Flourishing Schools Project

Supporting schools to promote character and flourishing globally

THE HUMAN FLOURISHING PROGRAM
at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science









Flourishing Schools Project

Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University
Christina Hinton and Tyler J. VanderWeele

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Flourishing	3
Education for Flourishing	4
A Framework for Metrics for Education for Flourishing	6
Flourishing Measures	8
Flourishing Schools Project	13
Flourishing Schools Survey	14
Support from Research Schools International	20
Get Involved	22

Acknowledgments

We thank Suzanne Ouyang, Reece Brown, Brendan Case, and Noah Padgett at the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard and Catherine Glennon and Hannah Block at Research Schools International for their meaningful contributions to the Flourishing Schools Project.

Executive Summary

There is an international movement toward expanding the purpose of education from advancing narrowly-defined academic outcomes to promoting students' academic learning in concert with their holistic wellbeing—their mental and physical health, happiness, sense of meaning, relationships, and character—a movement toward education for flourishing. The shifting educational landscape, including the onset of AI technologies that can perform many traditional academic functions and the unprecedented youth mental health challenges globally, requires us to re-envision how education might nurture students' flourishing and empower them to make meaningful contributions to the changing world.

In light of this, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard has launched a Flourishing Schools Project. In collaboration with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Dr. Tyler VanderWeele and Dr. Christina Hinton developed an education for flourishing framework, which proposes that **education for flourishing can be built on three interdependent pillars that operate at both the individual and community level: flourishing, academic learning, and character-social-emotional skills**. While traditional assessments address academic learning, there is a need for comprehensive measures of flourishing and character strengths that are empirically validated and readily implemented in schools. To address this gap, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard and Research Schools International (RSI) developed a survey for schools that includes measures of flourishing and character strengths as well as assessments of evidence-based practices that promote these outcomes. In our Flourishing Schools initiative, we are inviting school networks to take this survey to measure and track progress over time. Each time schools take the survey, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard will provide a report that highlights strengths and areas for growth in supporting students' character skills and flourishing, enabling schools to monitor progress across years. Results can inform future policies, initiatives, and programming. For schools that are interested, Research Schools International (RSI) can then also offer further onsite and online support to schools to address areas for growth uncovered from the research to further nurture students' character and flourishing. We envision schools in participating networks using cycles of this research and professional development to track progress and iteratively improve practice over time, gradually ushering us toward evidence-based education that advances learning in harmony with character strengths and flourishing.

For further reading see:

VanderWeele, T. J., & Hinton, C. (2024). Metrics for education for flourishing: A framework. International Journal of Wellbeing, 14(1), 1–35.

Flourishing

The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard defines flourishing as "the relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of life are good, including the contexts in which that person lives." Understood in this way, flourishing is multi-dimensional. We may be flourishing in certain ways, but not others. Flourishing is also an ideal; it is not ever something we ever perfectly attain in this life; there is always room for improvement. Flourishing also includes the contexts, communities and environments in which a person lives. The community's well-being is part of a person's flourishing. Flourishing societies enable individuals to flourish, and flourishing individuals are better able to contribute to communal wellbeing. With flourishing understood in this broad holistic manner, it is never possible to fully enumerate all that is included in flourishing. However, in the work of the Human Flourishing Program we often focus on the following domains of human life: **happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships**. Fulfillment in each of these interconnected domains is (i) intrinsically valuable and (ii) nearly universally desired. These two criteria can help shape consensus around what to measure and aim for. In thinking about flourishing we also consider the financial and material means that are needed to sustain these various aspects of flourishing.

Based on a synthesis of interdisciplinary research and scholarly work across the social sciences and the humanities led by Dr. Tyler VanderWeele, empirical research indicates that key pathways to flourishing include family, work, religious community, and... education. This key pathway to flourishing in education is the focus of the present report and of the Flourishing Schools Project. For individuals, quality education is associated not only with improved future employment and income, but also with a range of positive wellbeing outcomes, including better mental and physical health, greater happiness and life satisfaction, richer social networks and greater social integration. Further, strong and equitable education systems improve societies by promoting positive outcomes for communities such as good citizenship, productive labor market participation, healthy habits, and community involvement.

For further reading see:

VanderWeele, T.J. (2017). On the promotion of human flourishing. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 114(31), 8148-8156.

Education for Flourishing

The educational landscape is shifting and there has been increasing interest in making flourishing a central aim of education. The onset of AI technologies that can perform many traditional academic functions as well as the international youth mental health crisis has heightened this interest further. In light of this, leading international organizations, including the OECD and UNESCO, are calling for us to re-envision how education might support students' holistic wellbeing and empower them to make meaningful contributions to the changing world.

