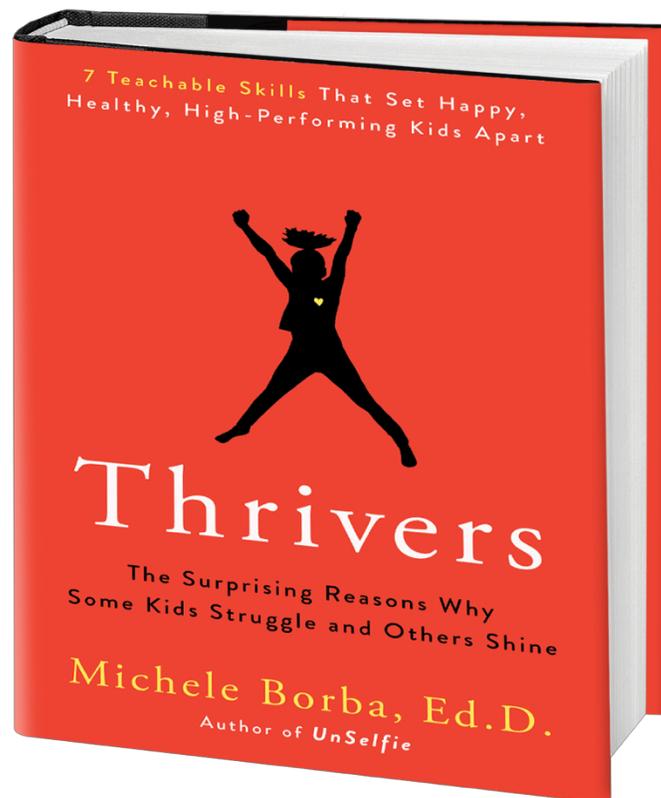


# THRIVERS

By Michele Borba, Ed.D.

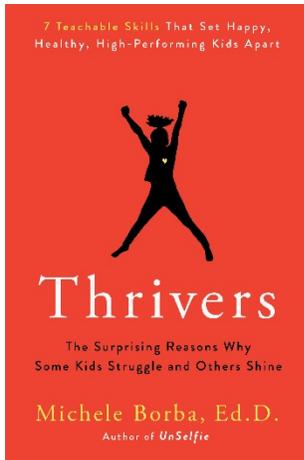


## *A Discussion Guide for* **EDUCATORS**

Invite the author to “visit” your book discussion or staff meeting if 20 copies of THRIVERS are purchased. [Contact Dr. Borba at this link.](#)

# About the Book

## ***THRIVERS: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine***



**THRIVERS** is an insightful, science-backed guide that helps parents and educators teach the essential character strengths kids need to become “thrivers” -- young people who flourish in a rapidly changing, digitally-driven, and uncertain world. Thrivers are ready for whatever the world throws at them, even in difficult times. *What is their secret? And can it be taught to others?* The answer is “yes” -- because *Thrivers* are made, not born.

Dr. Michele Borba, an educational psychologist, bestselling author, and regular NBC contributor, combed scientific studies on resilience, spoke to dozens of researchers and experts in the field, and interviewed more than 100 young people from all walks of life. She found that the difference between those who struggle and those who succeed comes down not to grades or test scores, but to seven teachable character strengths. These character strengths set Thrivers apart (and prepare them for happiness and accomplishment later in life):

- **Self-confidence:** Using personal strengths to find purpose and meaning.
- **Empathy:** Understanding and sharing another’s feelings while acting compassionately.
- **Self-control:** Managing stress, delaying gratification, and strengthening focus.
- **Integrity:** Adhering to a strong moral code, thinking ethically, and leading a moral life.
- **Curiosity:** Having an open mind and willingness to try new ideas, take risks, and innovate.
- **Perseverance:** Exhibiting fortitude, tenacity, and resolve to endure and bounce back.
- **Optimism:** Learning self-advocacy and encouraging hope.

