


Winter 2-13-2014

# A Student Assessment in Value of Cooperative Education Curriculum Integrated Through Character Development: The Greenwood School

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A Student Assessment in Value of Cooperative Education Curriculum Integrated  
Through Character Development: The Greenwood School

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22 July 2013

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## ABSTRACT

*Key Themes:* Learning Differences/Disabilities (LD), Experiential learning, Cooperative education, Collaborative education, Mentorship theory, Internship programming, Character education, Learning style

Cooperative education programming as a model of teaching to varied learning styles, is based on a small scale school working to teach children to their specific learning styles centered around their brain function strengths and limitations. The Greenwood School is a boarding school located in Putney, VT specializing in teaching boys with academic, social, and behavioral differences. The school caters to about fifty boys from ages ten to eighteen. Within all of the programs operating on this campus, one of the newest is the internship program, which offers off-campus, community based work learning opportunities with adult mentors and small business owners. Over the course of almost two years this program has been evaluated and adapted to students' needs.

This paper looks at the structure of The Greenwood School and then delves into literature in the field of education strategies and different methods to address learning styles. Using student voices of those participating in the internship program, this paper will attempt to measure the value added of this program of cooperative learning and how interactions amongst youth and interested professionals, as well as hands-on interaction effects saturation of learning. Importantly, unlike evaluations of many other education programs, this review of the effectiveness and net impact of the internship program will consider youth participant perspectives to evaluate value added to academic and social learning.

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## **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

For many young people in today's society there are conflicting patterns between the content and style in which they're taught and the manner in which they learn. It is no secret that legislative actions of the past fifty years have really worked against students who's learning style doesn't fall quite in line with the assumed mainstream style and there have been both grassroots and governmental activist movements to help address the discrepancy. As a specific case study, this research will look into a small scale school working to teach children to their specific learning styles and, more specifically, at the school's cooperative education internship program. This case study will be used to explore how we as human beings learn, what teaching styles are effective at reaching multiple learning styles, how adaptive teaching styles can be integrated, and what students' perceive as the value of such programs.

### **A. Case Study: The Greenwood School**

The Greenwood School is a nonprofit residential and day school in Putney, Vermont catering to young men ages eleven to seventeen, in grades six through twelve, requiring additional supports to learning. A small student body of less than fifty students allows for individualized supports and learning plans which students embrace ownership with. The intimate community of The Greenwood School is comfortably nestled in the green mountains on a two hundred acre property enabling faculty and students to broaden the learning environment. As students and adults work together identifying individual students' lagging skills in academics, behaviors, social pragmatics, and life skills, a comprehensive learning plan is created. A small student body also allows for an average one-to-two teacher to student ratio.

The breadth and richness of the Greenwood curriculum has set a standard in the profession among independent LD schools. Students succeed at Greenwood because the program

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is designed to address the needs of each individual student: intellectually, emotionally, creatively, and physically. A full academic program, including language tutorials, science, history, literature, mathematics, art, music, drama, public speaking, and athletics ensures that students are intellectually challenged, creatively inspired, and factually informed. In addition to The Greenwood School's outstanding academic programming, the curriculum includes a number of enriching opportunities through extra curriculars. These include; community service, healthy living club, outdoor club, garden club, team sports, internships, campouts, off campus trips, and ever evolving opportunities.

From these opportunities, individualized learning plans, and close connections with adults, students are able to thrive in an academic setting often for the first time. The motto of The Greenwood School is to: "maximize potential, awaken talents, transform lives". This holistic philosophy to education opens possibilities for students to identify and actively address areas they're concerned with personally, socially, behaviorally, and of course academically. The nurturing environment of The Greenwood School also opens possibilities for educators to express their concerns effectively and work with students collaboratively to solve problems and build skills.

### **B. Internship Programming**

As a new initiative for the 2012-2013 school year The Greenwood School formalized their internship program based on cooperative education models that connected students with impassioned interests to skilled adults locally in corresponding fields. The surrounding areas of Greenwood are small towns full of craftsmen, artisans, tradesmen, and skilled professionals. Outreach for internships is done by the internship coordinator to find well-intentioned and caring adults to mentor and foster the learning of Greenwood students. The adult mentors and intern

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hosts participate in the programming strictly as volunteers, some of which have offered their time, energy, skills, knowledge, and compassion to multiple students throughout the school year. Once intern hosts are acquired, the internship coordinator works with the adult mentors at each location to ensure that program expectations, guidelines for student interactions, and logistics are clearly communicated both ways.

The program itself runs during The Greenwood School's afternoon programming blocks. Specific slots for internships are on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 3:45pm to roughly 5:30pm. This schedule runs for ten weeks through the duration of each school term. The Greenwood School operates on trimesters; September through mid-November, mid-November through mid-March, and mid-March through May with respective breaks throughout so there are three opportunities during the course of the year for boys to apply for an open slot and receive an internship.

At The Greenwood School, student interns have applied on their own accord for pre-set opportunities arranged by the internship coordinator, interviewed for said opportunities, and subsequently been selected for an internship within the local community by the internship coordinator in collaboration with potential hosts. Students are selected based on the depth of their questions, overall attitude and interest, as well as goals for the experience and are matched up based on the criteria of the dean of students, the internship coordinator, and any preset criteria requested by the host specifically. The collaboration is crucial to ensure that each student is the right match for the location, 'job description', and adult mentor.

Aside from the excitement of what is often the first 'work' opportunity, application and interview, or 'job' there is also a huge academic component of the internship program. To begin each intern's experience, they fill out applications, go through a formal interview, and then



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participate in a hands-on professionalism workshop. In the workshop they are introduced to the values of the internship experience as well as expectations of student participants. They are then guided into a dialogue about attitude, professionalism, proper dress, use of appropriate language, asking good questions, and other pertinent topics of work ethic. From there, the students mock an initial 'meet and greet' of their first interactions with their internship hosts serving as an important practice at networking. They then share what each other may have done well and something that could be strengthened. Finally, we discuss questions and concerns or challenges that come out of the activity. They are each then asked to privately write out their own personal goals and expectations of the internship program and of themselves. This includes any challenges that they may face and steps to help them overcome those roadblocks. Then throughout the semester they are asked to reflect on their experiences in relation to their goals and expectations helping to self-actualize their learning.

All assignments throughout the term are shared with the intern host or adult mentor to ensure that on the job tasks and projects fall in line with what each student intern aspires to learn. The intern coordinator administers all assignments and does regular check-ins with both interns and hosts to ensure that the pairings are still beneficial and reciprocal to both parties. The adult mentor or intern host's role is to supervise each intern while on location at their internship, answer their questions, enhance the student's learning goals, and teach the basics of the trade in which they are working. Their role is to also maintain a positive working relationship with each student and continuously provide a safe trusting work environment.

### **C. Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to gauge the value and effectiveness of cooperative education programming through student perceptions within The Greenwood School cooperative

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internship program.

