbeing connected to community wellbeing?</p> <p>How do students make the link between their character and their wellbeing?</p>	<p>Intellectual Virtues</p> <p>Reflection – Learn from collective experiences.</p> <p>Pro-activity – Take the initiative to support collective character and wellbeing development.</p>	<p>Experience taking part in structured discussions related to wellbeing, for example, Socratic seminars.</p> <p>Set up peer-led wellbeing support groups where peers can reflect in a safe space and focus on their collective wellbeing.</p>
	<p>Moral Virtues</p> <p>Empathy – Strengthen group relationships through understanding.</p> <p>Kindness – Help others in need.</p>	<p>Learn about the different forms of kindness (emotional, practical, relational, social etc.).</p> <p>Volunteer for local projects or community wellbeing events that strengthen relationships and help others.</p>
	<p>Civic Virtues</p> <p>Service – Take action to improve school or community wellbeing.</p> <p>Social Action – Share time and expertise in collaborating on collective goals.</p>	<p>Connect with others through collaboration on school character and wellbeing projects (e.g., class wellbeing campaigns).</p> <p>Train as peer mentors or wellbeing champions to support others with wellbeing.</p>
	<p>Performance Virtues</p> <p>Tenacity – Encourage others to engage in character and wellbeing development practices and help with barriers.</p> <p>Optimism – Cultivate a hopeful and optimistic approach.</p>	<p>Observe others responding positively to setbacks in group work, such as redoing a project after receiving feedback.</p> <p>Seek out opportunities to work with different peers on group tasks and learn to adjust to various working styles.</p>

RIPPLE Stage	Example Virtue	Examples of Student Actions Across Caught, Taught and Sought
<p>Lead <i>Taking a lead on character and wellbeing development for self and others.</i></p> <p>What structures and activities can be put in place to support sustained efforts in character and wellbeing development?</p> <p>How can students become character and wellbeing leaders of tomorrow?</p>	<p>Intellectual Virtues</p> <p>Creativity – Use innovative thinking to create sustainable wellbeing solutions.</p> <p>Intellectual Ambition – Set high standards for self and strive for improvement.</p>	<p>Reflect on inspirational leadership case studies to understand the high standards set by others.</p> <p>Learn critical thinking skills to enable informed decision making and set aspirational self improvement goals.</p>
	<p>Moral Virtues</p> <p>Honour – Lead with ethical and compassionate decision-making.</p> <p>Justice – Become aware of contextual factors impacting individual starting points.</p>	<p>Use current affairs to highlight ‘calls to action’ related to justice and fairness issues in the local and international community.</p> <p>Understand leadership theories (such as servant, authentic, transformational) and recognise how they impact people’s wellbeing.</p>
	<p>Civic Virtues</p> <p>Co-operation – Work with others to promote socially responsible action advocating for the many.</p> <p>Civility – Role model ethical forms of leadership that rely on civil discourse and respect.</p>	<p>Learn about advocacy projects and justice movements related to character and wellbeing.</p> <p>Seek out different approaches to civic leadership and explore their impact on character and wellbeing development.</p>
	<p>Performance Virtues</p> <p>Resilience – Stay committed to long-term change despite setbacks.</p> <p>Resourcefulness – Continually strive towards character and wellbeing development goals by drawing on a range of resources.</p>	<p>Contribute to campaigns where students take the initiative to address performance-related stress, such as implementing mindfulness practices.</p> <p>Draw on own resources and those resources available, including those sought out, to enhance character and wellbeing and to overcome challenges.</p>

RIPPLE Stage	Example Virtue	Examples of Student Actions Across Caught, Taught and Sought
<p>Embed <i>Making character and wellbeing a way of life.</i></p> <p>How can character and wellbeing be integrated into a way of life?</p> <p>How can students learn knowledge, skills and habits of character and wellbeing that equip them for a lifetime?</p>	<p>Intellectual Virtues</p> <p>Practical Wisdom – Learn to sustain personal and social flourishing through <i>phronesis</i>.</p> <p>Intellectual Integrity – Balance using evidence based strategies with lived experience.</p>	<p>Introduce moral/ethical dilemmas encouraging discussion and reflection on situations requiring a moral/ethical response.</p> <p>Discuss how to incorporate character and/or wellbeing strategies and theories into everyday life and as daily practices.</p>
	<p>Moral Virtues</p> <p>Integrity – Live a life guided by ethical personal and collective values.</p> <p>Awe – Encourage exploration and discovery to find moments of awe that have a positive impact on character and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Discuss with teachers, mentors and peers the challenges of living a virtuous life.</p> <p>Ask self-searching questions like, "What is the right thing to do?" when faced with a situation where values are tested.</p>
	<p>Civic Virtues</p> <p>Equity – Create inclusive, thriving environments where fairness prevails.</p> <p>Social Altruism – Selflessly care about the welfare of others as well as taking care of own wellbeing.</p>	<p>Witness structured debate where civic leaders are questioned on issues such as fair treatment and inclusivity.</p> <p>Learn about and enact altruism through giving and kindness to others.</p>
	<p>Performance Virtues</p> <p>Purpose – Align character and wellbeing development with long-term goals.</p> <p>Confidence – Continue to refine character and wellbeing development practices and have a belief in one's own capacity to take the right action.</p>	<p>Understand varying theories of purpose that have strong cultural roots, e.g. the Japanese ideal of Ikigai.</p> <p>Aspire for personal growth and wellbeing as a way of life through methods such as goal setting and critical reflection.</p>