Each of these seven character strengths is like a superpower that helps safeguard kids against depression and anxiety. And when those superpowers are combined, they become even more potent, creating a Multiplier Effect that prepares children to succeed in our fast-paced, ever-changing world. The best news of all: these strengths aren’t inborn. They can be taught – and Dr. Borba shows parents and educators how to do it.

Along the way, Dr. Borba shares historical and contemporary stories of the strengths in action, brings in key research and scientific findings, and offers real stories from children talking about their personal challenges. And each chapter includes age-appropriate activities and topics to discuss, offering quick-reference resources for adults to reinforce each Character Strength as the child grows, from preschool through high school.

Using her trademark clarity of vision and actionable step-by-step instruction, Dr. Michele Borba offers a comprehensive guide to teaching kids how to cope today so they can thrive tomorrow.

# How to Facilitate a THRIVERS Book Discussion

In [THRIVERS: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine](#), Dr. Borba offers educators and parents practical, actionable ways to develop key Character Strengths in children from preschool through high school. And we haven't a moment to lose. The more we (educators, parents, community) partner in our quest to raise resilient kids, the more successful we'll be in producing kids who can thrive in an uncertain, new world. A book discussion can start that necessary momentum to create real and lasting change.

## Steps to Begin Your Book Discussion

1. **IDENTIFY EDUCATORS INTERESTED IN A [THRIVERS](#) BOOK CLUB** or discuss at staff meetings.
2. **PURCHASE THE [BOOK](#)** from your local bookstore, [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [Bookshop.org](#). For discount book rates visit [Porchlight Books](#) and [click](#) to see the pricing breakdown for bulk quantities. THRIVERS is available in paper, audio, and ebook formats.
3. **DETERMINE SPECIFIC DAYS, TIMES, PLACES, AND FREQUENCY FOR GROUP MEETINGS.** Choose the number of total book sessions based on group consensus and needs. Options include:
  - [A traditional, one-time book club discussion](#). Participants will read the book in advance and meet once to discuss issues participants find most relevant.

OR

  - [A longer, multi-part book club discussion](#) go to deeper into each of the seven character strengths. Participants can read one chapter per month (7 discussions total), or divide THRIVERS into the three parts of the book (3 discussions total).
4. **ASSIGN A DISCUSSION LEADER** or rotate the role at each discussion. Use the questions provided to facilitate discussion. Some groups ask each participant to develop one question for each meeting. The key is to make your meetings meaningful for participants.

## Invite the author, Dr. Borba, to Your Book Discussion

Dr. Borba will personally "visit" your book discussion with groups with 20 or more members who each purchased a copy of THRIVERS and share receipts. [Contact Dr Borba at this link.](#)

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# INTRODUCTION

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## THRIVERS: Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine

*“THRIVERS feel ‘We’ve got this’; they meet the world on their own terms because they know they can control their own destiny. And they keep trying, despite challenges, and are more likely to rebound from those challenges and overcome adversity with confidence.” – Michele Borba*

### Discussion Questions

1. Why did you choose to read THRIVERS? What do you hope to gain from these discussions?
2. What preconceptions about thriving did you have before you began reading? Have any changed by your reading? How would you and your staff define a “thriver” (a student who thrives)?
3. The book begins with a twelve-year old saying: “It’s like we’re produced to be test takers. We’re missing the pieces on how to be people.” Does the view reflect your student population? Are you noticing a decline in educating the whole child?
4. A large reason for the Failure to Thrive epidemic is that character in our test-driven society is low on our educational and parental priorities. Do you agree?
5. What do students really need to be happy and successful in today’s world? What are you already doing to help kids thrive? What else could adults do to improve kids’ odds of thriving?
6. Create a chart of skills your students will need to succeed in the global economy when jobs of tomorrow don’t exist today. Which skills and experiences are you teaching or providing to preparing your students for the new world? Which are missing?
7. Which Character Strengths are you addressing in your classroom or school? Which strengths do most of your students possess? Which are more dormant in their makeup? Why?
8. Which Character Strength do you consider most important for student success? At home? For mental health? Which should your school address now and why?
9. Which strengths do your students need to thrive? What may be preventing kids from developing their thriving capacities?
10. Data reveals a mental health crisis in today’s children. Do you agree? If so, what is causing it? Which other (if any) concerns do you have about today’s students?
11. Did any quote of a teen concern or resonate with you? If so, which quote and why?
12. Borba contends that Thrivers are “born, not made.” Do you agree?
13. Seven Character Strengths are essential to help students shine more and struggle less. How would you rank them in the order of importance? Which are crucial for our Pandemic Generation?
14. Complete a Character Strengths profile (p 21-23) on one student who is not thriving. Did any results surprise you? Share your findings with a colleague. How can you work together to support the students’ well-being and academic success?
15. What were key take-aways to help your students shine more and struggle less?