### **1. Needs Assessment.**

It is clear that there is limited research on cooperative education let alone from student perspectives. Most research is also out dated based on control of education legislation and subsequent allocation of funding for such programs. A few research samples even note this themselves as a limiting factor and challenge to earlier research attempts. On a micro level, The Greenwood School would like to see how effective and efficient the program is at upholding it's school motto: maximizing potential, awakening talents, transforming lives and be able to assess it's validity as an educational tool; should it be amended, transformed, enhanced, promoted, cut, etc. as the school continues the transition to meet student needs. Furthermore, the school would like to see the role the program holds in individualized capacity building and character development.

### **2. Inquiries.**

A few background questions informing the research question are: to what extent have cooperative education programs been integrated into mainstream education systems, how have they been received, and how effective are they at their goal of bridging practical skill-based learning and practice to that of academic classroom theory in a context that can be applied to other aspects of life? At the heart of this research however, the questions explored here will be of a micro level to examine The Greenwood School and furthermore, each of the participants. Something to be pondered is the extent to which internships and other cooperative education programs provide students with a solid base for which to grow academically, socially, and personally. More specifically, *to what extent does The Greenwood School's cooperative internship program promote positive overall growth and development of character in student*

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*participants?*

### **D. Project Parameters**

Program participants include student interns who participated in the program, from each trimester, throughout the 2012-2013 school year. The sample includes eleven students out of the twelve interns for the year. The research includes excerpts from each students' written work produced throughout their internship experience as well as surveys of students produced at the end of the school year. Student value will be measured based on evidence in their writing that suggests strength in a particular character trait or positivity in overall growth as an individual. To follow suit to The Greenwood School's character education program, those character traits are as follows: curiosity, gratitude, grit, optimism, resilience, self-control, and zest. These and emerging themes of confidence and success, self-actualization, and honed career aspirations will be further qualifiers of growth and character development.

### **E. Conceptual Framework**

The concepts behind this research project and the manners in which it was implemented have a great deal to do with the background of the researcher. Growing up, I was immersed in an immediate family culture of community. Our family extended further than I understood at the time and to the extent that I could not keep track of. What I did learn however is that when you have the ability to help someone, you do it. I learned this through my parents' actions and activism within their circles and the larger one encompassing the community they created with others. I started formally volunteering my time when I was in elementary school. I would go down to the special education classroom during lunch and recess to engage with students. In high school, I then engaged in a number of community service and service learning projects. In college I volunteered as a teacher at an inner city nonprofit school. I found myself rejuvenated by

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my service and civic engagement with the people and places that I volunteered my time and services. Not only did I take away a broader worldview and sense of confidence in my skills but I learned new ones banked away in my toolbox. I believe that service in and of itself is a tool that I have learned to foster, adapt, and exude through my life endeavors. It is a factor of my identity that is strong and compassionate while impassioning my work and transforming those around me. This is undeniable. I value the face-to-face connections, place-based experiences, and hands-on experiential learning that I have grown from and will continue to throughout my life.

Furthermore, through my experiences I have found a strong connection to young people who fall outside the status quo. Young people who often have a harder struggle in both learning and success. Because of this, I have dedicated much of my own educational and work experiences in the nonformal education of “at-risk” youth. I choose to define this population of “at-risk” as; youth in poverty including cyclical and generational poverty, youth of incarcerated parents, youth within the juvenile justice system, youth of undocumented migrant workers, youth living within gang stricken neighborhoods, youth within the welfare state, and youth with learning disabilities affecting their educational standing and capacity through legislative mandates. The importance of working with this population in an educational program is to attempt to address the social issues that feed into their individual identities or the perceptions of their identities and to instill positivity, strength, and hope for producing greater future selves.

### **F. Pedagogical Framework**

The importance of these interactions is that they instilled in me the positive attributes and values of experiential learning as well as the reinforcement of activism. Experiential Learning after all, allows for:

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“insight gained through the conscious or unconscious internalization of our own or observed interactions, which build upon our past experiences and knowledge: it represents the transformation of most new and significant experiences and incorporates them within a broader conceptual framework.” (Beard & Wilson, 2005)

Experiential learning is essentially the coupling of theory and practice, reflection and action. It therefore, “helps us to understand how one takes an experience and then re-organises and categorises one’s knowledge in order to see the relevance of the experience, hence [learning] from it” (Garavan & Murphy, 2001). Without taking an active role in my community or in the slums of Kenya, I never would have expanded my worldview, learned new skills, or practiced living knowledge of human culture and behavior. These internships served as the foreground for my academic growth because I was learning experientially and the biggest benefit was that of cooperation, not just as a virtue of kindness, but as a mindset and skill cohesively bonding forces.

Perhaps this is why a new phenomenon in teaching, in an effort to increase student engagement, has evolved into what is called cooperative education programming. Cooperative Education is based on the combination of experiential learning and cooperation in work environments. It is often broken down into various career exploration programs based on principles of service learning, civic engagement, and practical experiential learning. These programs can include; internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, job shadowing, technical or vocational preparation as well as place-based learning, out-of-schooling, unlearning, or universalism. In essence, cooperative education or cooperative learning principles can be defined as “a set of alternatives to traditional instruction systems” (Manning & Lucking, 1991) that “allow students to experience the connection between education and work [which] may result in

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increased interest in class work” (Garavan & Murphy, 2001). Garavan and Murphy also express that “[Cooperative education] aids in the development of the students’ cognitive skills, self-confidence, and personal- and work-related knowledge” (2001). Therefore, cooperative education programs supplement mainstream education with civic engagement and activism. In fact, the core of cooperative learning has “roots in social and psychological research and theory that focused on cooperation versus competition” (1991) from as early as the 1990’s and showed that “programs encourage students of all performance levels to work together toward group goals” (1991).

Cooperative education programs therefore not only have the ability to empower individuals based on their interests but, unite peers and passionate individuals to work and learn towards common goals which, in turn, has the potential increase academic, social, and community engagement or interest across the board. This in itself is an astounding lesson to experience and self-actualize. This very essence is what had peaked my interest in the position I landed with The Greenwood School. A major part of my position entailed not only spearheading but also developing an internship program from the ground up. The school had been exploring cooperative education programming as a means to connect boys to their passions and talents as well as awaken those they never knew they had. With my aforementioned experiences and passions for such a model, I began to develop an experiential cooperative internship program with the hope that it would be transformational. By using Freirean principles, I created a foundational praxis by not only introducing students to service learning in the community but by also tactfully placing measures for student goal setting, dialogue, personal reflections, gratitude, teamwork, and further action back into their experience. I did this because,

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“By setting a regular cycle of reflection and action in which [the] group [is] constantly celebrating their successes and analysing critically the causes of mistakes and failures, they can become more and more capable of effectively transforming their daily life” (Hope & Timmel, 1995).

I presume that while society’s systems don’t always reflect a valued connection in face-to-face exchanges, the people of the same society may very well place value to it. I further assume that face-to-face exchanges, which actively break up the monotony of work and life, can hold great value in its effects on individual attitude and worldview. Furthermore, as it will be argued here, face-to-face interactions that rest in a purposeful exchange of knowledge and skills, as seen in cooperative education programming, has the ability to transform the individuals participating in such an exchange.