Flourishing, which the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard has conceptualized to include domains that are nearly universally considered to contribute to a good life and operationalized with validated measures that enable us to assess, track, and monitor progress in a variety of countries, languages, and cultures, seems poised to serve as a potential "north star" for this re-envisioned educational approach. Indeed, there is an international movement towards widening the purpose of education from targeting narrowly-defined academic competencies to promoting students' learning and flourishing.

While education can help students flourish, it is important to note that students' flourishing is shaped by many other institutions as well, such as families, neighborhoods, religious and other communities, subsequent workplace experiences, and governments. If we are to take seriously the notion that education aims to promote flourishing, we should clearly specify what is, and what is not, within the purview of a formal educational institution. Toward that end, Dr. Tyler VanderWeele and Dr. Kristján Kristjánsson propose that the scope of education for flourishing is not "everything" but can be specified as: 1) supporting students' academic knowledge and understanding, along with the epistemic skills and virtues that enable academic learning, and 2) promoting the aspects of student flourishing around which we can attain a broad consensus and which educators are prepared to address.

The first of these components is of course itself a central contribution that educational institutions make to student flourishing. Research shows that academic achievement and wellbeing are mutually reinforcing, with students with greater academic achievement enjoying better wellbeing, and students with better wellbeing achieving greater academic success, on average, across a wide variety of countries and contexts.

The second of these components recognizes that schools can contribute to many aspects of students' lives. However, we propose that this component focus on the aspects of student flourishing that we can attain broad consensus on. Conceptions of flourishing vary across cultures, religions, philosophical traditions, and individuals, and may be especially diverse in more pluralistic contexts. Nevertheless, while well-developed conceptions of flourishing vary, there will arguably also be a great

deal that is shared. In our conceptualization of flourishing, which synthesizes interdisciplinary research and scholarly work across the social sciences and the humanities, we aimed to distill domains that are nearly universally considered to be part of flourishing, including, as noted above: happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships.

For further reading see:

Kristjánsson, K. & VanderWeele, T. J. (2025). The proper scope of education for flourishing. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 59(3-4), 634-650.



A Framework for Metrics for Education for Flourishing

In collaboration with the OECD, Dr. Tyler VanderWeele and Dr. Christina Hinton proposed a framework for metrics for education for flourishing utilizing the understanding of the proper scope of education for flourishing above. The framework is intended to support not only the present flourishing of students, but also their development and their flourishing into adulthood as well. The framework proposes that education for flourishing can be built on three interdependent pillars that operate at both the individual and community level: flourishing, academic learning, and character-social-emotional skills.

One of the central ways in which schools enhance student flourishing is by nurturing students' academic knowledge, understanding, and skills, which enable them to pursue their future goals. Research shows that educational achievement supports subsequent flourishing across many aspects of life, including employment, income, social connectedness, likelihood of marriage, happiness, and mental health. There are many available measures of academic achievement and the appropriate metrics will vary depending on the context and use. With any set of academic achievement metrics, it would be helpful to supplement standardized summative assessments with formative assessments.

Present flourishing is another interdependent pillar of education for flourishing later in life. There is evidence for causal relationships between an individual's present flourishing and their flourishing later in life. This holds across the domains of happiness, health, meaning, character, and relationships. It might be argued that this is particularly true for children and adolescents as wellbeing in childhood and adolescence powerfully shapes a wide range of later adult outcomes related to flourishing. The measures used to assess flourishing may vary based on context and use, but one potentially promising way to assess students' flourishing in a variety of countries, languages, and contexts is using our flourishing measures described below.

Interdependent with academic achievement and flourishing, we propose character-social-emotional skills as a third pillar for education for flourishing. This pillar recognizes the profound and lasting impact of social, emotional, and character development on flourishing. Developing the skills to nurture close social relationships has a profound impact across flourishing domains. Strong social relationships contribute to greater happiness and life satisfaction as well as nurture character and virtue and a sense of meaning. Social relationships also act as a buffer against mental and physical health issues, with social connectedness linked with a lower likelihood of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety as well as physical health issues such as cardiovascular

FLOURISHING
ACADEMIC LEARNING
CHARACTER-SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

disease, obesity, and even mortality. Likewise, research shows that character skill programs and interventions, ranging from gratitude to compassion to perseverance, can contribute positively to a host of outcomes including happiness, mental health, physical health, sleep, relationships, and educational achievement. Again, the metrics used to measure character-social-emotional skills will vary depending on the context and use.

These three pillars also operate at the community, or systems, level as well. Systems-level metrics for academic achievement can evaluate the efficacy of institutional components that contribute to academic achievement, such as teacher quality, professional development for teachers, or pedagogical approaches. National or cross-national policies, such as the availability of high-quality preschool or equity in resource allocation, are also important. Flourishing can also be evaluated at the community level, considering factors such as leadership quality, relationships among staff and students, school climate, and sense of shared mission. Our Community Wellbeing Measure provides a template for one way that schools might approach assessing community-level flourishing. At the systems level, the social-emotional-character skills pillar could involve assessing the implementation, quality, and evidence-base of programs and activities designed to foster social, emotional, and character development.