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# PART ONE: NURTURING HEART

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## Chapter 1: SELF-CONFIDENCE

*Thrivers focus on “who,” not “what.”*

Students who are strong in self-confidence recognize their strengths, accept their weaknesses, and apply that knowledge to help them find the best path to life success. Three abilities nurture self-confidence: 1. Self-awareness; 2. Strength awareness; 3. Finding purpose.

### Discussion Questions

1. Self-confidence emanates from students' awareness of themselves and their strengths and interests. How are you discovering your students' strengths? What are other ways?
2. What kind of people do you hope your students to become? How could you help students become those kind of people?
3. The book stresses that one reason for our students' feelings of emptiness is our culture's obsession with grades, scores, and rank? Do you agree?
4. If you asked your child what matters most to you, his character or his grades, how do you think (or hope) he would respond?
5. Complete the Core Assets Survey on a struggling student. What did you discover? How can you help the student develop them? How can you pass on findings to colleagues?
6. Did the Reggio Emilia story capture your interest? How would colleagues respond to the ACS report card (p. 28)? Would you consider measuring students' Character Strengths? If so, how?
7. What is the philosophy of most early learning programs? Do they hinder or help students' thriving potentials?
8. Did any of the benefits (p. 30-31) of self-confidence (better academic performance, resilience, a greater sense of well-being and more happiness) surprise you?
9. Reasons self-confidence is hard to teach include: a misinterpretation of self-esteem, a superficial, appearance-focused culture, and the end of the well-rounded kid. Are there additional causes? Which are most indicative of your student population?
10. How does your school currently nurture students' strengths (like music, theatre, art, sports, debate)? Which strengths are overlooked? How can you offer those missing areas to improve self-confidence?

## Chapter 2. EMPATHY

*Thrivers think “we,” not “me.”*

Students with strong empathy can understand and share another’s feelings, act compassionately and are more open, accepting and willing to understand views that differ from their own. Three abilities nurture empathy: 1. Emotional literacy; 2. Perspective taking; 3. Empathic concern.

### Discussion Questions

1. THRIVERS stresses that children are born with the potential for empathy, but unless it is purposely nurtured it will remain dormant. American teen empathy has decreased 40 percent in thirty years. What factors are reducing students’ abilities to feel with others?
2. What are common pitfalls to most programs that attempt to teach empathy? Did any of the stories or examples in the chapter convey an approach that you’d like to try? If so, why? What outside factors are hindering the development of this second Character Strength?
3. How can educators “step into students’ shoes” to better understand their needs and experiences?
4. Which of the three empathy types (Affective, Behavior, Cognitive) does your school address most? Which is the hardest to teach? Which do your students need? How could you offer it?
5. Emotional literacy is cited as a key to unlocking empathy and motivating kids to care. How can educators help today’s digital-driven students understand feelings?
6. What are you doing to enhance empathy in your students? How are you helping students develop empathic mindsets so they realize that they can better the world?
7. How is service learning used at your school? Are there other ways in your community so students can learn the value of caring and develop empathy?
8. Which age-by-age strategy (p. 93-99) would you consider using or adapting to expand your child’s/students/ Empathy? What other strategies might you consider?
9. What practices are your students experiencing that strengthen their empathy development? For instance: Restorative Justice, Service Learning, Cooperative Learning, SEL (Social-Emotional Learning), Conflict Resolution, Diversity Training, Mix-It-Up at Lunch Day, History Day, Peer Mentoring, Class Meetings). Is there an empathy-building practice that might benefit your students that you’d like to explore? If so, which and why.

