

ACADEMIC

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER

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## Interviewed By: Douglas Lindsay

**Lindsay:** Do you mind talking a little bit about your journey and how you got to where you are today in terms of your interest in the field of character?

**Berkowitz:** I'm a developmental psychologist. My degrees are in lifespan developmental psychology which basically means I study normative or typical development from conception, to death and dying, but my focus has always been on children and adolescents. The content area that I was most interested in was morality. It sort of came about with the interface of my upbringing to tripping over it in Graduate School and learning about Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Reasoning. I was really interested in changes in reasoning and how people got to reason better. It just hooked me. So, I went off and got my Doctorate in Lifespan Developmental Psychology focusing on the moral development of adolescents. I went from there to actually work with Kohlberg as a post doc at Harvard. That was a real qualitative turning point for me in my career. One, I got to work for two years with the best and brightest in the world, all who were in a community studying the same kinds of things. That was just a remarkable opportunity for me. It also exposed me to applications because Kohlberg was doing work in experimental schools and how to do this work in school settings.

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**Dr. Marvin W. Berkowitz** is the inaugural Sanford N. McDonnell Endowed Professor of Character Education, and Co-Director of the Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and University of Missouri President's Thomas Jefferson Professor. He has also served as the inaugural Ambassador H.H. Coors Professor of Character Development at the US Air Force Academy (1999), and Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Ethics Studies at Marquette University (1979-1999). He was also founder and Associate Director of the Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research in Milwaukee. Since 1999 he has directed the Leadership Academy in Character Education in St. Louis. He earned his BA degree in psychology from the State University of NY at Buffalo and his Ph.D. in Life-span Developmental Psychology at Wayne State University. Dr. Berkowitz has served as a visiting scholar in Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, Spain, and Taiwan. His scholarly focus and expertise is in character education and development and he is author of more than 100 book chapters, monographs, and journal articles. He is founding co-editor of the *Journal for Research in Character Education*.

After that, I went off and got my first job at Marquette University where I was the developmental psychologist in the Psychology Department. I had to teach all of the developmental courses like child, adolescence, adult, life-span, and so on. I was being a good social scientist doing research, theory, and publishing but I still had this seed of really wanting to make a difference in the real world. That just grew over the years as I dabbled in education. I started thinking more and more how can I leverage schools, and to a certain degree families, to help optimally nurture goodness in children and adolescents. I don't know how reflective I was about it, but it was certainly calling to me.

When I was finishing about 20 years at Marquette, I had already at that point began working with educational organizations. I had been publishing in education, working first with West Point and later with USAFA and other military organizations thinking about it in terms of military formation. I was dabbling all over the place. At the time, I got headhunted for the job that I have right now. It is an Endowed Chair funded by Sanford McDonnell who was the CEO for McDonnell-Douglas, and later Boeing. By the way, he was always thrilled to come to the terrazzo at USAFA to see how many of his planes were sitting out there that he had designed and manufactured. He liked that a lot. It was a coincidence because at the same time, I was also headhunted for the Ambassador Holland H. Coors Professor of Character Development at USAFA. I got both offers at almost the same time. First, from USAFA, and that came about from meeting people when I was working with West Point. I accepted that one and then I was offered the one at St. Louis, the McDonnell Chair. I actually turned it down because I told them that I had just signed a contract with the Air Force. Even though it was just for a year, I wasn't backing out of a contract that I had signed. They said, "It's okay. We want you, so we will hold it for a year." So, I spent a year working with

the CCD, I think it was called that then, which is now the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD). I was triangulating a bit there. I went from Milwaukee to USAFA, and then to St Louis.

Once I got to St Louis, I was in the College of Education and my job was explicitly to be dealing with schools, and particularly leadership. The leadership piece came about in the following way. When I was at Marquette, I was encouraged to pursue my interest in applying it to schools. But I was encouraged to pick one school with a good leader and mentor that leader through whole school transformation. We were not able to pull that off for all sorts of bureaucratic reasons. So, when I got to St Louis, part of my job contractually was to run a Leadership Academy for school leaders. It is part of the definition of my job. I have been doing that for over two decades now.

That turned out to be the best gift that I got out of this whole thing because I think it is my greatest leverage point. The most powerful thing that I do is work with leaders in the field of education to help them rethink what their organizations are, what their role as a leader is, and what kind of person they have to be as a leader to pull this off in order to optimally serve the flourishing of kids. We have been turning schools around left and right. Now, it has grown to where we are doing it all around the world. That is how I got to this point.