Together, this framework provides educational institutions with a blueprint for how they might aim to promote education for flourishing.

For further reading see:

VanderWeele, T. J. & Hinton, C. (2024). Metrics for education for flourishing: A framework. International Journal of Wellbeing, 14(1), 1-35.



Flourishing Measures

The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard operationalized flourishing by creating valid and reliable flourishing measures. In the article *On the Promotion of Human Flourishing*, Dr. Tyler VanderWeele put forward a **Flourishing Measure, which includes the following domains: happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, close social relationships, and financial and material stability[1].** Each domain is assessed using questions rated on a scale from 0 to 10. An overall flourishing score can be calculated by averaging the scores across all domains. Scores can also be calculated within each domain.

The Flourishing Measure can be used in a wide variety of countries and contexts. As part of our Global Flourishing Study (GFS), a longitudinal research study that follows over 200,000 adults from 22 geographically and culturally diverse countries, it has been translated into over 40 languages. The GFS employs these measures in all of the following 22 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China (Hong Kong), Egypt, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Research from the Global Flourishing Study and other cross-national studies has demonstrated that the flourishing measure exhibits good validity and reliability across a broad array of countries, languages, and cultures.

Our team, including Dr. Christina Hinton, Hannah Block, Dr. Noah Padgett, Catherine Glennon and Dr. Tyler VanderWeele, has also created developmentally-appropriate adaptations of the Flourishing Measure for youth, including: an Adolescent Flourishing Measure for ages 12-18, a Child Flourishing Measure for ages 9-11, and an Early Childhood Flourishing Measure for ages 5-8. Each of these measures includes the same core domains as the Flourishing Measure for adults: happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, close social relationships, and financial and material stability. However, the questions that measure each domain are adapted to be developmentally appropriate. In all youth flourishing measures, the overall flourishing score is calculated by averaging the scores across all domains and scores can also be calculated within each domain. Analogous to the adult Flourishing Measure, in the adolescent and childhood versions, each domain is assessed using written questions rated on a scale from 0 to 10, with the questions adapted to be developmentally appropriate.

The innovative Early Childhood Measure for ages 5-8 engages children in a virtual experience in which they answer questions that map onto each domain. The questions are read aloud in simple language, often accompanied by concrete, developmentally-appropriate scenarios to support comprehension. The measure also uses engaging touch-screen interactions, visual characters and prompts, and pictorial scales to capture nuanced, child-expressed indicators of wellbeing. For



example, for the domain of character and virtue, one of the questions children respond to is: “Doing the right thing can be tough sometimes, like sharing your favorite toy or helping someone when you’d rather play. Use your finger to move the slider to show how much you try to do the right thing.” There are three response choices for each question. For example, in this case, the response choices are: “I try very hard to do the right thing;” “I sometimes try to do the right thing;” and “I don't try to do the right thing.”



We have carried out studies with the adolescent and childhood flourishing measures in many countries, including: Australia, Belgium, Bermuda, Botswana, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Sint Maarten, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UAE, Uganda, UK, and the US. Most notably, we have carried out a pioneering longitudinal study in which 22,000 adolescents across Australia took our Adolescent Flourishing Measure. We have also invited thousands of children to take our Childhood Flourishing Measure. Our research conducted so far suggests that the adolescent and childhood flourishing measures are valid and reliable in a number of countries and contexts, but further research is needed to test, adapt, and validate the measures across more countries, languages, and cultures. We have so far tested our Early Childhood Flourishing Measure with children in the US and UK. We will continue to test, adapt, and validate these measures in diverse countries, languages, and contexts.

We do not flourish on our own, but in communities and contexts. As such, we have conceptualized and operationalized flourishing at both the individual and the community level. In 2019, Dr. Tyler VanderWeele proposed a Community Wellbeing Measure. This measure, which can be adapted to multiple contexts, consists of six domains of community wellbeing: flourishing individuals, good relationships, proficient leadership, healthy practices, satisfying community, and strong mission. The Community Wellbeing Measure has so far been validated in the US, across communities with diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. It has been translated into other languages as well. Further research is needed to validate this measure in more languages, countries, and cultures.

Our flourishing measures, which are freely available for academic and non-commercial purposes and licensable for commercial purposes, are included in this brochure. The Flourishing Measure for adults is in this section; the Adolescent Flourishing Measure, Childhood Flourishing Measure, and Community Wellbeing Measure are in the Flourishing Schools Survey section below.

Our flourishing measures enable us to assess, track, and support flourishing over time, including in educational contexts.

Flourishing Measure for Adults

Please respond to the following questions on a scale from 0 to 10.