### **Educator Points to Remember About Instilling Character Strengths**

There is no one “right” approach to teaching the seven Character Strengths that increases their thriving potential, nor is it a cookie-cutter concept in which you borrow strategies from another school to make it your own. Best approaches are always culture-driven and home-grown, based on *your* students’ needs -- but implementing evidence-based practices is always key.



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# PART TWO: DEVELOPING MIND

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## Chapter 3: SELF-CONTROL

*Thrivers can think straight and self-regulate.*

Students who are strong in self-control can manage stress and regulate unhealthy emotions, can delay gratification and can stretch their focusing capabilities so to increase mental and physical strength. Three abilities nurture self-concept: 1. Attentive focus; 2. Self-regulation; 3. Self-discipline and mental strength.

### Discussion Questions

1. Research shows that self-control is a better predictor of adult wealth, health, and happiness than grades or IQ. Do you agree or disagree and why?
2. Are today's children being raised to have self-control? What may be reducing this generation's focusing abilities? Are you noticing a change in students' abilities to regulate unhealthy emotions? If so, to what do you attribute the increase?
3. How well do your students manage emotions? How are you identifying their stress signs and triggers? What helps your students reduce stress or regulate their stress?
4. THRIVERS describes several approaches (like mindfulness, yoga, meditation, and stress management) to nurture children's self-control. Do any interest you? Are there ways you might join other parents (playgroups, scouting, playdates) to teach stress management and self-control practices to your students together?
5. Which age-by-age strategies (p. 131-135) would you consider using with your students?
6. What is you or your school doing to teach students the habits of self-regulation?
7. Which programs or practices cited in this chapter (for instance: stress-management, yoga, meditation, mindfulness) would you like to learn more about?
8. Thousands of adults are now adding mindfulness practices to their family or school routines. Would you consider adopting the approach?
9. Pocantico Hills Center School helped their students recognize that "self-control is like a muscle that gets stronger from regular daily exercise, but real and lasting change always comes from the *inside out*" (p. 136). How can you help your students learn that message?

## Chapter 4: INTEGRITY

*Thrivers have a strong moral code and stick to it.*

Students who have strong integrity value and adhere to moral codes and values, are ethical thinking, and practice honesty to lead good, moral lives. Three abilities nurture integrity: 1. Moral knowing; 2. Moral identity; 3. Ethical reasoning.

### Discussion Questions

1. Integrity is best caught, not taught. What behaviors are students catching from us? How can we model integrity to our students?
2. Many people feel there is an integrity crisis in today's children. Do you? What factors may be preventing students from fully developing moral codes?
3. What are some of the sayings, proverbs, or experiences you recall from your childhood that helped you define your values?
4. How are you passing on moral beliefs and examples to your students to help them develop Integrity?
5. A major theme in THRIVERS is that integrity is learned and that educators can make an enormous difference in influencing students' moral growth. How much influence do you think teachers have on instilling integrity in children? What factors get in the way?
6. THRIVERS stresses that one of the best ways our kids learn integrity is by watching us. How would your students describe your moral behavior? Colleagues?
7. What have you done with your students recently to reinforce your moral beliefs so she/they sees herself as a moral being?
8. How was discipline handled in your family as you were growing up? How did it affect your integrity?
9. What is the most common method you use to discipline your students? How effective is it in enhancing their knowledge of right and wrong and willingness to adhere to those values?

## Chapter 5: CURIOSITY

*Thrivers are out-of-the-box thinkers.*

Students who are strong in this strength are open-mindedness to new experiences and thinking, willing to try new ideas and take healthy risks to learn and so they are more likely to be innovative and expand their creative horizons. Three abilities nurture curiosity: 1. A curious mindset; 2. Creative problem-solving; 3. Divergent thinking.

