



Reading 430

You are going to read an article about the significance of character development. For questions 1-14, choose from the paragraphs of the article (A-F). Each paragraph may be chosen more than once.

In which paragraph is the following mentioned?

- 1 the scientifically proven importance of some character traits?
- 2 students' unwillingness to accept innovations at school?
- 3 more than one character trait of students' inner strength?
- 4 an important idea of the time past is now no longer relevant?
- 5 the need of assistance in simple situations despite being over-confident?
- 6 working on a different project prompted him to write his book?
- 7 an initiative from certain educational establishments?
- 8 flexibility as the key factor in the near future?
- 9 students challenging their teachers' objectiveness?
- 10 the necessity to read a certain book for everyone in charge of educational schemes?
- 11 some students' self-esteem that is unreasonably high?
- 12 lack of parents' attention affecting kids' internal growth?
- 13 pupils' mothers and fathers overinvolvement in their matters?
- 14 his own work that appeared to coincide with another one?

A — Character matters. In fact, it matters more than anything else when it comes to doing well in school - and life. Yet parents and schools are actively preventing children from developing their inner resources, by being too neglectful or by never allowing them to fail. This is the main message of a new education book that has topped the best-seller charts in the US. The book demonstrates that it is things like perseverance and determination that ultimately help children succeed. This old-fashioned message would have been common once but appears to have vanished from the modern world.

B — But, as this book shows, character is badly in need of a comeback, and some pioneering schools are already starting to put it at the heart of their curriculum. It's a timely message, yet last summer, when the book was first published, it had me grinding my teeth in fury. This was not because I disagreed with its thesis but because I was deep into researching what seemed at first glance to be the same subject. US social affairs reporter Paul Tough had produced *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power*

of Character. The working title of my book was *Backbone: What Children Need, Aren't Getting and How to Give it Back to Them*.

C — But when I got over myself and settled down to read his work, I realised we were approaching the same important territory from different angles. Relying on the studies of neuroscience, economics, psychology and child development, Tough shows how qualities such as self-mastery and optimism make children succeed. In this respect, good parenting and character-based schooling can make all the difference. It's a persuasive argument, and for anyone involved in creating educational policy, this publication should be forced reading, so they can see how fiddling with school structures can never, by itself, help pupils do better.

D — My book, by contrast, is being written specifically for parents to show what strength of character consists of. It identifies six key values that, when knitted together, give a person deep-rooted focus, integrity and resilience, and suggests an outline for encouraging children to grow the 'backbone' of these qualities. All this sprang out of the growing unease I felt as I spent time in schools. As a journalist, I was usually there to write about 'development' in education - a newly changed curriculum, or an inventive method of teaching. Yet, it seemed to me that pupils' attitudes often went against the very things designed to help them. And, luckily, not in any exhilaratingly rebellious way.

E — Rather, children seemed distracted or otherwise worried and devoted to getting things 'right'. And when I started to ask teachers about this, I got a tsunami of complaints and stories about the everyday behaviour they were seeing in school. One said with each year students seemed less willing to share or even hang their own coats on their own pegs. Another complained about the amazing sense of superiority and self-righteousness that many pupils now demonstrated. If a teacher gave them poor marks for a piece of work, they said it was never because they could have done better, but only because he was 'picking on' them. And often, he said, their parents agreed.

F — Meanwhile, universities were raising the alarm about how today's students seemed less able to think for themselves. A toxic combination of teaching to the test at school and parents hovering over their lives, now means that even those wishing to get to the most prestigious universities were helpless when they first had to take care of themselves. All this matters desperately because in a competitive world, tomorrow's adults will have to rely on their personal resources to navigate life's constant changes. A good life demands courage, resilience, honesty and kindness. This is the true spine of success, without which we are all jellyfish. And since no one wants their child to be a jellyfish, our prime job as parents - and teachers - has to be to help our children build the backbone they need.

Key

1C 2D 3D 4A 5F 6D 7B 8F 9E 10C 11E 12A 13F 14B