Happiness and Life Satisfaction

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?
   0=Not Satisfied at All, 10=Completely Satisfied
2. In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?
   0=Extremely Unhappy, 10=Extremely Happy

Mental and Physical Health

3. In general, how would you rate your physical health?
   0=Poor, 10=Excellent
4. How would you rate your overall mental health?
   0=Poor, 10=Excellent

Meaning and Purpose

5. Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
   0=Not at All Worthwhile, 10=Completely Worthwhile
6. I understand my purpose in life.
   0=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree

Character and Virtue

7. I always act to promote good in all circumstances, even in difficult and challenging situations.
   0=Not True of Me, 10=Completely True of Me
8. I am always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later.
   0=Not True of Me, 10=Completely True of Me

Close Social Relationships

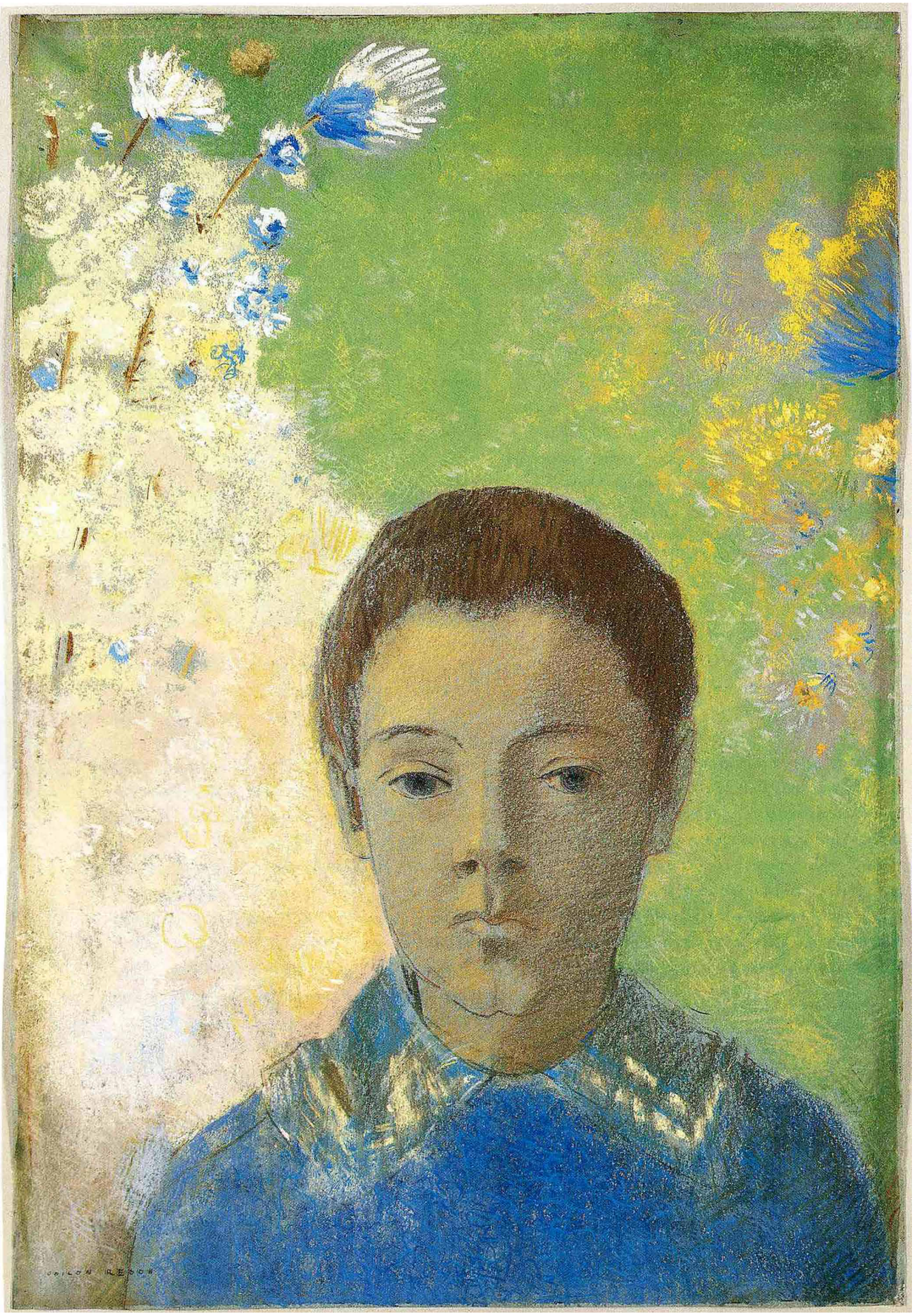
9. I am content with my friendships and relationships.
   0=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree
10. My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be.
    0=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree

Financial and Material Stability

11. How often do you worry about being able to meet normal monthly living expenses?
    0=Worry All of the Time, 10=Do Not Ever Worry
12. How often do you worry about safety, food, or housing?
    0=Worry All of the Time, 10=Do Not Ever Worry

For further reading see:

VanderWeele, T.J. (2017). On the promotion of human flourishing. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 114(31), 8148-8156.