### Discussion Questions

1. "Kids of any age can be innovators. The tricky question is how to nurture students' creative gifts in an era of conformity, test-obsession and extreme safety consciousness" (p. 162). Do you agree? What other factors are contributing to the dip in American children's creativity?

2. MIT's Media Lab's success in producing extraordinary innovation is based on four principles: peers, passion, projects and play (p. 163). Which factors does your home or school provide? Which are missing?
3. Did it surprise you that over two hundred studies involving over fifty thousand students found that curiosity is as important as intelligence in determining how well kids do in school (p. 168)? Why?
4. Research finds that when creative people are passionate about projects, they experience a state of total absorption called "flow" (p. 163). How can you discover the type projects/interests that create joy and purpose for your students?
5. Curiosity is internally driven and rewards extinguish creativity (p. 171). Do your students expect rewards? What can you do expect students to their best-without those enticers?
6. Curious students are passionate about their original ideas and willing to defend them, but must feel support from adults so they can deviate from the norm (p 183). Do you convey such support to your students? Does your child know that you admire originality? Are you seeing the need to back away from always protect or rescue your child from mistakes or challenges? What would be your first step?
7. How would curiosity benefit children's mental health? Academic performance? Confidence? Character? How can you encourage this trait in your students?
8. Review the seven factors that are proven curiosity builders (p. 175). Which ones are you using in your school? Which practices might be overlooked or used infrequently that you could implement? How will you do so?
9. THRIVERS offers examples of educational practices that support the development of curiosity such as Odyssey of the Mind, Project-Based Learning, Genius Hour, Robotics, and Tinkering places. Did any interest you? And, if so, why? What are other practices or programs that nurture students' curiosity? What is the one idea you would like to use in boosting curiosity? How will you begin?

### **Guiding Educator Questions**

- **Do you agree that we are facing a crisis of "Thriving Depletion" with our students? What examples can you cite from your own school?**
- **Do any of Borba's seven Character Strengths seem particularly lacking in your school or district? What practical steps could you or your school take to boost students' competencies in these areas?**
- **In what ways do you and your colleagues model the Character Strengths in your school? In what ways could you improve your efforts?**
- **As you read and discuss the concept of thrivers keep asking yourself: "What are we *already* doing? What are we missing to would help children thrive? What are simple ways to begin? Think big, but start small and then just keep taking steps until you see positive change.**



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# PART THREE: CULTIVATING WILL

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## Chapter 6: PERSEVERANCE

*Thrivers finish what they start & don't need gold stars.*

Students strong in perseverance exhibit fortitude, tenacity, and the resolve to endure, so as to bounce back from failure, increase resolve to endure and develop personal agency.

Three abilities nurture perseverance: 1. A growth mindset; 2. Goal-setting capabilities; and 3. Learning from failure.

### Discussion Questions

1. The opening story describes the Outdoor Odyssey Leadership Academy's strategy to stretch perseverance and the impact it had on students' character. What was your reaction to the approach? Was there a takeaway you'd like to use with your students?
2. Research says that the: "the ability to stick to a task and a long-term goal is the greatest predictor of success and stronger than IQ, academic achievement, SAT scores, extra-curricular activities and test scores" (p. 201). How important do you think perseverance is on student performance and achievement?
3. Resilient children are self-driven. How do we help students develop agency and competence if the parenting culture is prone to helicoptering, snow-plowing or rescuing?
4. The perseverance chapter stresses the need for parents to praise their children for their effort, not the grade or end product. What type of praise do you typically give your students? Do you think it helps to instill a growth mind-set?
5. Many teachers and psychologists are witnessing an increase in risk averse children. Are you seeing that trend? How can adults help stretch children's comfort zones so they feel secure sharing original ideas? (p. 183).
6. After reading Carol Dweck's research on the power mind-set has on grit, did you consider changing how you praise or help your child handle mistakes or failures? How can you help your child/students develop a growth mind-set? Which strategies in the chapter are you interested in trying?
7. "Peak performers accept mistakes as part of their path to success, and it's why they stick longer to tasks and don't give up as quickly. They've learned the lesson that a mistake

doesn't mean a 'life sentence' of failure but is instead a temporary setback" (p 213). How can you impact this concept to your child or students?