**Lindsay:** That's quite the journey. Is the Leadership Academy part of the Center for Character and Citizenship.

**Berkowitz:** Yes. When I first got the University of Missouri at St Louis, it was just me. I remember when I left Kohlberg's Center at Harvard and came to Marquette, I felt like I was all alone. I had been in a Center where everybody had a synergy, where we were

all studying the same thing. It was great but now I was not only the only one studying moral development, I was the only developmental psychologist at the University, so I felt really alone. I ran around campus trying to find people to connect with. Fortunately, at a Jesuit University, you find people interested in morality and ethics all over the place. I started building a network there so that when I came to the University of Missouri-St Louis, I had my head on to know that I needed to come in there and find people that had a shared interest.

I started finding people and attracting others to come join us, but there was no formal organization for it. It was just me and my Leadership Academy. When we hired Dr. Wolfgang Althof into another prestigious position, he was a Chair in Citizenship Education, together we said, let's make this formal. So, we proposed to the University of Missouri system that we become a Center of Excellence, and they said yes. That was about 15 years ago that we turned it into a Center. We are now formally a Center for Character and Citizenship. We have a lot of people working there and the Leadership Academy is a part of it.

**Lindsay:** You talked about helping leaders in the field of education, is that primarily K-12, or is that at other levels?

**Berkowitz:** Let me pull back a step before I get to that to give you some context. We do multiple things. The leadership training is one of the most important things that we do, but we also do work in scholarship. We edit the Journal of Character Education. We also are the key folks trying to digest, synthesize, and disseminate all of the research that is going on in this field. The real goal of that is to say, "What are the evidence-based practices? What really works?" When I was at USAFA, I wrote a couple of papers about getting our heads on straight thinking about what are the real leverage points. What

are the active ingredients? How do we emphasize those to achieve the character mission of the institution? I still think that way and I still try to do that. We have done that very consistently for 20 years. We have a whole model dealing with the design principles for the evidence-based practices in promoting the development of character. That background leads me to answer your question. The leadership piece is mostly K-12.

It is dealing with principals, assistant principals and other leaders. The broader work is asking, "What does organizational reform look like, what are the design

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principles for that, and what are the best practices?" While we certainly do that mostly for K-12 schools, we do get interest from all sorts of sectors. Post-secondary is certainly an obvious one, but we also have interest from corporations, non-profits, and others. We don't do much with the rest of those because I am in a College of Education and most of my work is explicitly out of the education literature. So, that is really the mission for my position. Therefore, we are heavily skewed toward the K-12 sector.

**Lindsay:** You mentioned developing design principles. I imagine part of that gets into some pretty good discussions to include the development of curriculum regarding character development? Do you advise on that as well?

**Berkowitz:** I'll give you a yes and a no answer to that. Yes, in the most direct sense that schools want to know about that. We have plenty we can lend people about how we can do that. In fact, I had a conversation last

night about that with two high school government teachers who said, “We are up and running with our virtual learning at the high school level, now we need your advice on how we do character in these classes.” So, we brainstormed about that. A lot of it had to do with integrating it through the curriculum, but a lot of it had to do with other places like classroom management, ancillary stuff, and so on. That is sort of the yes part of it.

The no part of it is that is the first place that people go, and I mean all around the world, the first thing people want is curriculum. They say, “Can you give me curriculum, lesson plans, and can you teach me how to teach this in the classroom?” My inclination is to say, “No, we are not doing that.” Character education is much more a way of “being” than a way of “doing.” Be-Know-Do is a common phrase in the military context, but this “being” piece is the really slippery, but most important, piece of it. How you are with others has the greatest impact on their character, much more than what you cover in your classes or what you teach about. I’m not belittling that or saying that we shouldn’t do that. If you are going to sit down at a roulette wheel and put your money down, don’t put it on something that isn’t likely to pay off. Put your money where you have a good chance at having the greatest impact. We all have limited resources so let’s use our resources wisely. That is a tough sell to people. That means I may have to be a different person. For instance, one of the most overlooked and most powerful elements, and I am talking K-12, but we can extrapolate to other levels, that can impact character is the adult culture. The culture among the teachers and the other adults who work in the building. It is the leader’s job to nurture and shape that adult culture. The leader doesn’t have to worry about the kids as much. At USAFA, that means the Superintendent doesn’t have to worry about the cadets. He needs to worry about those that impact the cadets. That gets lost in a lot of places, but it is so

critical. What you have to shape is how do we function as an adult community? What do we model in front of those people? How do we get along with each other? Do we act out of character with each other or not? That is a critical piece of this that is so often overlooked. That is so far away from curriculum, you can’t get much further away than something like that.

