8 STRENGTHS OF CHARACTER: Assets Needed for a Flourishing Life

1. Lifelong learner and critical thinker
   - Strives to acquire the knowledge that characterizes an educated person
   - Approaches learning as a lifelong process
   - Demonstrates skills of critical analysis
   - Takes seriously the perspectives of others
   - Seeks expert opinion and credible evidence
   - Makes connections and integrates knowledge
   - Generates alternative solutions
   - Demonstrates willingness to admit error and modify thinking.

2. Diligent and capable performer
   - Strives for excellence; gives best effort
   - Demonstrates initiative and self-discipline
   - Knows standards of quality and creates high-quality products; takes pride in work
   - Sets personal goals and assesses progress
   - Perseveres in the face of difficulty.

3. Socially and emotionally skilled person
   - Possesses a healthy self-confidence and a positive attitude
   - Demonstrates basic courtesy in social situations
   - Develops positive interpersonal relationships that include sensitivity to the feelings of others and the capacity for "confrontation"
   - Communicates effectively
   - Works well with others
   - Resolves conflicts fairly
   - Demonstrates emotional intelligence, including self-knowledge and the ability to manage emotions.

4. Ethical thinker
   - Possesses moral discernment, including good judgment, moral reasoning, and ethical wisdom
   - Has a well-formed conscience, including a sense of obligation to do the right thing
   - Has a strong moral identity defined by moral commitments
   - Possesses the moral competence, or "know how," needed to translate discernment, conscience, and identity into effective moral behavior.

5. Respectful and responsible moral agent committed to consistent moral action
   - Respects the rights and dignity of all persons
   - Understands that respect includes the right of conscience to disagree respectfully with others' beliefs or behaviors
   - Possesses a strong sense of personal efficacy and responsibility to do what's right
   - Takes responsibility for mistakes
   - Accepts responsibility for setting a good example and being a positive influence
   - Develops and exercises capacity for moral leadership.

6. Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle
   - Demonstrates self-control across a wide range of situations
   - Pursues physical, emotional, and mental health
   - Makes responsible personal choices that contribute to continuous self-development, a healthy lifestyle, and a positive future.

7. Contributing community member and democratic citizen
   - Contributes to family, classroom, school, and community
   - Demonstrates civic virtues and skills needed for participation in democratic processes
   - Appreciates the nation's democratic heritage and democratic values
   - Demonstrates awareness of interdependence and a sense of responsibility to humanity.

8. Spiritual person crafting a life of noble purpose
   - Considers existential questions ("What is the meaning of life?", "What is happiness?", "What is the purpose of my life?")
   - Seeks a life of noble purpose
   - Formulates life goals and ways to pursue them
   - Cultivates an appreciation of transcendent values such as truth, beauty, and goodness
   - Pursues authentic happiness
   - Possesses a rich inner life
   - Pursues deep, meaningful connections—to others, nature, a higher power, and so on.

—from Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson, Smart & Good High Schools (2005) (www.cortland.edu/character)