8. Which age-by-age strategy (p. 217-222) would you consider using or adapting to expand your students' perseverance? What other strategies might you consider?
9. Angela Duckworth recommends the Hard Thing Rule to "encourage grit without obliterating their children's capacity to choose with own path" (p. 221). Might the rule be something to consider implementing in your classroom?

## Chapter 7: OPTIMISM

### *Thrivers find the silver lining.*

Students strong in optimism display positivity and gratitude, learn self-advocacy, keep unrealistic pessimism in check to reduce despondence and encourage a hopeful outlook and belief that life has meaning. Three abilities nurture optimism: 1. Optimistic thinking; 2. Assertive communication; and 3. Hope.

### Discussion Questions

1. How important is it for students to have optimism? Do you think it's harder to raise a child today with hope and optimism about the world?
2. What impact do events such as the pandemic, racial injustice, climate change, school shootings and the Capitol Insurrection have on children's optimism outlooks?
3. What are ways to help students see the "good" in their community and world?
4. Psychiatrist Aaron Beck, believed that how we think, feel and act interact (p. 227) and developed a method called Cognitive Behavior Therapy that is now proven effective in countering depression and anxiety in children. What is your view of Beck's theory?
5. How can you apply the steps to instilling optimism (*Catch pessimistic thinking; Challenge inaccurate views; Change unrealistic pessimistic thoughts* p. 237) to your teaching?
6. What are ways you could help your child learn to self-advocate (p. 239)?
7. Why was Ruby Bridges, the first African American student to integrate an all-white elementary school, able to overcome adversity (p. 249)? Do students today have the same mental strength?
8. How can you use uplifting stories like the Bald Eagles (p. 249) to help children find hope?
9. Which age-by-age strategy (p. 248-255) would you consider using to nurture optimism? Could any of the ideas be expanded to use in your school or community?

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR: MICHELE BORBA, Ed.D.** is an educational psychologist and an expert in parenting, bullying and character development. She is an award-winning author of 22 books that have been translated into 20 languages. Her latest: [Thrivers: The Surprising Reason Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine](#); [UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World](#) and [End Peer Cruelty, Build Empathy](#). Dr. Borba is a regular NBC contributor on *Today* and has been featured as an expert on *Dateline*, *The View*, *Dr. Phil*, *NBC Nightly News*, *Dr. Oz*, *The Doctors*, and *The Early Show*. She has spoken to over one million educators and parents on five continents. She lives in Palm Springs, California with her husband and is the mother of three grown sons. For more about Dr. Borba [see her website](#).

# 7 Essential Character Strengths to Raise THRIVERS

By Dr. Michele Borba, author of

[THRIVERS: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine](#)