I met years ago in Hong Kong with a high level education person from the government and I tried this line of argumentation with him and it just fell on deaf ears because all he could think about was (1) how we could increase academic scores, and (2) the only way to do that is what you teach and your teaching methods. I kept telling him that there are other things that impact the outcome that you want. What we are talking about at a place like USAFA, and this is a line that I always used to use when I was there is, “Yes, it’s about the character of your cadets, but that is not really your end game.

The end game is the character of officers in the operational Air Force. That is the end game.” When a person is out there 10 years later and they have control over critical decisions, that is the end game for USAFA. That is when the character has to be there. I remember there was a guy at West Point who I heard speak many years ago who wasn’t a graduate because he was disenrolled for a violation of the Honor Code.

They would bring him back every year to give a talk to the cadets. His talk was that he had lied during an inspection on whether he had polished his boots, or something like that. They asked him if he did X, and it turns out he didn’t. They didn’t know that he had lied. He actually later self-reported out of remorse. Back in those days, and this probably happened 40 years ago, it was single sanctioned so he was disenrolled. I thought, the message here should be, we blew it because this is the type of person that we want. At that point in his life he

was so driven by ethics that he self-reported. He didn't become bitter and hate the Military Academy, he was loyal to them over all those years. Those are the people that you want to keep in uniform if you can, because in the long run, those are the people that are going to do good in the world.

**Lindsay:** As I hear you talk about that, I think the default toward curriculum is to be able to get a plug and play answer. It is pretty straightforward and easy.

**Berkowitz:** It is easy. Here is an interesting way that I frame this. There is a thought experiment that I do in presentations. I say to people, I want everyone in here to think about the thing that you like to think about most in the world. They look confused and I say, yourself. Everyone thinks about themselves more than anything else. Think about yourself and think about one of your actual character strengths. You aren't going to share it with anyone so don't worry about humility here. Are you particularly caring, honest, responsible, or what is a strength of yours that you would hope that people who know you see and are pleased that their friend or relative is like that? I have them think about that for a minute. Okay, now I want you to answer a tougher question. How did you end up like that? How did you end up strong on that and not on something else? What made you that kind of person? Where did that come from? They do that, and then I ask them to share out.

What you get from the vast majority of them is they will tell you that either one or both of their parents had that characteristic. Some others will say someone else significant in their life had that characteristic. A few will say that there was some significant adult in their life, often a parent, that had the opposite characteristic and they vowed they wouldn't follow that path. I actually first learned that when I was at USAFA. We were sitting around in our offices and were talking about

our lives and our parents and one guy was talking about how his dad was a horrible bigot. As a result, he always vowed he would not be prejudiced and lived his life to not be. Another one said that her mom was an alcoholic and that is why she never drank. I thought, wow, this is an interesting fork in the road. We know from statistics, if you are raised by a bigot, you are more likely to become a bigot. Or, if you are raised by an addict, you are more likely to be an addict, and so on. But for some people, it takes them in a different direction. That is the third one.

The fourth answer that I hear is a life trauma. Life threw me challenges and that brought out the character in me. Those are the things that I always hear. But, there are some things that I never hear, and I have done this all over the world with thousands of people. I have never heard curriculum, a lesson, poster, a song about character, or an award I got, caused my character. Nobody has ever said that to me. Yet, schools flock to this stuff. It is the first thing they want to do. Some of those are just low impact and don't do much. If we really want to change someone's fundamental nature, that is a heavy duty task and we need heavy duty input.

**Lindsay:** I can really see how people would want to start with curriculum. How do you address that fundamental idea that it is a way of "being" and not just doing? How do you start to unpack that for people when they want to just focus on the curricular part?