This is the very phenomenon explored here and questioned under the framework of society at large as a comparison to an individualized approach at The Greenwood School. Furthermore, research findings will then be used as justifications for systemic need of face-to-face curriculum adjustments through cooperative education models. These relationships begin at home, expand throughout schools, and are based in the foundations of healthy communicative exchanges as well as stakeholder buy-in through active participation. For the purposes of this paper, those techniques will be formally referred to under the educational models they correlate with.

### **Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEWED**

#### **A. Overview & Objectives**

In looking at the broader background questions it is important to cover a few bases before one can argue that cooperative education is an effective pedagogical path outside of student

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perceptions. Therefore, this analysis begins by exploring how we as humans learn, especially young people in stages of development, followed by exploring techniques that address varied learning styles, and finally examples of successfully implemented learning programs that are considered non-formal methods as well as outside the current systemic education philosophy. The literature reviewed here will be done so thematically to best explore perspectives and approaches in order to provide a platform to explain changing variables and techniques that attribute to learning in today's youth. This discussion will lead us in to a further understanding of developmental stages in youth, the importance of nurturing development, and ways to teach collaboratively *with* young people, rather than *at* young people (the current and longstanding method and undermining philosophy in education).

It is important to first understand how today's children learn, what positive initiatives and approaches address that learning, as well as how they've been integrated. It is by no means assumed that there is a cookie cutter answer nor that that approach is even effective or plausible systemically. It is however suggested that, *when student learning is nurtured by adults and comprehensive to include all learning styles, students feel more in tune with educational goals and more confident in their abilities to both learn and contribute.* Let us explore.

### **B. Literature on Question**

#### **1. How We Learn.**

Since the emergence of science and perhaps even before, the human brain has served great intrigue to mankind. For it's size, the number of notable parts from hemispheres to lobes, the spinal cord to the basal ganglia, cerebellum to hypothalamus, amygdala to executive function and every nerve synapse in between; it's extensive. Even today, scientists devote their entire careers to the study of the human brain in hopes of determining how it is that we gather and



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process informational inputs; again, there is no cookie cutter. The truth is, no two brains look or operate exactly the same. This often overlooked fact then translates into learning quite interestingly. While it is known that we all perceive sensuous inputs differently it never seems to fully translate that this means that we all also receive the same exact inputs from shared experiences differently. Therefore, we obviously learn differently based on what we experience or perceive we experience in those moments and every moment of our lives. We all go to school to learn the same subjects, the same information, and often in the same deposited manner. Yet, our individual brains and their operations are rarely accounted for in formal education systems.

### *a. The Brain.*

According to Dr. Mel Levine in Keeping A Head in School, we all learn differently because of the manners in which we receive inputs followed by what we do with them and how. All day every day, different parts of our brains turn on and off to naturally increase our attention, heighten different senses, organize and store inputs, and of course question and critically analyze everything. These responses however, are not automatic for all and require skills and processes within our brain functions to get the work done in a timely manner. This is not nearly the case however. Most people have strengths and weaknesses in brain function that transcend into daily tasks. Some are visual absorbers, some auditory, some experiential, some sequential, some written or verbal re-callers, some creative, some you name it and there's someone out there with that learning style. Within these functional categories there are infinite factors and variables that can change the power of skills in our ability to perform; the presence and strength of certain skills ultimately affect how we receive information, what we gain from it, and how or if we retain any at all. Whether one has strengths in these skills or not, it's not a matter of left or right brain functioning as most think, it's a matter of time and whether or not skills have the

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opportunity to develop *when* they are supposed. Time is essential; skills build because correlated brain cells are stimulated by experience which in turn helps dendrites grow strong and myelin insulate the message pathways. These are the basic roots of human learning and are essential in understanding the success of individuals both in school and in other areas of life (Levine, 1990).

In 2005, a group of neurologists published a fantastic collaborative study in *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* about the developmental course of human brain development. In the study, the authors highlight the value and important of experience based synapse formation during childhood and adolescence. In fact, brain connectivity is directly linked to cognitive development and that while it increases with age there are caps to myelination (neurological insulation of brain pathways for message transfers), a notion previously discarded. By tracking learning developments and maturation of brain functioning in children and adolescence, the team was able to identify and distinguish between neuroanatomical changes and physiological changes in cognitive maturation. While they did not measure influences that concern nature versus nurture in development they did note that cross-sectional studies may show how external factors such as environment and lifestyle may impact development as well as internalized responses from the amygdala or emotional center of the brain (Casey, Tottenham, Liston & Durston, 2005).

Jane M. Healy, author of *Endangered Minds*, worries that the lack of systemic acknowledgements about diverse brain functioning has left society assuming that everyone's processing is even keel. Obviously, they're not. Her concerns are focused around societal advancements that actually hinder brain development at times ideal in young brains to expand in areas of self-awareness, critical thinking, perspective taking, and the list goes on. Her biggest concern is that our ever-changing society is now actively teaching young people to *not think*. Because growing brains are physically shaped by their experiences we can link various types of

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experiences to strong brain development and vice versa. In this extensive look at brain development, technology is criticized as a core staple in the popular culture. In fact, technology has actually begun to replace oral exchanges, reading, and thoughtful writing because of the way it both excites and trances our brains. Now, for adults, we've already learned how to spread our attention throughout the day, be critical of what we're absorbing, and limit technology as desired. For young people, it's quite the opposite and in fact by engaging in the same manner as adults, young people are actually stunting their own development. Technology does not promote language skills because it happens in colorful rapid delivery that young brains can't process. While it teaches words it fails to teach the meaning behind them, appropriate usage, syllable sounds, or analysis of content. In fact, if young brains absorb too much technology they miss out on key development periods for various aspects of language and subsequent reasoning. These development delays and lagging skills then show up later down the line – a prevalent and spreading epidemic in the United States (Healy, 1999).

According to Howard Gardner, everyone has the capacity and potential for learning abilities regardless of delays or lagging skills. Gardner deems that potential as intelligence: 'An intel-ligence is an ability to solve a problem or to fashion a product which is valued in one or more cultural settings'. Gardner expanded this notion to formulate his theory of multiple intelligences, the concept that everyone fits into a category, or multiple categories based on their ability to learn and subsequent learning style (the correlation between the processing of inputs and the application of learning). Identified learning styles include: linguistic "word smart", logical-mathematical "number/reasoning smart", spatial "picture smart", bodily-kinesthetic "body smart", musical "music smart", interpersonal "people smart", intrapersonal "self smart", and naturalist "nature smart". Gardner stresses that not

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matter which learning style a student falls into they need to be part of the learning process, the learner must both come first and have buy-in to what they're learning. The learner must also be taught through a larger instructional approach addressing a variety of intelligences (Gardner, 1987).