## 1. SELF-CONFIDENCE: Healthy identity, self-awareness, & using strengths to find meaning



Self-Awareness  
Strength Awareness  
Finding Purpose

Healthy Sense of Self  
Positive Self-Identity  
Service and Meaning

## 2. EMPATHY: Understanding & sharing another's feelings, relating, acting compassionately



Emotion Literacy  
Perspective Taking  
Empathic Concern

Reading & Sharing Emotions  
Understanding Other Views  
Compassionate Action

## 3. SELF-CONTROL: Managing stress & strong emotions, delaying gratification, stretching focus



Attentive Focus  
Self-Management  
Healthy Decision-Making

Delayed Gratification  
Coping & Regulation  
Self-Discipline/Mental Strength

## 4. INTEGRITY: Adhering to strong moral code and values, ethical thinking, practicing honesty



Moral Knowing  
Moral Identity  
Ethical Reasoning

Valuing Virtue  
Strong Moral Compass  
Ethical Decision Making

## 5. CURIOSITY: Open to experiences, ideas and life, taking creative risks to discover, learn, innovate



Curious Mindset  
Creative Problem-Solving  
Divergent Thinking

Creativity  
Generating Alternatives  
Innovation

## 6. PERSEVERANCE: Fortitude, tenacity, resolve to endure, bounce back, and increase sense of purpose



Growth Mind-Set  
Goal-Setting  
Learning from Failure

Determination and Drive  
Self-Mastery & Agency  
Self-Sufficiency

## 7. OPTIMISM: Positivity, gratitude, hopefulness to self-advocate & keep pessimism in check



Optimistic Thinking  
Assertiveness  
Hope

Positive Attitude  
Self-Advocacy  
Hopeful Life Outlook

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Twitter: [@micheleborba](#) Instagram: [@DrMicheleBorba](#) Web: [Micheleborba.com](#)

# NEXT STEPS: How Educators Can Teach the 7 Essential Character Strengths of Thrivers

These questions are designed to help your staff discuss ways to produce a world-ready generation of students who are strong in heart, mind, and will. Consider posting responses on a Goggle doc so colleagues can share ideas. Working together always improves odds of success.

## 7 Principles of Effective Character Strength Education

1. **Ongoing.** Education is not a one-time lesson, but a continual focus.
2. **Woven-in.** Character strengths are integrated into content and interactions, not tacked on.
3. **Meaningful.** Instruction is authentic and touches children's hearts, minds, and will.
4. **Internalized.** The goal is for students to adopt the Character Strengths as lifelong habits.
5. **Student-Centered.** Students' needs drive the lessons and experiences.
6. **Respectful Relationships.** Thriving breeds in a culture of respect and caring.
7. **Respectful Leadership.** Character is modeled, expected, and core to a leader's vision, purpose, style and interactions.

## Educational Questions on Ways to Implement Ideas from THRIVERS

1. **What is your one takeaway from learning about THRIVERS that you can do right now to help students thrive?** How can you get other staff members to join that mission? How do we cultivate character in a culture whose only metrics of success are achievement and performance? What does our staff need to do to commit to helping students thrive?
2. **Brainstorm what sort of people you want your students to become.** Which Character Strengths would help your students reap those outcomes? Does your current school mission statement reflect those outcomes? If not, how can you alter it so it also addresses students' thriving abilities?
3. **What would the ideal learning culture look like that helps students thrive?** What part of that vision can be implemented? What is countering that vision and how could we fix it? What would a school community that is committed to helping students thrive look and sound like? What would the mission statement say?
4. **How can you continue to build stronger awareness of the seven Character Strengths?** For instance, set aside a few minutes at each staff meeting to discuss simple ways to boost students' thriving potential or discuss current resilience research, discuss a chapter each month club and read books from the suggested reading list, or invite Dr. Borba to your school or district for a training. What will you do to maintain interest?

5. **List the Character Strengths and the 21 abilities of THRIVERS** (p. 262-263) **that you currently teach.** Are there ways to make lessons more meaningful and age appropriate?
6. **Which Character Strengths are not addressed?** How will you determine which Characters Strengths your students need most? (Such as behavior referrals, staff surveys, student focus groups or parent concerns). Choose ones that you agree that your students need. What will be your next step to teach those abilities and skills? How will you measure your success?
7. **Which practices and programs do you or school already use to support the development of the seven Character Strengths?** Did any teaching practice (such as Exhibition, Tools of the Mind, chess clubs, Odyssey of the Mind, service learning, Socratic Dialogue, Quiet Time, and Tinkering places) interest you to learn more about or implement?
8. **What Character Strengths are we best at modeling to students?** Are our messages or behavior hindering or helping students from developing these Character Strengths?
9. **Review your school's Policies, Practices, Principles and Procedures: which support the development of the seven Character Strengths?** Identify those Ps that possibly counter the strengths (for instance, shame-based discipline, hyper-competitive culture, reduction of recess, public posting of grades). What changes need to be made to align your policies, practices, principles and procedures to nurture students to thrive?
10. **How can we use children's literature titles to nurture each Character Strength suggested throughout the book?**
11. **How can you enlist the help of parents or your community support your efforts?** How can you help parents learn best practices that nurture their children's thriving potential (a parent book club, tips posted on your school newsletter, Website, or workshops)? How will you know your ideas are appreciated or used by your parents?
12. **What is the one idea our staff is willing to commit to right now to help graduate a generation of students strong in heart, mind and will?** How will it benefit your students? What is the first step you will take to make your commitment a reality? How will you know when you have succeeded?

