

# ***Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics***

***Version 2.7 short***

## ***Key to Interpretation of Data Reports***

**2008**

***Prepared by Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC. on behalf of  
the Institute for Excellence & Ethics, Inc. and the Smart & Good Schools Initiative***



# CREE Interpretation

---

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This instrument is aligned with several major constructs described in *Smart & Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in Schools, Work, and Beyond* (Lickona and Davidson, 2005). The Smart & Good Schools framework proposes a definition of character as having two essential and interconnected parts: performance character and moral character.

*Performance character* can be described as a “mastery orientation.” It consists of those qualities—including but not limited to diligence, perseverance, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, ingenuity, and self-discipline—needed to realize one’s potential for excellence in any performance environment, such as academics, extracurricular activities, the workplace, and throughout life. *Moral character* is a “relational orientation.” It consists of those qualities— including but not limited to integrity, justice, caring, respect, and cooperation—needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical conduct. Moral character enables us to treat others—and ourselves—with respect and care and to act with integrity in our ethical lives. Moral character also has the important job of moderating our performance goals to honor the

interests of others, to ensure that we do not violate moral values such as fairness, honesty, and caring in the pursuit of high performance.

This expanded understanding of character enables researchers and practitioners to address more effectively the question, “What’s the connection between character and academics?” Davidson, Lickona, and Khmelkov (2008) cite four important roles for character in academic life and work in general. First, students need performance character (initiative, self-discipline, perseverance, teamwork, etc.) in order to do their best academic work. Second, students develop their performance character from working hard and smart on their schoolwork. Third, students need moral character (respect, fairness, kindness, honesty, etc.) in order to create the relationships that make for a positive learning environment. Fourth, students develop moral character from their schoolwork—for example, by helping their peers to do their best work through constructive critique, studying ethical issues in the curriculum, and carrying out service learning projects that help solve real-world problems – and from being in a supportive environment.

# CREE Interpretation

---

## THE INSTRUMENT

The *Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics* survey is designed to provide either a one-time assessment or over-time monitoring of various aspects of the ethical learning community in schools and the development of the performance and moral character in youth. To triangulate the information and explore similarities and differences in the views of character development held by various stakeholders, CREE is comprised of student, faculty/staff, and parent forms. This process of collecting information from all those engaged in the process of schooling and comparing and contrasting the results provides a 360-degree view of the issues being assessed.

The instrument is designed to capture group differences and not intended as a diagnostic tool for individuals. Negatively worded items are reverse-coded for analysis, so that '5' always indicates the most positive attitude or belief, most frequent positive behavior, or absence of anti-social behavior, whereas '1' always indicates the most negative attitudes/beliefs, lack of positive behavior, or most frequent anti-social behavior. Scale scores are computed as means of contributing items, so that

their range and interpretation is the same as that of individual items (1 to 5).

The instrument is designed to measure not only the school outcomes—student performance and moral character—but also school inputs in character development, in other words, school and classroom academic and social climate and culture, intentional and unintentional practices of faculty, staff, and parents, as well as student own behaviors, experiences and interactions with peers and adults that impact their learning and socio-moral development. As such, this instrument is well-suited for initial needs assessment, as well as for formative evaluation and providing feedback to all the stakeholders.

This version of the instrument is labeled “short” because the scales have been reduced in length from their “full” versions to include about 60% of the key items. This approach allows for broad scope of assessment combined with ease of administration without sacrificing its validity or reliability.

# CREE Interpretation

---

The **CREE Student Form** measures:

- 1) *School Climate: a) Social Health and Safety*, measuring the extent to which students feel safe in the school, as opposed to being exposed to disruptive behavior or incidents of peer cruelty or violence, and b) *Social Capital* generated in the classroom/school community by adults.
- 2) *Ethical Learning Community*, conceptualized as (a) acceptance of differences in schoolmates and attachment to the classroom/school community, (b) collective responsibility for classroom/school community, or courage and commitment to challenge others to be and to do their best.
- 3) *Experiences of Learning the Strengths of Character*, focusing on student perceptions of the opportunities created by adults in the school and arising through interactions with schoolmates in which youth develop performance character—such strengths of character as diligent and capable performer and lifelong learner and critical thinker—and moral character—such strengths of character as socially and emotionally skilled person, ethical thinker, respectful and responsible moral agent, contributing community member and democratic citizen.

- 4) *Performance and Moral Character*, conceptualized as (a) commitment and self-discipline of individuals to challenge themselves to do their best work, to strive for excellence, and to improve their knowledge, attitude, and skills in any performance environment, such as academics, extracurricular activities, the workplace, and throughout life; and (b) commitment and self-discipline of individuals to challenge themselves to be their best ethical selves, to strive to do the right thing, to be responsible members of various social groups—in the classroom, on the playing field, and so on.