### *b. Nurture.*

In Jane M. Healy's most recent book, Different Learners, she takes a more in depth approach in looking at the way our environments shape learning styles and abilities. In fact, Healy rests a great deal of emphasis on the role of parents in the household and teachers in the classroom as they are often the most influential in creating meaningful experiences; be they positive or negative ones. Of course, from a parental perspective, nurturing begins before children are even born. While brain development inside the womb progresses, the fetus is highly susceptible to movement, rhythms, sounds, tone, and before the infant is birthed all five senses have already come alive. Based on how the child's environment is experienced also directly correlates to how that child learns. Just because something is genetic does not mean that it will be prominent if the environment fosters skills to counteract that aspect of biology. Stressful environments often have serious implications for a child's ability to learn as does the absence of love. Helping children to foster their talents and build skills only improves their academic, social, and personal successes in life. Because our brains are plastic and ever changing, these talents and skills can change over time especially depending on how often they are used. Whether a child seems out of place now or not, it's the unique thinkers that end up in some of the most creative and important societal roles so time should be given for them to explore their environments and their roles within it (Healy, 2011).

We Make the Road by Walking is a spoken book by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire,

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comparing their life long learning and educational philosophies. Both men agree that linguistics is a fundamental measurement of a child's success. While reading increases literacy which in turn increases critical analysis of experiential reality, active participation in reality is a fundamental building block of development, acquisition of knowledge, and future applications of knowledge and skill sets. Therefore, when a child is 'word smart' the cognitive capacity is only enhanced by the expansion of language learning. Furthermore, the learning process of language learning must then be nurtured by promoting question-based learning, reciprocal teaching, collaborative problem solving, place-based education, and an acceptance that teachers learn from their students just as much as they learn from their teachers. A child's learning style must then be nurtured. It is the role of adults overall however, to provide the nurturing environments that allow for young people to foster their own curiosity, appreciation, and love of learning. Both visionaries also place a great deal of emphasis on the realities that much of life's learning takes place outside the classroom and is therefore a process of out-of-schooling which may or may not be fostered through direct guidance (Horton & Freire, 1990).

### *c. Nature.*

Aside from the stage of development that our brains are in at any given point in time, the process of learning is an ever and ongoing phenomena. From the moment that we are born, and arguably before, we begin learning sensuously from the multitudes of inputs received through our senses each second of every day. In David Abram's The Spell of the Sensuous, he maps the historical cultural evolution of learning from oral cultures through pictorial cultures up to the creation of the alphabet and in to today's modern media frenzied techno-sphere. The major proponent of these changes is language; how it's spoken, written, verbalized, it's meanings, symbols, nuances, usage, context, etc. Even today, language is continually altered. With the

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addition of the media we are even more stimulated than ever before. This stimulation however, is blocking the way for other inputs, inputs that are crucial to childhood development and it completely disregards critical thinking skills, question based learning, and experientialism. Historically, humans learned by mimicking nature, sharing stories passed through generations, connecting to their natural environments as well as their senses and their experience of those environments. Human anatomy, and more specifically the brain, was designed to learn through the senses and build upon it's own knowledge base through that continuous sensuous experience. Today's technology numbs us to these holistic experiential phenomena and pin us down to a limited experience of the world. We all too often even mock those cultures and peoples, still existing today, who rest their entire knowledge base of the world, it's creation, their role within it, and their history on this very concept (Abram, 1998).

According to Bill Plotkin, author of Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche, our relationship with nature begins even before we are born. When we begin to hit adolescence, that relationship molds a course for our adult future we are often seemingly disconnected from but is simultaneously profound in the mapping of our worldview through the lenses of life. During the volatile years of childhood and early adolescence, our brains create four facets of the Self or subpersonalities. In short, he deems north as the nurturing generative adult which is kept safe by the loyal soldier; south is the wild indigenous one, containing the wounded or fragile child; east is the innocent sage, along with addicts and escapists; and west is the muse-beloved, with the shadow and shadow selves. These subpersonalities hold immense powers of consciousness, empathy, compassion, and connection but are often not understood or utilized until well into adulthood if ever. Plotkin believes however, with the right focus and guidance anyone can tap into the knowledge and resources of their subpersonalities, which are driven by nature and

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reconnect. After all, we all crave those connections and can acknowledge when and where they happen. He furthermore, praises wilderness programming, outdoor education, and nonformal techniques that do just that; awaken the brain. (Plotkin, 2013).

### **2. Teaching to Learning.**

Now that the science behind how we learn has been established it is important to look at the education system. This serves as the formalized and often uniform system for teaching individuals specific standards and foundations of popular academic subjects such as math, reading, and writing. But, does our education system really account for the learning styles just explored? Does the education system adapt its methods to the individual brains in each classroom? Does it cover the material needed by young brains at specific points of development? My assumption is that systemically the answer is no. There are however, a number of existing teaching styles that address these individual learning styles, which have been implemented in both public and private educational settings. Let's explore.

#### *a. Communicative Delivery.*

Dr. Ross Greene is deemed an expert in his field for understanding the various manners in which we learn, training teachers to work with a classroom full of varied learners, and for creating a model that best incorporates educational goals, collaborative communication, skill building, and empathetic understanding. In Greene's book Lost at School, he focuses his discussion on how adults often address students in and out of the classroom based on the idea that the adult, as the authority figure, is always correct. This involves adults imposing their will and concerns on young people. A secondary approach adults often take is to lower their expectations of young people when they aren't complying with adult will. Neither of these, Greene argues, helps young people develop lagging skills that appear through symptoms often

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deemed as laziness, opposition, defiance, and the like. In order to best address the root of these symptoms Greene argues that adults must help young people understand what skills they are lacking and help them to learn those skills. This crosses academics skills to social and behavioral which all come in to play both in the classroom and outside of it. He therefore has created and implemented what he calls “Plan B” which is a Collaborative Problem Solving tool in which adults work with young people, adults, and parents to build working relationships to help young people address concerns around lagging skills and developmental delays. By bringing students in to the process, adults are no longer imposing their will or concerns but rather addressing the young person’s as well. Simultaneously, the young person is learning to; trust those adults, show more respect, work on communication skills, problem solve, make plans, follow through, and hopefully, eventually success. Green deems this process to be an important component to student success because it provides an opportunity for young people to be heard and to have ownership over their own learning. This process has also been proven to decrease the need for traditional punitive measures, increase test scores, and relieve pressure on all parties, not to mention improve young people’s self esteem (Greene, 2009).

Much like Ross Greene’s Plan B, LouAnne Johnson believes in guiding young people to a place where they can communicate what is going on for them and assures them of support. In Johnson’s book, School is Not a Four-Letter Word, she emphasizes the importance of active listening and guidance to build a rapport with students creating a place of trust. She also emphasizes that no one wants to fail or fall and while it happens its important for adults to remind themselves of this elusive fact when young people present difficulties. The role of adults is to provide the language and safe space for young people to identify their setbacks and problem solve solutions rather than jump to disciplinary action, which she feels is a major fault in public



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education. This technique is something Johnson refers to as ‘pass it on’, more commonly known as paying it forward. A few key tips for this technique include: remembering there are reasons for everything children do, try to separate the child from their behavior, love them loudly – praise, praise, praise, this is not the time or place for winners and losers, remember your own childhood, be the kind of person you want them to be, and listen (Johnson, 1997).