**Berkowitz:** When you deal with cadets, who happen to be some of the best and brightest in the country, they will sometimes tell you that you can't impact their character. It is already done. You aren't going to change me. One part of the answer is that for every complicated problem, there is a simple solution, and it is wrong. Another one that I learned a long time ago is the way that we make meaning in the world is to draw lines and

make distinctions. The first distinction is a dichotomy. It's this or it is that. Those are overly simplistic. Human beings are so complex. I used to teach my students that the human mind is too complex for the human mind to comprehend. We are not going to fully understand it. These are interesting issues to raise, like you can't teach an old dog new tricks. That just isn't true. It may be a bit more difficult to teach an old dog new tricks under certain circumstances, but you still can. That is the answer to much of this. It is complex and nuanced. It doesn't mean there are rules and patterns that you can follow, but they certainly aren't dichotomous, neat rules in that regard.

My argument would be that human beings are not born a blank slate as behaviorism would teach us, or that any human being has equal potential to be good or bad, or smart or dumb, or whatever you want to look at. Rather, we are born with certain tendencies that are vectors in certain directions. While there are these vectors that will push us in certain directions, there are also countervailing forces. So, we are born with the potential to develop as pro-social, moral beings. But, we need certain conditions and circumstances to draw that out and still others to optimize it. That is really what we are trying to do in character education. To ask, what are the conditions that will optimize the flourishing of the potential for goodness in people? A metaphor I often use for this is that there is the potential for a seed to become a tree. But, if you don't have the right nutrients, temperature, light, etc., it won't. If you do it optimally, then you greatly increase the chances that you will get a positive result for which the potentiality already existed.

**Lindsay:** Creating those optimal individual conditions to maximize that potential can be a challenge when you have a large school. I think that is why you often see

a more one size fits all approach, hence the curriculum approach. Let's try to get everyone over the line that we need them to be over. When you are dealing with a technical skill, it is more straightforward on how we can intervene with someone on a particular skill. When you are dealing with character, that is a different challenge because it is so individual. So, when you are looking at creating the conditions, you can quickly get past the curriculum discussion and then you get to the "being" part of influencing the faculty. What have you found to be successful in creating the conditions necessary to create a culture where character is modeled and shown?

**Berkowitz:** The easiest place for me to start are with six design principles I have described. The model is called PRIMED. I actually have a book that will be out within a few months on this model. PRIMED is an anagram for six ideas. It comes out of our digesting the research for the last 20 years to see what the evidence suggests. P is the most important and it stand for Prioritization. For example, the character development of cadets is an authentic priority at USAFA. It is in your mission statement. It doesn't mean that it doesn't sometimes get short shrift because something else supersedes it. But, to a large degree, as an institution, I think character formation of cadets is an authentic priority there.

The R stands for Relationships. It is building the healthy relationships that are necessary for human flourishing. It means everybody has to be included. So, if you have a cadet who is different in some way, being ostracized in the squadron, in some way being marginalized, or someone who is shy and insecure, we need to make sure that we have structures and ways where that doesn't happen and everyone is connected. Mentoring is a great way to make sure there is a relationship, and my former Ph.D. student Lt. Col. David Huston, who is at CCLD did his dissertation on mentoring. What some schools are now doing, and now I am back to the K-12 world,

is that they do a scan of each student and find out who does not have a staff to student relationship and they strategically make that happen. There are all kinds of structures and ways to do that. It is thinking, how do we make sure there are these relationships? It is keeping an eye on how do we keep building relationships.

One of the things that I would love to see USAFA do, which is an idea I came up with years ago, is making your character a self-project. When I was there, the probation system started to touch on that. For example, if someone stole something and was put on probation, then they have to work on that. They write on it and reflect on it during their probation. However, I think it is something that everyone should do. I will play it out as a possibility as an example. Let's say every cadet who comes into USAFA, when they first arrive, are taught about the Core Values. They are asked to complete a private self-assessment that they don't share with anyone else, to really do some deep work on what I am strongest on, what am I weakest on, and so on. Then, they chose one of those that they want to work on in their first year. There is a whole system in place at USAFA for this. Every class that they take that has any connection at all, assignments are linked to that.

If you are studying history, you are asked to think about where do you see evidence of or the absence of evidence of that at this moment in history. If you are in literature, where do you see it in the literature, and so on. If science, where do you see famous scientific discoveries manifesting it or not manifesting it? They are also taught how to do strategic planning and they do strategic planning for themselves. They are creating a portfolio for four years. Maybe at the end of the first year, they do a final report and they do a public presentation in their squadron or some place else of my journey this year on this character trait. When they are a sophomore, they

can choose a new one or continue working on the same one. So, they end up with a four-year portfolio on their character growth. But, they are also assigned a peer in the same class who is their accountability buddy. You wouldn't have to be working on the same character strength so the accountability is on the process. You stay together as accountability buddies. Maybe there are three sets of accountability buddies assigned to a junior who is mentoring them. You are building relationships while you are focusing on character and empowering people to build their own character. I kind of made that up just now as an example, but it is based on a model that I have been working on.