Portrait Ari, Odilon Redon, 1898


★1
PLC

Flourishing Schools Project

The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard has launched a Flourishing Schools Project to operationalize the education for flourishing framework described above, which proposes that education for flourishing can be built on three interdependent pillars that operate at both the individual and community level: academic learning, character-social-emotional skills, and flourishing. While traditional assessments address academic learning, there is a need for comprehensive measures of flourishing and character strengths that are empirically validated and readily implemented in schools. To address this gap, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard and Research Schools International (RSI) developed a survey for schools that includes measures of flourishing and character strengths as well as assessments of evidence-based practices that promote these outcomes.

In our Flourishing Schools Project, we are partnering with school networks to invite schools to take this survey to measure and track progress over time. Each time schools take the survey, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard will provide network-level and school-specific reports that highlight strengths and areas for growth in supporting students' character and flourishing for each participating network and individual school. Participating schools can then also meet with other schools in the network to share their results, reflect upon them together, discuss best practices to promote flourishing and character skills, and work together to advance education for flourishing.

The survey is described below and further information for how a school network can participate in the Flourishing Schools Project is given at the end of this report. The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard has received institutional review board (IRB) ethics approval for use of the survey throughout school networks.

We encourage school networks to participate in the survey repeatedly to track and support students' character strengths and flourishing over time. Learning takes place both from reflection on the results of the report itself, and in collaboration with other participating schools in the network; and further support is also available through Research Schools International, as described below.

For further reading see:

VanderWeele, T.J. (2022). The importance, opportunities, and challenges of empirically assessing character for the promotion of flourishing. Journal of Education, 202:170–180.

Flourishing Schools Survey

School networks that participate in our Flourishing Schools Project will take our Flourishing Schools Survey. The Flourishing Schools Survey is an online survey for students age 9-18, which includes validated measures of student flourishing, character strengths, and community wellbeing as well as questions about evidence-based practices that can support each of these outcomes. It takes participants approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The Flourishing Schools Survey contains the following validated measures of individual flourishing: Adolescent Flourishing Measure for ages 12-18 and Childhood Flourishing Measure for ages 9-11. In the survey, each student provides their age and then receives an age-appropriate measure of flourishing. The survey also includes our Community Wellbeing Measure to assess flourishing at the community level. The survey collects a range of demographic details from students as well, including age, gender, status as a boarding, day, and international student, and frequency of religious service attendance.

In addition, the survey includes measures for character strengths and skills developed by the VIA Institute on Character. Drawing on nearly three decades of research, the VIA Institute on Character has identified 24 character strengths that are arguably relevant across the vast majority of countries and contexts, such as kindness, honesty, teamwork, forgiveness, gratitude, and curiosity. VIA created and validated measures of each of these 24 character strengths for adolescents, which are included in the survey.

In addition to the validated measures related to character strengths and flourishing, the Flourishing Schools Survey also includes over 50 evidence-based practices that support those outcomes. To generate these practices, we conducted an academic literature review on evidence-based practices to support character skills and flourishing in schools internationally. Notably, we drew significantly on our collaborators' work in this area, including the Jubilee Centre's Character Teaching Inventory, the OECD's Evidence-Based interventions and initiatives to support student wellbeing in schools, and UNESCO's Happy Schools Framework and assessments.

We also considered the results from our own longitudinal research on evidence-based practices that support student flourishing in schools led by Dr. Christina Hinton, Dr. Noah Padgett, and Catherine Glennon. This study provided insights into which evidence-based practices seem to be causally related to increased flourishing. Consistent with previous research, this study suggests that character education programs and activities also support flourishing, with students who engage in activities that help them grow into a person with good character at least once a month experiencing a 9% increase in their flourishing score.



Finally, in the design of the Flourishing Schools Survey, we considered our international research on school-based practices that aim to support wellbeing, led by Dr. Christina Hinton. In this research, in collaboration with the International Baccalaureate, we explored practices that aim to support student wellbeing in schools across over 70 countries. We considered the results from this research to ensure that we included the evidence-based practices that are most commonly implemented to support wellbeing in schools globally.

Synthesizing all of this work, the Flourishing Schools Survey includes questions about over 50 evidence-based practices to support character and flourishing. For example, students are asked to report on the extent to which their school provides opportunities for social time among students, written reflections about character, outdoor learning, discussion-based learning, practicing gratitude, and volunteering. The response structure for these questions is on an 11-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much.” For some of these questions, students are randomized to the question they receive to keep the survey time shorter but still obtain school-level data.

The results from the survey provide school networks and schools with insights on their strengths and areas for growth in supporting students’ character skills and flourishing. For example, we offer results on the groups that are flourishing as well as those that may need more support. We also show which character skills are strong and those which have room for growth. Further, we report on the degree to which a wide variety of evidence-based practices to foster character and flourishing are implemented.