Evaluation Criteria

Alongside the RIPPLE Approach, which guides how we integrate and teach character and wellbeing, we suggest three criteria^{xxvi} that will help schools, teachers, and students to reflect on what kinds of goals – academic, personal, or institutional – that will contribute to individual and societal flourishing. The criteria recognise that whilst ambition is valuable, not all goals are equally wise in practice, realistic for every individual or organisation, nor conducive to others' flourishing. Flourishing enhanced by character and wellbeing education means thinking and acting in ways that work with who we are, where we are, and how we relate to others.

The three evaluation criteria can be used as a lens for evaluating actions that result from putting the integrated character and wellbeing education model and RIPPLE Approach into practice in schools. All actions should honour:

- **The Biological Context**
Do they consider who students are in terms of personality, ability, and other factors students cannot easily change?
- **The Individual Context**
Do they respond to the circumstances of the students in the school – their social, economic and cultural context, environment and history?
- **The Social Context**
Do they contribute to others' flourishing – or, at the very least, avoid impeding it?

These criteria can help **individuals** (students or staff) set realistic, meaningful goals; and **schools** to design practices, curricula, or interventions that enable flourishing; and to **evaluate** whether a goal, action, or policy honours human complexity, or works against it.

The table below details how the evaluation criteria can be used as a lens to evaluate character and wellbeing education in practice.

Criteria	Considerations when designing character / wellbeing curricula	Considerations when setting character / wellbeing related goals	Questions for the evaluation of integrated character and wellbeing education activities
Biological Context <i>Working with what we cannot change</i>	Learning allows for variation in temperament, ability, and personality. Differences are taught, not simply accommodated.	Personal goals reflect personal abilities and dispositions. Growth is measured against one's own past self, not against peers.	Does the curriculum or goal structure enable students and staff to understand and work with their individuality (cognitive or physical) – without forcing conformity or comparison? Do learners have opportunities for formative assessment of their individuality?
Individual Context <i>Practical wisdom and context sensitivity</i>	Curricular content and delivery respond to real-life social, economic and cultural contexts – home, background, current circumstances, and the changing nature of the world.	Goals are grounded in current realities and personal history. Expectations are realistic and situationally aware.	Are support, expectations, and content responsive to the actual contexts learners are in, or do they apply abstract standards regardless of contextual reality? Do learners learn skills and are they supported to develop character traits that are useful to them and others?
Social Context <i>Enabling others to flourish considering their constraints</i>	Teaching promotes collaboration, moral perspective-taking, and the importance of contributing positively to others.	Goals are valued for how they impact or set examples for others, not just for what they achieve individually.	Does the practice promote flourishing as a shared endeavour? Are students and staff encouraged to support others – who have their own contexts – as part of their own development?

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Endnotes

- i Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022.
ii de Ruyter *et al.*, 2022; Stevenson, 2022.
iii Haidt, 2024; McLoughlin and Kristjánsson, 2025.
iv See Morris, 2015, for a notable exception.
v Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2011.
vi See, for example, <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>
vii Haidt, 2024; McLoughlin and Kristjánsson, 2025.
viii See, for example, Lewis *et al.*, 2014; Telzer *et al.*, 2014; Lembke, 2021.
ix VanderWeele, 2017.
x Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022; Kristjánsson and Fowers, 2024; Peterson and Kristjánsson, 2024.
xi See Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022, where these categories derive from.
xii Stevenson, 2022.
xiii As documented in Seligman, 2011.
xiv Morris, 2015.
xv See, for example, Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021; Brown *et al.*, 2023.
xvi Haidt, 2024.
xvii VanderWeele, 2017.
xviii Biesta, 2020.
xix McLoughlin and Kristjánsson, 2025.
xx Stevenson, 2022.
xxi Weare, 2015; Stirling and Emery, 2016; DfENI, 2021.
xxii See, for example, Morris, 2015; Meek, Jordan and McKinley, 2022; Bethune, 2023.
xxiii See <https://beewellprogramme.org/>
xxiv These include the Seven Strategies for Character Development developed by Lamb, Brant and Brooks, 2021, 2022.
xxv <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>
xxvi The criteria are based on a new idiomonic model of flourishing (CIVIC: Cultivating Individual Virtue in Context) being developed by McLoughlin that will be forthcoming in 2026.





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For more information about the *Integrating Character and Wellbeing Education in Schools A New Practical Model to Enhance Student Flourishing* and the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues please contact:
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