The I stands for Intrinsic motivation. Ultimately, what you want is that when these cadets go out anywhere, that those character strengths are inside them and go with them everywhere. It isn't just something that they do at

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USAFA because they are being monitored, rewarded, or punished, because that is extrinsic motivation. Instead, it becomes who I am. There is a whole psychology of how you get that inside a person. We don't have time right now to go through all of that, but we focus on building a whole program around what will make these cadets really honestly motivated to be the Air Force values and to work to become more and more like that all the time. Otherwise, when they leave, it is gone.

I used to go nuts when I was there and people would come in and brag about all of the stupid things that they did when they were TDY. Then, they would say, "What goes TDY, stays TDY." If they really realized how much they were undermining the character education message of USAFA, and particularly the toleration clause of the

Honor Code, by telling those stupid bragging stories, they wouldn't do it. They are undermining it all. Don't do that.

The M stands for Modelling. Cadets are constantly telling us that officers are yelling at them because one little button was off but they are doing that when they are disheveled themselves and have their uniform on wrong. It doesn't work then. You have to be the character you want to see in the people you are trying to impact.

The E stands for Empowerment. There is a lot of empowerment at USAFA. Cadets get to be officers and run the Honor System, and all kinds of activities. D is for a Developmental perspective. Which is saying, in everything that we do, how can we do it in a way that impacts the long term development of this person? That is why I said I am much less concerned about the character of cadets as the outcome than I am of the officers in the Air Force that they eventually become. That is the goal.

What kind of education do we need to have that kind of impact as opposed to getting them to be a certain way right now? For example, we can get them to clean up their acts while they are at USAFA because you have a system over their heads. When they leave, and are Second Lieutenants, they have to decide how they are going to act. They remember how everyone told them, what goes TDY, stays TDY, and how people really wear their uniforms. They taught me well how to act in the operational Air Force. Because they pay attention to everything. That is the PRIMED Model and the principles of design of how you make this stuff go deep and stick.

**Lindsay:** That is an interesting point about how we may be undermining our own work by what is modeled

and talked about. If we agree that our leadership is a natural extension of who we are being, then we need to pay attention to that within the system.

A challenge with that PRIMED approach is that it is a highly individualistic approach. Some might say that takes a lot of time and resources to pull that off. I'm sure you hear that quite often.

**Berkowitz:** That is a real issue and a real concern. But you have to look in the mirror when you say that. What they are saying is that they don't want to do the heavy lifting. If that's the case, then is it fair to say, that maybe isn't the kind of person you want in the Air Force. If you are immediately going to say that it is hard, difficult, and different than what we used to do before, then what are you going to do when you are in harm's way and that is difficult? It's really just getting in people's faces and shining a light on them for their own development. The single most powerful tool you have to influence someone else's character is your character. That is the greatest tool you have.

The other thing that I hear is that you are asking too much of us. You are asking us to be saints and to go so far above and beyond. You know what I say to educators who tell me that? I say that education is not just a job or a profession. It is a calling. It is a calling to service. I think that speaks a lot to your readership. Anyone who is serving in the military as just a job or mainly to make money, they are missing why they are there in the first place. Don't we want the people who are called to serve? For example, I met a lot of special operations folks and they were just amazing. These are people who are consistently willing to put themselves in harms way in some of the scariest places because they have a true calling to serve the best interests of this nation.



The other thing that I wanted to say is that it does optimally get to a more individualized approach as you mentioned. But people take that and say they have so many students and we can't have a separate program for each student. However, you have all sorts of resources in place to help you do that. At USAFA, you have the benefit of having them 24 hours a day and so many structures that many organizations do not have to really get to know the individual. I met a person recently who is an "edupreneur." He does technology for education. He said, when his kids started going to school, he realized that teachers don't know their kids well enough. They don't know them individually. So, he created a website application called Thrively with the idea that it is a platform where kids have e-portfolios that grow over time. As much data as possible gets in there. He also recommends collecting data on character. So, teachers can have a ready way to get a deeper understanding of each student. I thought that is a great idea.