We encourage school networks to participate in the Flourishing Schools Survey repeatedly to track and support students' character strengths and flourishing over time. The Flourishing Schools Survey is designed to be taken annually to provide schools and school networks with a touchpoint on the ever-evolving status of students’ character strengths and flourishing as well as the school-based support for those outcomes.

The Flourishing Schools Survey provides schools and school networks with actionable insights to promote character and flourishing among students in their communities.

Adolescent Flourishing Measure for Ages 12-18

Please respond to the following questions on a scale from 0 to 10.

Happiness and Life Satisfaction

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?
   0 = Not Satisfied at All, 10 = Completely Satisfied
2. In general I consider myself a happy person.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Mental and Physical Health

3. In general, how would you rate your physical health?
   0 = Poor, 10 = Excellent
4. How would you rate your overall mental health?
   0 = Poor, 10 = Excellent

Meaning and Purpose

5. Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
   0 = Not at All Worthwhile, 10 = Completely Worthwhile
6. I am doing things now that will help me achieve my goals in life.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Character and Virtue

7. I always act to promote good in all circumstances, even in difficult and challenging situations.
   0 = Not True of Me, 10 = Completely True of Me
8. I am always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later.
   0 = Not True of Me, 10 = Completely True of Me

Close Social Relationships

9. I am content with my friendships and relationships.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
10. I have people in my life I can talk to about things that really matter.
    0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Financial and Material Stability

11. My family has enough money to live a truly decent life.
    0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
12. How often do you worry about safety, food, or housing?
    0 = Worry All of the Time, 10 = Do Not Ever Worry

Childhood Flourishing Measure for Ages 9-11

Please answer the questions below on a scale from 0 to 10.

Happiness and Life Satisfaction

1. Overall, I am happy with life.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
2. I'm a happy person.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Mental and Physical Health

1. How healthy are you?
   0 = Not healthy, 10 = Completely healthy
2. My mind is at peace.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Meaning and Purpose

1. Do you feel the things you do in your life matter?
   0 = Not at all, 10 = Completely
2. I am doing things now that will help me in my life when I grow up.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Character and Virtue

1. I always try to do the right thing, even when it is hard.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
2. I am always able to do something hard now that I know will make me happy later.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Close Social Relationships

1. I am happy with my friendships and relationships.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
2. I have people in my life I can talk to about things that really matter.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Financial and Material Stability

1. My family has enough money to live a good life.
   0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
2. How often do you worry about being safe, having food to eat, or having a place to live?
   0 = Worry All of the Time, 10 = Do Not Ever Worry

Community Wellbeing Measure

Relationships and Trust

Everyone has close relationships within the school.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Everyone is respected within the school.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Everyone in the school trusts one another.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Everyone contributes to the wellbeing of others in the school.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Leadership and School Vision

Those in leadership truly care about the wellbeing of everyone in the school.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Those in leadership can be relied on to do what is right.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Those in leadership have the skills and understanding they need to lead the school well.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Those in leadership are able to inspire the school with their vision.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Supportive Structures and Practices

There are structures and practices in the school that allow relationships to become closer.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

There are structures and practices in place that allow the school to deal with conflicts so that everyone is treated fairly.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

The school has structures and practices so as to be able to sustain itself.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

The school has structures and practices that allow it to accomplish its goals.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Belonging and Satisfaction

Everyone is satisfied with the way things are in our school.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Everyone thinks that this school is a good community to be a part of.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Each person has a sense of belonging in the school.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

There is a sense of welcome in the school so that it is possible for each person to become more integrated over time.
0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Shared Purpose and Contribution

Our school's shared purpose or mission is clear to everyone.

0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Our school contributes to the world to make it a better place.

0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Everyone is needed for the school to fulfill its goals and purposes.

0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

Our school is able to do more with everyone together than we could individually.

0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree

For further reading see:

VanderWeele, T.J. (2019). Measures of community well-being: a template. International Journal of Community Well-Being, 2:253-275.





Support from Research Schools International

The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard has partnered with Research Schools International (RSI) to support schools to use the findings from the Flourishing Schools Survey to impact practice “on the ground.” RSI will invite interested schools to engage in onsite and online professional and program development that guides them to deepen evidence-based practices to support students’ character skills and flourishing, focusing on the areas for growth identified in the Flourishing Schools research.

RSI engages schools around the world in cycles of research and professional development to promote character skills and flourishing. In our Research Schools Model, we first carry out research with direct practical relevance, which identifies strengths and areas for growth in supporting character skills and flourishing at our partner schools. Following this, we lead professional development to support our partner schools to deepen the implementation of research-informed practices to support character skills and flourishing, focusing

on the areas for growth identified by our research. Schools can then continue this cycle of research and professional development over time. Throughout this process, we disseminate findings and lessons learned to the broader education community. RSI has carried out over 80 research and professional development projects using this Research Schools Model in schools serving students aged 1-18 in over 70 countries.