### *b. Awakening Intrigue.*

Dr. Richard Selznick’s School Struggles is a brilliant how to book for parents and teachers in helping young people awaken their senses and bust through their shut-down mental patterning that often arises from constant over-stimulation. By giving parents and educators a whole picture look at their child’s developmental phases, potential genetic influences, and environmental factors, adults are able to not only understand the underlying struggles for each child but help identify tools that build skills addressing the struggles. A number of suggestions that address children’s academic, social, and behavioral needs include; free play, limited technology use, one-on-one and group conversations, set aside family time, involvement in decision making, collaboration rather than dictation. These techniques help young people find value in themselves, boost self-esteem, and encourage confidence so that they start to not only learn but apply themselves in ways they never have before (Selznick, 2012).

In the classroom, there are other techniques that help alleviate individual boredoms and re-engage a student’s curiosity and love of learning. According to Judy Willis, a blogger for Edutopia, teachers can help re-engage the amygdala so that information gets processed by our executive function rather than sent to the lower 80% of our brains due to over stimulation of the same inputs, which in turn, create boredom. The way she suggests to do this is by teaching to each student’s achievable challenge level. In other words, if a student has mastered a specific

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skill in math class then they are no longer challenged to come up with a prediction or guess to the material being presented – they already know the answer – and desire being challenged. Their brains therefore are not fully stimulated positively and the student can appear bored or spacey. In order to keep students engaged and intrigued in what's being taught, educators need to keep them guessing, predicting, and curious. Along the way, she suggests intrinsic rewards through; color-coding important information, acknowledgement of success or mastery, using classroom tools where students can guess and adjust as needed i.e. individualized white boards, pairing students together with similar achievable challenge levels, self-assessments, and constant immediate feedback (Willis, 2011).

### *c. Experiencing as Experiential.*

The manner in which inputs are received and processed along with the brain's effectiveness at categorizing, processing, and recalling are directly linked not only to a child's developmental stage but also their developing learning style. In Ronald and Serbrenia Sims' book, The Importance of Learning Styles: Understanding the Implications of Learning, Course Design, and Education, they create a demand for understanding individuals within the learning process. Their acknowledgement that everyone learns differently is founded in the beliefs that teachers and educators should adapt their methods of delivery to accommodate multiple learning styles in one class. Furthermore, they argue that students should be taught to know the strengths of their own learning styles so that they may then adjust as needed throughout both formalized learning and life's experiential opportunities. Of course, a furthered argument made here is that if taught and adapted early enough then success in college and beyond exponentially increases. Sims and Sims acknowledge however that teaching individuals and conforming classrooms to

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today's learners isn't necessarily enough for all. There will still be students in need of more flexible and individualized learning plans (Sims & Sims, 1995).

Place-based education is a teaching model that connects classrooms to local communities. In David Sobel's book, Place-Based Education, value is emphasized on reconnecting students to their immediate environments through the communities that surround them. At a time where technology is at an all time high, young people assume being plugged in means that they're connected. Sobel argues it's quite the opposite. This education model uses communities and the environment at large as a starting point to teach concepts in various subjects across curriculum. Emphasis is placed on hands-on work, face-to-face interactions, and real-world experiences. These experiences better equip individuals to be stewards, civil servants, conservers, mindful citizens, and critical thinkers. The approach has also been shown to improve academic achievements, enhance student appreciation, and promote active and engaged lifestyles (2005).

In the U.S. education debate, Diane Ravitch, author of The Death and Life of the Great American School System, argues that the key to student success comes through reconnecting students to values and civility within their own communities. Legislation since the 1940's tried to decentralize education authoritatively but in doing so has separated students from their community schools and furthermore separated student learning away from character and on to a set statistical measurement of math and writing. Ravitch argues that community schools are often a staple of community learning and a connection of community members in valuing their communities. The building itself, symbolizes strength and progress of a community by teaching the young people of that community the value of learning, governance, civility, character, and integrity. According to Ravitch community based schools only enhance learning because it expands on pre-existing connections and fosters even more thus adding to the human capital of

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entire communities (2011).

### **3. The Three C's.**

So far, we've broken down the brain and the senses as they are the primary receptors and experiencers of inputs. This acknowledgement was then rolled in to learning styles based on development and use of reptilian tools. Admittedly, the systemic methodology of teaching no longer suits societal needs or individual learning styles so we examined a number of examples that help correct this imbalance in the classroom. What about outside the classroom? How can we as educators further student learning and experience of the world around them through alternative academic programming? The answers are cooperation and collaboration. As you will see, these models not only teach important social and communication skills but they also further promote intrigue or interest in learning by opening new channels of experience and reflection.

#### *a. Cooperation.*

In the 1990's Cheryl Cates and Patricia Jones revitalized Herman Schneider's turn of the century cooperative education model in their book Learning Outcomes: The Educational Value of Cooperative Education. The basis of the model is to integrate classroom learning into practical application or provide opportunities to students for 'the realization of theory through its practical implication'. The model provides a holistic look at how to connect student interests and curiosity for learning to practical skill based guidance in a work setting with veteran mentors. The heart of the program aims to build programming around principles of effective student learning, tie the cooperative experience to academic goals, develop learning worksites, promote activities to guide student learning, and identify student learning outcomes developed through the cooperative experience. Overall, the point of cooperative education is to consider the student and motivate them to be involved in their own learning (Cates & Jones, 1999).

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### *b. Collaboration.*

Collaborative learning as a means of engaging students more deeply in the subject matter is how Kenneth Bruffee, author of Collaborative Learning and “The Conversation of Mankind” describes the technique behind the philosophy. Bruffee and other scholars began shaping the model in the 1980’s as a means to an end other than competition. The belief was that all could share a stake not only in learning but especially in problem solving through learning. He and other scholars began by creating opportunities in the classroom and through course work in which groups of students were dependent upon one another and had to adapt experientially to tasks, assignments, and problems so that the outcome was a unanimous and equitable one. Essentially, we all learn from one another and Bruffee believed education had hit a point where people were no longer able to engage in that natural process – education had shifted to a depository method. Collaborative education works to restore the linkage between cognitive thought and reflection to social forms and convention of conversation where students not only share opinions backed with knowledge or experience but persuade, negotiate, teach, and learn within that process (Bruffee, 1984).

### *c. Character.*

A newer development in education philosophy and reform circles around the idea of character and character development. In Paul Tough’s book How Children Succeed, the importance of nurturing children and adolescents is compounded in the belief that nurtured low-stress environments allow for skill development in character; a clear indicating factor of life success. Character strengths of grit, optimism, resilience, curiosity, zest, self-control, and gratitude are the core character traits believed to be linked with the success of young people especially in environments where they can practice leadership and independence in situations

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where they're knocked down or facing adversity. Tough argues that the nurturing of these qualities is the responsibility of all members of society not just guardians. A large emphasis is placed on the responsibility of the education system from pre-K up through college to be in support of character development providing many examples of what schools and programs are already doing to achieve this (Tough, 2012).