One high school approached it this way. They got some of their best and brightest juniors and seniors to each be assigned five incoming freshmen. They would meet with them and advise them on how to navigate high school. What they did was pair them up. Two of the older students with each of their five mentees would get together periodically. They said in the very first semester they did this, 9th grade misbehavior plummeted. It almost went away just by having them be in a small group of five of their peers and one older student.

There are all sorts of structures that can be used to get a more customized knowledge. The thing is, most of the cadets (or students) coming in don't need special attention. So, you are trying to identify those that need support. You need to be able to find out who they are because you can't necessarily predict them. It may not exactly be a one-on-one individually tailored educational experience, but you can be flexible.

**Lindsay:** That approach expands a bit to how you might about faculty and staff. It becomes more than just having people with technical competence in a particular knowledge domain. As you mentioned one of the benefits of USAFA is that we get 47-months with each cadet and 47-months is quite a bit of time.

**Berkowitz:** It is, but only if you are strategic and intentional about it. While I think USAFA does a pretty good job, there is always room to improve. What happens is that our tendency is to fall back on the tried and true and what we know. There are really two strategies in higher education. One is to put the filter up front. These are places like Harvard. If we put the filter up front, then we don't have to worry about them afterwards. We know that they all will be able to do the work and what we demand of them because we select them for that. The other one is to say that we will let more people in without that kind of filter and set up hurdles along the way and they will kind of winnow themselves out. In essence, USAFA is both. The key is having that discourse. It is important. Do you think of your cadets as already pre-selected so that the vast majority of them should have a relatively easy path through the 47-month obstacle course that USAFA is? If so, then they don't need a whole lot of scaffolding or help. Or, do you see this as a real obstacle course where at the end, only the best and brightest are standing because they winnow themselves out because we made it so challenging for them? What do you really think you are doing there? That would give you a better sense of how you need to operate.

One of the problems with the model is that some may not have it yet, but could develop it under your watch. So, what do we do for that? The other part is do we have selection science nailed down well enough where we could differentiate who is the sure winner and who isn't?

I don't think we do yet. One thing I tell school leaders all the time is to start with the assumption that everyone here has the potential to be what you want them to be. My friend Clifton Taulbert always says, "Don't teach to people as they are, teach to the potential in people." That is what you teach to. I tell leaders all the time, that is the first thing you do is to put every resource possible that makes sense there to help this person be able to do their job as a teacher.

With the teachers, if you have tried everything you can and it is clear that they are never going to become a teacher who is healthy for kids, then you need to get them out of there as they shouldn't be teaching kids. Likewise, at USAFA, what can you do to give each cadet a shot at becoming a good officer in the United States Air Force? Do you know who Dave Bing is? He was an NBA all-star and then went on to become the Mayor of Detroit. He always had a passion for helping urban minority youth. I remember him once saying, "As much as it kills me, we don't have the resources to save some of these kids, and some will need to be locked away." That is an extreme case, but I tell principals to try and try to see if you can get the burnt out or cynical teacher to become a good teacher. To teach to that potential. Lead to that potential. But, if you figure out it is never going to happen after you have tried everything, then they need to go find something else.

**Lindsay:** Understanding which approach your organization has is important to determine what steps you need to take. With all of this in mind, if you could pass on advice to young leaders, what would you say?

**Berkowitz:** I'm going to answer that question by telling you about a new initiative that we have around servant leadership. I want to give credit where credit is due. My colleague, Dr. Melinda Bier, is really the leader behind us moving in this direction. What she did is come up

with a model of the virtues of servant leadership. She got it from the scholarly literature and there are eight core virtues of servant leadership. What we are doing with educational leaders is to take them on a journey to first learn about these eight virtues and then to make themselves a self-project to become more like those virtues. Some of the things that we are hearing back from educational leaders is that they need to be more courageous, which is one of the virtues. Or that they need to be more grateful, which is another one of the virtues. I don't express my gratitude enough.

The idea of servant leadership, which comes from Robert Greenleaf, I find dovetails so nicely with the development of character. Basically, what it says is to take a systemic perspective. We are a system. I can't be a puppeteer who just orchestrates it all and everyone will go along with it. Instead, what I have to do is respectfully understand how critical each piece of this is and I have to empower and equip them to be the best that they can be at what they do. Or, I can't be the best that I can be and the organization can't be the best that it can be. That notion of servant leadership would take new leaders a really long way. If you serve the people who follow you, they will follow you more closely and more effectively.