The **CREE Teacher Form** measures:

- 1) *Professional Ethical Learning Community*, measuring faculty and staff perceptions of colleagues' commitment to explicit and integrated focus on excellence and ethics for students and for themselves, including evidence of such approaches as developing shared purpose and identity, aligning practices with desired outcomes, having a voice and taking a stand, grappling with tough issues, practicing personal responsibility for continuous self-improvement and collective responsibility for excellence and ethics.

## CREE Interpretation

---

2) *Assessment of the Ethical Learning Community*—parallel to student reports of (a) acceptance of differences in schoolmates and attachment to the classroom/school community, and (b) collective responsibility, or courage and commitment to challenge others to be and to do their best.

3) *Teaching the Strengths of Character*—faculty and staff practices promoting performance character, conceptualized as focus on such strengths of character as diligent and capable performer and lifelong learner and critical thinker, and practices promoting moral character, conceptualized as focus on development of such strengths of character as socially and emotionally skilled person, ethical thinker, respectful and responsible moral agent, contributing community member and democratic citizen.

4) *Assessments of Student Performance and Moral Character*—parallel to student own reports of their corresponding behavior;

The **CREE Parent Form** measures:

1) *School-Family Partnership*—conceptualized as (a) parents' (other adults' in the family) perceptions of school's efforts to educate and involve parents in teaching performance and moral character, to communicate with parents about their children's learning and to involve parents in decision-making and volunteering at the school and community, and (b) parents own actions initiating communication with the school, volunteering at the school, participating in decision-making about school issues, and participating in community life.

2) *Parent Practices Promoting Performance Character and Moral Character*—conceptualized as parents' (other adults' in the family) focus on development of performance and moral character in their children.

3) *School Focus on Excellence and Ethics*—parents' perceptions of school efforts to build the ethical learning community in the school and develop students' performance and moral character.

# CREE Interpretation

---

## REPORT CONTENT

The CREE Data Report consists of the following components: summary of all the data, frequencies and means of items on the student survey, frequencies and means of items on the faculty/staff survey, and frequencies and means of items on the parent survey (if collected).

The summary component presents means for the scales and individual items comprising the scales in the survey. In *absolute* terms, means above 3.0 indicate positive responses, whereas means below 3.0 indicate negative responses. It is best, however, to examine mean scores on a scale or item in *relative* terms, in other words, how they compare across groups. The summary component provides three main kinds of comparison.

The first comparison is a comparison of the participating school to the weighted results from a range of schools across the U.S. for which Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC. has data available. The comparisons are always for the appropriate developmental level, in other words, elementary schools are compared to elementary schools, middle to middle, and high schools to high schools. The

comparative group results from the CCE's database are always labeled "Other."

The column labeled Sig. provides the statistical level of significance of the t-test comparison of means between the participating school and the comparison group data: numbers below .05 in this column indicate that the difference in means is statistically significant. While no formal national norms for the survey are available at this time, this comparison gives one some idea as to where the participating school findings might be relative to other schools in the U.S.

One should also examine whether an observed difference has substantive importance, or whether it makes a difference in the real world. Since scales in this survey measure social constructs, it is impossible to directly assign a meaning to the metrics used. One way to get a feeling for how important the differences are is to estimate how large the difference between two means is relative to standard deviations of the two means being compared. A difference that is less than 20% of the standard deviation can be considered substantively insignificant, the difference of about 20%-50% of the standard deviation can be viewed as small, 50%-80% -- medium, and over 80% -- large (if

## CREE Interpretation

---

the standard deviations of the two means are different, use the larger of the two for a more conservative estimate).

The second comparison one should make is between the results from students (shown in blue in the graphs) and from faculty/staff (shown in a shade of red) in the participating school. This comparison reveals whether the two key groups of stakeholders have similar or disparate views of the concepts they are reporting on. Whereas some differences between responses from youth and adults can always be expected, a thorough examination often provides important insights into the dynamics of relationships that exist (or are absent from) between students and faculty/staff.

Each scale summary page is followed by a page showing graphically a third type of comparison – the one between mean scores on the individual survey items comprising each scale. Where similar items were included for students and faculty/staff they will be shown together, but the graphs are always sorted on the student items from the most positive at the top to the least positive (or most negative) at the bottom. Examination of the individual items typically reveals concrete areas within each concept in which the

school is doing better and areas where more work is needed. Again, a pattern of responses from students can be compared to the pattern of responses from faculty/staff.

Finally, two (or three) sets of tables with item frequencies and means are provided to allow for a more traditional reporting of the proportions of participants giving specific responses to each item (e.g., percent giving a “completely agree” and “somewhat agree” response). These results are especially useful for communicating them to parents and other community stakeholders.

## CREE 2.7 Survey Conceptual Matrix

