

Character LAB

ANNUAL LETTER

August 1, 2018

Kids everywhere thriving socially, emotionally, physically, and academically.

This vision motivates the 16 scientists, designers, and educators who collectively comprise Character Lab today. In our second annual letter, we report on our progress and plans for the future.

2018 Milestones

Over the past year, we published four articles in top-tier scientific journals. In the *Annual Review of Psychology*, we synthesized research on self-control and academic achievement, emphasizing strategies students can use to make self-control easier. In *Emotion*, we validated a novel behavioral measure of frustration tolerance and showed that it predicts academic achievement two years later. In *Child Development*, we demonstrated that a stress-can-be-enhancing mindset buffers against the deleterious effects of adversity. Finally, in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Character Lab Research Network affiliates Brady Jones, Mesmin Destin, and Dan McAdams showed that a specific way of writing about past failures and successes can boost grit and academic achievement.

In January 2018, the Character Lab Research Network randomly assigned over 14,000 high school students to complete one of a dozen different online activities designed by researchers and educators to increase academic motivation and effort. For comparison, consider that a 2016 meta-analysis of all the published and unpublished motivation-intervention studies ever conducted in K-16 education identified a total of 38,377 student participants. In a single week, Character Lab Research Network was able to deliver interventions to nearly half that number. When we receive report card grades from these schools, we'll know whether any of the activities were successful. Regardless, we consider the precedent-setting scale, interdisciplinary collaboration, and applied focus of this research a major step towards increasing psychological wisdom in schools.

On July 12 and 13, 2018, we welcomed more than 500 participants to our fourth annual [Educator Summit](#), which we jointly hosted with the Relay Graduate School of Education. Attending teachers participated in hands-on workshops developed and conducted by leading psychological scientists: Gabriele Oettingen introduced teachers to optimal goal setting and planning with the [WOOP](#) Playbook; Anders Ericsson explained the tenets of [Expert Practice](#) and how it can accelerate learning; and Chris Hulleman showed teachers how to spark curiosity in the classroom by inviting students to [Build Connections](#) between their academic work and their personal interests, values, and relationships.

We're thrilled that the Playbooks featured in these workshops won the 2018 Core77 Design Award for Education. The debut of these online classroom resources coincided with a 40% increase in visitors to www.characterlab.org since last year.

Looking Ahead

The Character Lab Research Network has secured philanthropic support to triple our capacity over the next three years.

We see tremendous promise in interventions delivered by teachers who themselves benefit from scientific insights into character development. Accordingly, with collaborators Ethan Kross, John Jonides, and Dan Willingham, as well as two dozen middle and high school teachers from across the country, we've developed full curricula for both the science of self-control and the science of learning. This year, we will train hundreds of teachers to implement these curricula with thousands of students: our largest teacher-mediated intervention to date.

Though encouraged by our progress to date, we recognize the need to make psychological wisdom more accessible and engaging to parents and teachers alike. Within the next year, we will pilot a podcast and an email newsletter. Together with our online Playbooks, these will communicate the latest scientific insights in character development, illustrate those insights with stories, and provide actionable advice.

While we continue to learn and improve, we hold steadfast to the core values affirmed in our [first annual letter](#): We put kids first. In every interaction, we aspire to model both excessive generosity and uncompromising honesty. We approach our goals with grit and never-ending kaizen.

From all of us at Character Lab, thank you for your continued support.

With grit and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Duckworth', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Angela Duckworth
Founder & CEO, Character Lab