## **FOR DR. BORBA TO SPEAK AT YOUR SCHOOL OR A BOOK DISCUSSION**

To contact Dr. Borba to speak to parents, educators, or students virtually or on site and for book discussion visit [click here](#).

A range of her speaking topics are available on Dr. Borba's [website](#).

# Practices to Build Students' Thriving Potentials

Evidence shows that children more likely to thrive do so because they learned skills and protective buffers to help them feel "We've got this!" *THRIVERS are made, not born.* Here are teachable skills, educational and parenting practices that build Character Strengths and their location in the book, [THRIVERS](#). Mark those that interest you as well as ones that you'd like to pass onto colleagues.

## Character Strength 1: SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Reggio Emilia; child-directed learning; p27
- Stop participation trophies & rewards; p34
- TALENT to identify strengths; p39
- Core Assets Survey; p40-43
- Earshot Praise; Use nouns and verbs; p48
- Praise effort, not talent; p49
- Don't stress weakness; p49
- Footwork check to boost agency, p52
- Identify potential mentors; p53
- Ask "why?" to gauge strength interest; p53
- Build an entrepreneurial spirit; p54
- Strength hand talks; p59
- Define "strength; p58
- Ask "what"; p59
- Ongoing strength portfolios; 60
- Strength mobiles and images; p60
- Asset collages; p60
- Victory logs; brag boards; strength chats; p61
- Books on strength building; p60
- Offer hobbies; p62
- Clubs that feature strength p63

## Character Strength 2: EMPATHY

- Exhibition Learning Project; p65
- Reduce competition, boost cooperation; p72
- Feeling Thermometer; p76
- Character-based praise; p74Rescue dogs teaching nonverbal cues; p77
- Labeling emotions; emotional literacy; p77
- Creating digital limits; p79
- 4 Ls to model empathetic listening; p81
- Museums; experiential empathy; p83
- Name, Frame, and Reclaim; p84
- "Imagine how other feels"; p85
- Gratitude Circles, Give me five; p86
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- Face-to-face service; p88
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[\*THRIVERS: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine\*](#), by Michele Borba, © 2021

# Further Reading About Thrivers

## Resilience

- Ann Masten, *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*
- Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*
- Emmy Werner and Ruth S. Smith, *Vulnerable but Invincible*

## Self-Confidence

- Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*
- Benjamin Bloom, *Developing Talent in Young People*
- Jean Twenge, *Generation Me*
- Victor and Mildred Goertzel, *Cradles of Eminence*

## Empathy

- Michele Borba, *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*
- Jamil Zaki, *The War for Kindness: Building Empathy in a Fractured World*
- Alfie Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*
- Bruce D. Perry and Maia Szalavitz, *Born for Love*

## Self-Control

- Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: This is Your Brain Online*
- Daniel Goleman, *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence*
- Daniel H. Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*
- Walter Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test: Understanding Self-Control and How to Master It*

## Integrity

- Michele Borba, *Building Moral Intelligence*
- David Brooks, *The Road to Character*
- Robert Coles, *The Moral Intelligence of Children*
- Thomas Lickona, *Raising Good Children*

## Curiosity

- William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep*
- Adam Grant, *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*
- Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards*
- Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*
- Tony Wagner, *Creating Innovators*

## Perseverance

- Geoff Colvin, *Talent Is Overrated*
- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Kevin Rathunde and Samuel Whalen, *Flow*
- Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*
- Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*
- H. W. Stevenson and J. W. Stigler, *The Learning Gap*

## Optimism

- Tamar E. Chansky, *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety*
- Martin E.P. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*
- William Stixrud and Ned Johnson, *The Self-Driven Child*