In this collaborative project, the Human Flourishing Program's Flourishing Schools Project serves as the research portion of our Research Schools Model, uncovering strengths and areas for growth in supporting character skills and flourishing in participating schools and school networks. Following this, RSI will offer schools interested in participating further in professional and program development further support to integrate evidence-based practices in areas for growth identified by the Flourishing Schools research.



RSI's professional development in this collaborative project will begin with in-person and/or hybrid workshops that support participating schools to unpack the findings in the Flourishing Schools reports. Following this, our researchers from RSI and Harvard Graduate School of Education will lead virtual professional development programs that guide educators in participating schools to create and implement initiatives that target areas for growth identified by the research. In these programs, our RSI team will host monthly sessions over an academic year that support educators to create and implement interventions that are both evidence-based and practically useful.

We encourage schools to participate in cycles of the Human Flourishing Program's Flourishing Schools Project research and RSI's professional development program to track and support character and flourishing over time.

We will disseminate findings and lessons learned from this project to the global education community, recognizing partner school networks and schools as collaborative thought leaders in this initiative to promote education for flourishing.

For further reading see:

Hinton, C., & Fischer, K. W. (2008). Research schools: Grounding research in educational practice. Mind, Brain, and Education, 2(4), 157–160.

Get Involved

We invite networks of schools to join our Flourishing Schools Project. School networks that join the Flourishing Schools Project will receive the Flourishing Schools Survey and a report of the findings, both for the participating individual schools and for the network as a whole, with actionable insights to promote character skills and flourishing among students. Participating schools will also be members of the Flourishing Data Collaborative of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard that uses flourishing data across a diverse range of contexts (schools, universities, religious communities, businesses, etc.) to advance research and to share insights and best practices as to how to promote flourishing. We envision schools in participating networks using cycles of research and professional development to track progress and iteratively improve practice over time, steadily ushering us toward education that supports learning in concert with students' character and flourishing.

If you'd like to learn more about joining our Flourishing Schools Project please fill in our expression of interest form, which is available from the QR code (left) or at this link: https://bit.ly/flourishingschools



Further Readings

Further Reading on Flourishing:

Lomas, T., Pawelski, J.O., and VanderWeele, T.J. (2023). A flexible map of flourishing: The dynamics and drivers of flourishing, well-being, health, and happiness. International Journal of Wellbeing, 13,3665:1-38.

VanderWeele, T.J. (2017). On the promotion of human flourishing. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 114(31), 8148-8156.

VanderWeele, T. J., & Hinton, C. (2024). Metrics for education for flourishing: A framework. International Journal of Wellbeing, 14(1), 1–35.

VanderWeele, T. J., and Johnson, B.R. (2025). Multidimensional versus unidimensional approaches to well-being. Nature Human Behavior, 9:857-863.

VanderWeele, T. J., Johnson, B. R., Bialowolski, P. T. et al. (2025). The global flourishing study: Study profile and initial results on flourishing. Nature Mental Health 3, 636–653.

VanderWeele, T.J. and Lomas, T. (2023). Terminology and the well-being literature. Affective Science, 4:36-40.

Further Reading on Education for Flourishing:

Arthur, J. & Kristjánsson, K. (2024, April). The Jubilee Centre framework for character education in schools. Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham.

Dewey, J. (1900). The school and society. The University of Chicago Press.

Glennon, C., Hinton, C., Callahan, T., & Fischer, K. W. (2013). School-Based Research. Mind, Brain & Education, 7(1).

Hinton, C., Block, H., Padgett, N., Vanderweele, T. J., et al. Validation of a flourishing measure for adolescents ages 12-18 [Manuscript in preparation].

Hinton, C., Block, H., Antonio de la Rosa, P., & Vanderweele, T. J. Validation of a flourishing measure for children ages 9-11 [Manuscript in preparation].

Hinton, C., Block, H., Cook, J., & Glennon, C. (2025). Policies and practices that aim to support student wellbeing in schools: Results from a global collaborative action research program. Research Schools International & International Baccalaureate.

Hinton, C., & Fischer, K. W. (2008). Research schools: Grounding research in educational practice. Mind, Brain, and Education, 2(4), 157–160.

Hinton, C. & Fischer, K. W. (2009). Research schools. In J. E. Cohen & M. E. Stearns (Eds.), Educating the whole child for the whole world: The Ross School Model and Education for the Global Era (pp. 99–112). Teachers College Press.

Hinton, C., Glennon, C., & Padgett, N. et al. Student Flourishing in Christian Schools of Australia [Manuscript in preparation].

Hinton, C., Hill, B., & Yemiscigil, A. (2024). Evidence-based interventions and initiatives to support student wellbeing in schools. OECD.