Marvin Berkowitz further explains that character education must be comprehensive and systemically integrated throughout the school or organization. Core acknowledgements to his view on character education are that Berkowitz says it doesn't matter which character traits you're trying to exemplify to students as much as it matters that they're modeled and reinforced as often and through as many structures as possible. Providing students with ample opportunities to both grow and express their character is equally as important (Berkowitz, 2002).

### **C. Literature Conclusions**

While there is no clear cookie cutter for individual development, learning, teaching technique, or universal programming, there are clear innovations being made in the field of education, both formally and nonformally. One clear indicator from the research is that there is a growing shift in mindset about how we look at the system of education and further more how we look at students within that system. It seems as though shifts already taken are working to better accommodate students' learning but fitting education to students rather than the historical mold of shuffling students into education based on arbitrary qualifiers like age. This shift in mindset opens up doorways of possibility and seemingly involves students, their learning styles, opinions, and interests in the process allowing for much more autonomy and hopefully bolstering character through a love of learning.

## **Chapter 3: LEARNING THEORY AND THE GREENWOOD RESEARCH PROJECT**

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What does all of this learning theory have to do with The Greenwood School? Quite a bit. Character development is a central theme at The Greenwood School and it is supported through faculty cooperation, collaboration, and value in the core character traits promoted throughout the school. Not only does The Greenwood School create and run its programming under the theories of cooperative education and collaboration in the way it looks at course work and subjects studied throughout the year but it allows for crossover of material learned, vocabulary, and major themes between science, social studies, and tutorial classes. Teachers are therefore encouraged to collaborate on readings and written assignments as well as timing and delivery of lesson plans. The creation of the schools internship program therefore fell right in line with the school's educational philosophy but took the ideas of cooperative education one step further.

The internship program relies on cooperative education as it connects students and their interests to place-based learning environments to experientially act on future career goals, skills, and character development. Through mentorship on site and collaboration with Greenwood schoolteachers, students work on field-based learning, which is then applied through written work and reflection in the classroom. Students' advisors also work cooperatively in this process from the start helping students identify if an internship is something desired, if so then which one and why, and follow-up with them throughout the learning process. The internship coordinator ensures that each student is 'maximizing their potential' in a safe and supported environment with invested adults. Students are the core yet one missing link from the literature reviewed is the presence of student voice; connecting us back to the importance and purpose of the Greenwood research project.

### **A. Project Methodology**

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The Greenwood School served as the context for this research, as the purpose of the study is to understand to what extent students value the cooperative internship program to the extent that it fosters character development in them. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research gives voice to multiple perspectives and levels of understanding. This mixed-methods approach is appropriate because it combines quantitative and qualitative methods that “can create a synergistic project whereby one method enables the other to be more effective, and, together both methods provide a fuller understanding of the research problem” (Leavy & Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Through The Greenwood School internship program, student perceptions on the value of the internship experience have been gathered especially as it pertains to their assessment of personal growth through experiential learning environments and the impact of that growth on their own measurement of self-worth and future outlook. Research has been gathered through a number of tools in order to look deeper into the research questions at hand. Student assignments, produced as a component of the internship program, have been collected, coded, and analyzed for themes that address the research questions and assumptions. Additionally, students have been asked to answer a survey for the end of the school year as a final reflection on the internship experience. Adult mentors have also been asked to complete an exit survey for the school year based on their participation, perceptions of the program, and observances of each intern they hosted throughout the year. Major theories applied to data collected are: character education, mentorship theory, cooperative education.

### **1. Data Collection Tools.**

There is a huge academic component through the internship program at The Greenwood School. For most students, this is the first job opportunity they have ever applied for so they fill



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out an application (Appendix A) and then participate in a one-on-one interview (Appendix B) with the internship coordinator. Students are expected to complete a number of assignments throughout the term once accepted into a position for which they've applied. Interns, once selected, are asked to write out their goals and expectations (Appendix C) of the program, both of themselves and their experience. Throughout the term they are then asked to write a number of self-reflections (Appendix D) on their goals, their performance, and the overall experience. This assignment is perhaps the most important and valuable to the program because students are asked to critically examine themselves and their growth especially in relation to their own goals. At the end of the term, students are then asked to write a formal thank you letter (Appendix E) to their adult mentor.

All assignments throughout the term were shared with the intern host/adult mentor to ensure that on the job tasks and projects fall in line with what the student intern aspired to learn. The intern coordinator administered all assignments and did regular check-ins with both the interns and the hosts to ensure that the pairings were still beneficial and reciprocal to both parties. The adult mentor/intern host role is to supervise each intern while on location at their internship, answer their questions, follow the student's learning goals, and teach the basic of the trade in which they are working.

As a more formalized assessment tool of the program in its first year, both for the schools' assessment and for the purposes of this research, the students have then completed an exit interview (Appendix F) followed by a final student survey (Appendix G) at the end of the school year as a final comprehensive self-analysis on the overall impact of the internship experience. The adult mentors and intern hosts have also been asked to participate in this research project via survey (Appendix H) to get an alternative perspective on student growth as

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well as the mentorship aspect on quality and value of programming; not to mention mentorship motivations to participate.

Student assignments and written work serves as the qualitative data to this research while the student surveys serve as the quantitative data. Data was collected over the course of one year through parallel data collection techniques. As noted, student participants were asked to complete both quantitative written assignments as well as a qualitative survey at the close of their internship experience.

As the sole conductor of all internship assignments, interviews, and surveys, the research has been able to maintain close consistency in the delivery of information as well as the clarification of questions to all parties. Both the initial applicant interviews as well as the exit interviews have been done on an individualized basis. To ensure uniformity, the question elaborations have been written after each question on the survey so that each student receives the same clarification. The implementation of the student survey has been administered to all students together at one time to ensure that participant questions are answered uniformly. The research has also served as the sole executor of consent forms sitting down with students and families to answer any and all questions as the consent forms were explained.

### **2. Data Analysis.**

First, all of the students' writing assignments were compiled into single documents so that all of student one's work was together as well as student two and so on. Second, the qualitative data in each student's written assignments has been coded by character traits of The Greenwood School's character education program found within and between participant responses. These themes are based on response criteria to academic, personal, and social growth as well as underlying language that places positive or negative value on the experience identified

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throughout the first six assignments (seen in Appendices A through F). Student perceptions have been used to determine not only the value they place on the program but, how relevant it was to their current outlook on life, view of themselves, and effectiveness at fostering their original goals set at the very beginning.

Their assessments combined with the adult mentors/internship hosts will provide for a comprehensive look at the reciprocal nature of such programs, how and why people choose to participate, and the intrinsic value that is placed on such experiences. Both the student and adult surveys have been quantified through graphical analysis. Student surveys have been analyzed differently from the adults as they display more quantitative information than the qualitative course assignments. This information is correlated into graphs and charts to look at individual student progress in comparison to themes in written work.

All student participant names have been removed and replaced with a number; all demographic information such as age and grade has also been removed. Those numbers and corresponding participant names, are known only to the research and were assigned at random. When it came time to code the data collected there were so many common themes in participant responses that in order to create further consistency both within the research project and in connection to The Greenwood School itself, the school's seven character traits of their character education program were selected. The codes used are therefore; *self-control, grit, resilience, curiosity, zest, gratitude, and optimism*. Because the school adopted these character traits to map students' character development in hopes of reinforcing a foundation for a happy, healthy, fulfilled life, it only seemed fitting to utilize the same character traits for coding student participants' assessment of the cooperative internship programming integrated into the school's curriculum.

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One of the seven character codes was assigned to words and phrases when there was either a word association or the text evoked a connection to that specific character code.

Synonyms were also prevalent and fell into word associations with the themes of this paper including: cooperative education, experiential learning, personal growth, and honed career aspirations.

These findings were also then compared to other student survey responses to see trends that reflect the overall response to the program. As a measure of quality and value, these student perceived trends were evaluated along the five-point scale that is associated with the scaling on the survey itself. If multiple students responded with “increased greatly” for example, to specific questions or a majority overall, it has been used as an indicator that the program was effective at it’s goal to “maximize potential, awaken talents, and transform lives”.

### **B. Greenwood Research Findings & Evidentiary Support**

The data supports the research’s assumptions that student who participate in The Greenwood School cooperative internship program not only enhance their knowledge and skills base in an area of interest but also grow on a personal level and thus strengthen in character. It is evident in the data that student participants not only value the program but attribute their experiences from the program as providing them more confidence, an overall sense of accomplishment, and clearer career aspirations. Many also noted a great value in the opportunity to connect with individuals in the local community; to have a working relationship with them that for many has extended outside of their internships. The following data is all in reference to the research foundational query: to what extent do student perceptions on the value of the internship experience, as it pertains to their equivocation of personal growth through experiential learning environments and the impact of that growth on their own measurement of self-worth

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and future outlook, connect to concrete measures of character development.

Perceived value of The Greenwood School internship program was measured through the students' expression of gratitude throughout their writing. Through the expression of gratitude many students summed up the overall impact the experience had on them. This was done on an individual basis and was then correlated together to get a sense of overall growth in experience from the participant pool. Results are as follows with individual growth broken down in Appendix I for your reference:

Of the seven character development traits used for student tracking at The Greenwood School and as codes in this research, five became prominent while two were too difficult to track and therefore have no data associated with them. The two omitted were grit and zest as it would be hard with the limited data in assignments to assess any grit or equivocate personal zest. The five prominent codes therefore became; curiosity, gratitude, optimism, resilience, and self-control. Within and between each student participants' reflections and acknowledgements there were a few key recurring subthemes that also emerged. These subthemes include: experiential learning, cooperative education, mentorship, self-awareness & self-actualization, confidence & success, and honed career aspirations also referred to as positive future outlook.

Amalgamated Learning Themes, Table 12

<b>Experiential Learning</b>	<b>Cooperative Education</b>	<b>Mentorship</b>
<p>"I think that I'm doing good and paying attention more than I do in class sometimes" #10</p> <p>"By paying attention to what you said while doing something I was able to learn the best" #9</p> <p>"It gives you kind of what a job might be like except maybe a little</p>	<p>"It affected my attitude by being able to work with other people and be helpful and able to make work friends which made me feel good" #9</p> <p>"It was a positive experience because I</p>	<p>"My mentor has been helping by letting me work by myself on some things which makes me feel trustworthy" #9</p> <p>"It was hard for me at first to know what I was able to do and what I was not able to do [with the kids]. Asking you for help, helped me to figure out okay</p>

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bit easier and there’s nothing too mandatory about it that you have to do but, instead of doing work you kind of learn, like, you’re not just taught in the beginning, well I guess you learn some in the beginning, but, you learn from the whole experience too” #6	got a lot out of it and it was a real relationship with everyone who worked there – it wasn’t like I wasn’t included” #3	ways to be around the kids” #8 “ Getting to work on cars is something that I wanted to do for a while not and I’m glad that I got to do it here with you guys, you were so helpful, thank you for the great experience” #7
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As seen in Table 12, students identified various accounts of learning and appreciation of that learning as well as appreciation for the learning environment and the role of their mentor in their overall learning experience. This table shows a testament to the educational theories explored in this research: experiential learning, cooperative education, and mentorship in which six student participants clearly placed value in one or more of these emergent themes.

Amalgamated Personal Growth Themes, Table 13

<b>Confidence &amp; Success</b>	<b>Self-Actualization/Awareness</b>	<b>Honed Career Aspirations</b>
<p>“[The experience] also made me feel like I could go out of Greenwood and learn things in the community – learn about the real world” #9</p> <p>“[The experience] gave me more confidence, a sense of pride, and success” #9</p> <p>“I think I’m more confident because there were things I could have made a mistake on, some things I’d didn’t know about, but from this experience those mistakes I could have made in the future won’t happen because of this knowledge I’ve gained” #3</p> <p>“Being the first one gave me confidence and made me feel good about myself” #1</p>	<p>“I will always have a good attitude about it and be happy to do it and try my best” #7</p> <p>“One thing that has been good is the feeling to have helped someone who was in need of help” #6</p> <p>“I want to be more independent” #5</p> <p>“The way to overcome fear is by just taking it one step at a time” #2</p> <p>“It makes me feel good that I’m helping out several people” #1</p>	<p>“When I grow up I want to follow my dream which is to work with autistic kids” #11</p> <p>“I will use the skills and knowledge you taught me on the family farm and maybe as a job in the future” #9</p> <p>“This experience will really help me with future experiences because I have always wanted to major in technology in college” #3</p>

Evidence is compounded in Table 13 where students identified various means of personal growth through the development of confidence and sense of success or accomplishment,

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testaments to self-awareness and self-actualization, as well as honed career aspirations implying a positive future outlook. In total, eight student participants placed a value on these emergent themes. Overall, most of the program participants identified growth in one or more of these areas and if it wasn't identified in writing it was referenced on their individual survey.

From the prevalence of these themes in combination with the character development tables it is clear that the intrinsic consequence is the equivalence of value within and for the program itself. This carries in line with literature findings of similar educational programming that follows models of experiential learning, cooperative education, and mentorship theory. In support of those findings, the student participants of The Greenwood School internship program for the 2012-2013 school year also gained the irrefutable maturation and increased character development suggested in those findings; confidence, self-awareness, self-actualization, self-esteem, positive future outlook, honed career aspirations, a sense of connection and meaning, self-control.

To solidify this point let's take a look at the student participants' survey values against one other, as opposed to against themselves as seen above. For starters, of the 30 questions asked on the survey, for a total of 330 answers, there were only 3 answers ranked as 'decreased', less than one percent (.009), and they were each marked for a different item. Interestingly enough, the questions with the greatest positive response were for personal leadership and creativity as developed attributes with 64% and 73% 'increased greatly' respectively. Furthermore, of the 30 questions, 13 of them had 82% or higher marked as either 'increased greatly' or 'increased somewhat' showing positive impact for growth. The questions with an 82% positive response rate can be referenced in *Graph 1* while the questions with a 91% positive response rate can be viewed in *Graph 2*.