Kristjánsson, K. & VanderWeele, T. J. (2025). The proper scope of education for flourishing. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 59(3-4), 634-650.

OECD. (2025). Education for human flourishing: A conceptual framework. OECD.

OECD. (2025). Promoting good mental health in children and young adults: Best practices in public health. OECD.

Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2006). Moral competence and character strengths among adolescents: The development and validation of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth. Journal of Adolescence, 29(6), 891-909.

Stevenson, M. (2025). High performing systems for tomorrow conceptual framework (III). OECD.

UNESCO. (2024). Why the world needs happy schools: Global report on happiness in and for learning.

VanderWeele, T.J. (2022). The importance, opportunities, and challenges of empirically assessing character for the promotion of flourishing. Journal of Education, 202:170–180.

VanderWeele, T. J. & Hinton, C. (2024). Metrics for education for flourishing: A framework. OECD Report.

VanderWeele, T. J. & Hinton, C. (2024). Metrics for education for flourishing: A framework. International Journal of Wellbeing, 14(1), 1-35.

Further Reading on Flourishing Measures:

Hinton, C., Block, H., Padgett, N., Vanderweele, T., et al. (2025). Validation of a flourishing measure for adolescents ages 12-18 [Manuscript in preparation].

Hinton, C., Block, H., Antonio de la Rosa, P., & Vanderweele, T. J. (2025). Validation of a flourishing measure for children ages 9-11 [Manuscript in preparation].

Hinton, C., Block, H., Padgett, N., Glennon, C., & Vanderweele, T. J. Validation of an early childhood flourishing measure for ages 5-8 [Manuscript in preparation].

Höltge, J., Cowden, R. G., Lee, M. T., Bechara, A. O., Joynt, S., Kamble, S., Khalanskyi, V.V., Shtanko, L., Kurniati, N.M.T., Tymchenko, S., Voytenko, V.L., McNeely, E., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2023). A systems perspective on human flourishing: Exploring cross-country similarities and differences of a multisystemic flourishing network. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 18(5), 695–710.

Kelly-Hedrick, M., Lhaksampa, T. C., Chisolm, M. S., & Miller, L. (2023). What does it mean to flourish? Piloting the flourishing measure with adolescents and young adults with mood and anxiety disorders. Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 28(4), 1612–1622.

Lee, M. T., Kubzansky, L. D., & VanderWeele, T. J. (Eds.). (2021). Measuring wellbeing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Oxford University Press.

Moon, D. J., Jeon, J., Cruce, A., Lee, H., Ma, R., & Case, B. W. (2025). Measuring flourishing for transitional youth aging out of foster care in the United States: Factor structure and invariance of the flourishing index. SSM - Mental Health, 100518.

Padgett, R.N., Lee, M.T., Wilkinson, R., Tsavaris, H. & VanderWeele, T.J. (2024). Reliability and validity of a multidimensional measure of subjective community wellbeing. Assessment, 31(8), 1658–1673.

VanderWeele, T.J. (2017). On the promotion of human flourishing. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 114(31), 8148–8156.

VanderWeele, T.J. (2019). Measures of community wellbeing: A template. International Journal of Community Wellbeing, 2(3-4), 253-275.

Węziak-Białowolska, D., McNeely, E., and VanderWeele, T.J. (2019). Human flourishing in cross cultural settings: Evidence from the US, China, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Mexico. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, 1-13.

Weziak-Bialowolska, D., McNeely, E., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2019). Flourish Index and Secure Flourish Index - Validation in workplace settings. Cogent Psychology, 6(1).

Zambelli, M., Tse, D., Cowden, R., Holtge, J., Johnson, B. R., Padgett, R.N., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2025), The psychometric network of individual flourishing across nationally representative samples from 22 countries. Scientific Reports, 15(1).

About the Program

Founded in 2016, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science has a twofold mission **to study and promote human flourishing, and to develop systematic approaches to the synthesis of knowledge across disciplines**.

Many topics that are fundamental to human well-being such as happiness itself, virtue, religious community, meaning, and purpose have traditionally been viewed as principally falling within the purview of the humanities, often of philosophy or theology. However, a robust empirical research literature on these topics has now developed from sociology, political science, economics, education, psychology, medicine, public health, and other empirical sciences. The Program's research contributes to the broad question of how knowledge from the quantitative social sciences can be integrated with that of the humanities on questions of human flourishing and how best to carry out this synthesis of knowledge across disciplines.

The Program produces research publications and sponsors educational activities, such as courses, seminars, and conferences, for the Harvard University community and beyond. The Program has helped lead the Global Flourishing Study which is a worldwide longitudinal study of over 200,000 individuals spanning 22 countries. The Program has a range of initiatives designed to increase public awareness of the science of human flourishing and the adoption of practices that can improve it throughout society.

For more information, visit: https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/



The Human Flourishing Program
at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science


1923
FK
MORNAR
BAR

The Human Flourishing Program

at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science