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Most prominently, looking at the questions with the highest cumulative positive responses, it's not surprising that those valued that highly are: Application of knowledge, Critical thinking skills, Ability and desire for continuous learning, and Creativity. Those that fell at the next highest cumulative positive response level were: Clarity of future career goals, Acquisition of new knowledge, Interpersonal skills, Teamwork, Personal leadership skills, Self-esteem and Self-confidence, Understanding professionalism, Increased employment options, and Effective workplace contributions.

Many of these, again, fall in line with the values and benefits of experiential learning, cooperative education programs, and mentorship opportunities. These education models service not only the students participating but also the local community within which students find their placements. Unfortunately, the research was not able to be compared to adult responses and perceptions because the adult survey response was limited. The findings still however, support the research assumption and address the research question. Holistically, The Greenwood School internship program does promote overall positive growth in character in individual student participants of the program and furthermore, is placed in high value by student participants as well as the school's community.

### **Chapter 4: CONCLUSIONS**

#### **A. Red Flags & Questions**

Due to the researchers' close personal connection not only to the subject matter and the case study location there was immense bias strewn throughout the development, application, and assessment of the program in research. Not only did the researcher live and work in close proximity to the student participants she was responsible for the design and implementation of the program. From scheduling and driving to assignments and grades, the researcher was



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embedded from the start. This may or may not have also swayed student responses – both the relationship to the researcher and her role as a teacher assigning a weekly credit score based on participation.

In hopes of squashing some bias, the original research format was intended to incorporate the mentor's voices through the survey drawn up in Appendix H. Unfortunately, the mentor response was zero with no returned completed forms. This is itself is not in support of the value of placed-based experiential and cooperative learning environments but may also have been too above and beyond the already strained time they donate to the program. The researcher does not believe it is a testament to the program mentors' dedication, attention to detail, or overall quality. It's just one of the setbacks, limiting the data to student only voices, something certainly lacking in other internship research and assessment, but could have provided a more holistic well-rounded view of the program and it's effectiveness. Leaving some things certain to be explored in the future.

One main question raised is: how can we change the popular mindset when looking at education policy and reform to account for the clear fact that brains develop differently and therefore, individuals learn differently. While charter schools and private school have adapted to account for student individuality and needs, systematically there has been little to no progress. Worse, there don't seem to be too many advocates voicing student concerns and it begs one to think that perhaps students aren't even being consulted. Has education swayed away from its core principles? If it has, and it no longer works for the students participating or those who have fallen by the way side, why aren't we taking action systemically to fix it? Surely, with all of these examples of progress and development, trial and error, there is some way to integrate principles and programming back into the system to better work for its clients: students.

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### **B. Contributions**

On a micro level, The Greenwood School has benefitted a great deal from this research project especially in that it created an entirely new program based on principles that have intrigued and aided the learning of students in it's community. The program has also created and strengthened connections to the local community and created reciprocal relationships between the school and local business. Because of the internship program, The Greenwood School took steps to act locally in what they buy and where they do business. They have also taken steps to invite our adult mentors into the Greenwood community from time to time.

On a macro level, it was discovered that very little research done on the topics and themes discussed in this paper included student voices let alone student below college age. The hope is that this research full of student voices and feedback will encourage future research projects to include student voices. After all, they are the primary recipients of such programs.

On an individual level, I personally gained a great deal from this experience. Not only did I develop professionally and hone in on my own skills and career aspirations, I learned experientially with a lot of trial and error right from the start. I myself turned out to be a participant of The Greenwood School cooperative internship program as I received all of the same learnings, character development, and growth. Because I was hired and tasked to create a unique yet comprehensive cooperative internship program in the rural hills of Putney I certainly had to get creative to assess and fulfill student interests which well varied. In looking at the program, I think it had a great deal of success in its first year and continues to in its second but in looking ahead to next year, I think removing the time structures and constraints to open more opportunities will be highly beneficial and something I've really been pushing for with the administration. This position has also therefore granted me the opportunity to work in an

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environment where I can voice my opinion and needs openly, something I also tried to provide to the boys.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

A Student Assessment in Value of Cooperative Education Curriculum Integrated Through Character Development: The Greenwood School

*Student Internship Application*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete the form below and turn in to Rebecca by Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>*

Intern Placement 1<sup>st</sup> Pick: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list why you feel you'd be a good match at this internship. What skills and interest would you bring?

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Intern Placement 2<sup>nd</sup> Pick: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list why you feel you'd be a good match at this internship. What skills and interest would you bring?

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**Appendix B**

*Applicant Interview*

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position Applied For: \_\_\_\_\_

If you receive this internship;

1. What will you bring to the table? Skills, ideas, knowledge, attitude, etc.
2. What are you interested in learning and why?
3. What specifically do you want to get out of this experience?
4. How will it help you socially, personally, and academically?
5. What challenges might you face and how will you work to overcome them?

### **Appendix C**

#### *Internship Goals & Expectations*

Please write thoughtful answers to the following prompts. Try to answer these questions in a cohesive paragraph about how you think your internship experience may go.

- a. What new skills, knowledge, and attitudes do you hope to learn?
- b. How will you push yourself to do your best?
- c. How can you use this experience in future goals/work/career ideas?
- d. Write one specific goal you hope to accomplish.
- e. What fears might you face and how will you overcome and learn from challenges?
- f. Overall, what would you like to gain from this experience?
- g. What questions would you like to have answered by the end of this experience?

### **Appendix D**

#### *Self-Reflections*

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Please write a paragraph (at least 5 sentences) about your experiences so far at your internship placement and how they're impacting you (knowledge and learning, skills, attitude). Have you been working towards your goals/answering your own questions? Have you been asking good questions? What were the answers and learning for those? What's the best experience you've had so far and why? What else would you like to learn about through this experience?

### **Appendix E**

#### *Intern Host Thank You Letter*

Take a look at the example below. We will work on formatting together, I'd just like for you to focus on the content of the Thank You letter. Remember, this should be a thoughtful and appreciated overview of your experience over the last ten weeks.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (insert adult mentor, intern host, or name of the organization),

What are you thankful for in this experience? What have you learned? How did you work on your goals to accomplish them? How has this experience impacted your learning? How has it impacted your attitude? How can you use the skills you've learned in your internship in other areas of your life? Be specific! Use examples! Tell us a story about your experience through personal moments of learning.

Thank You!

Sincerely,

Name (We will also sign in pen)

### **Appendix F**

#### *Student Exit Interview*



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Internship Placement: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How well did the internship meet your expectations? Is there anything that you wish could have been different?
2. To what extent did you learn new skills? What were they? How applicable do you feel those skills are for the future?
3. To what extent was your internship a positive experience? How? What were the benefits of your involvement in the internship program?
4. Do you believe you participated in a meaningful and challenging work related experience?
5. How did your involvement in the program effect your overall attitude and outlook on yourself and your future?