Character Day 2017

Evaluation Report

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Presented to:

Let it Ripple

Table of Contents

Background

Organizational Overview & Outcomes

Let it Ripple is a distinctive film studio, led by Tiffany Slain, based out of San Francisco. Let it Ripple's mission is to use film, technology, discussion materials, and live and virtual events to engage people in conversation and action around complicated subjects that are shaping our lives, and updating these topics through an engaging, accessible, 21st-century lens. One of Let it Ripple's most notable programs is the annually occurring event Character Day.

Let it Ripple's global event Character Day brings together organizations, schools, communities, and groups of all types to ignite a worldwide dialogue about character. Character Day offers short films and discussion materials, a global live Q&A with experts from a variety of fields, and thousands of resources on character development all free of charge. In addition to providing films and discussion materials, event leaders are also given a full creative license to design the Character Day event that is most practical for their organization. Ultimately, Let it Ripple seeks to leverage Character Day to inspire interest about character development that will help eventually shift culture and encourage individuals to embed character development into their daily lives. From the inception of Character Day, interest about character development has quickly expanded over the last four years.

This year marks the fourth annual Character Day, which was held on September 13th, 2017. Character Day has grown from approximately 1,500 events during its first year (2014), to over 6,700 events its second year (2015), to over 93,000 events in 125 countries and all 50 states last year (2016) to 133,000 events and people engaging from 150 countries from Guam to Thailand to Central Africa Republic in 2017. Given the rapid success and broad impact worldwide, Character Day has the capability to influence hundreds of thousands of people's character development.

Let it Ripple believes that if Character Day occurs as designed, it will impact participants' motivation to implement improvements in character in the following ways:

- ✅ **Increased Self-Efficacy:** that their belief in their ability to improve character will increase
- ✅ **Increased Value:** that their value for improving character will increase
- ✅ **Enhanced Intent:** that their intention to develop their character strengths will be enhanced

In addition to a change in Character Day hosts and participants, Let it Ripple also believes that there will be a shift in organizational practices to support character development. Over time, these short-term outcomes will lead to individual improvement in character and organizational enhancements in culture across sectors. Please see the logic model in Appendix A for a more detailed description of these outcomes.

Evaluation Questions

Let it Ripple partnered with ImpactED at the Fels Institute of Government at University of Pennsylvania to evaluate the impact of Character Day in 2017. Three evaluation questions guided our analysis:

- ✅ **Motivation:** Who participates in Character Day and why?
- ✅ **Implementation:** How are organizations utilizing the materials provided?
- ✅ **Outcomes:** How has Character Day impacted host and participant motivation for character development (specifically, in terms of self-efficacy, value, and intent)? How has Character Day impacted organizational culture more broadly?

These research questions align with different sections of Let it Ripple's logic model for Character Day; in particular, they focus on outputs and short-term outcomes of individual and organizational change. See Appendix A for a more detailed overview of key outcomes.

This report is organized into the following sections:

- ✅ **Methodology.** This section describes the approach to quantitative and qualitative data collection, which included three in-depth case studies and a large-scale survey. The research methodology was largely informed by a pilot survey conducted in the summer of 2017 with participants from Character Day 2016.

- ✅ **Key Findings.** This section describes the key findings related to motivation, implementation and participant and organization outcomes.

- ✅ **Recommendations.** This section provides recommendations for Let it Ripple in its efforts to make improvements for Character Day 2018 and any future character-related initiatives.

Methodology

This mixed-method evaluation included three in-depth case studies at schools across the country and a comprehensive survey taken by 1,342 people who signed up to host a Character Day event.

Case Studies

On Character Day 2017, ImpactED conducted three in-depth case studies at three different schools across the country: Yavneh Day School and Diablo Vista Middle School both in California, and Branchburg Central Middle School in New Jersey. These schools were selected based on the fact that they had participated in Character Day in the past.

- ✅ Yavneh Day School. Yavneh Day School is an independent, K-8 Jewish Day School located in Los Gatos, California. Yavneh's mission is to "discover how a child learns in order to maximize each student's potential while fostering curiosity, encouraging risk taking, and ingraining a love of learning." In order to reach their mission, they put a strong emphasis on "living Jewish values" and have identified creative ways to teach these values, like through Character Day. Character Day at Yavneh is framed around the "The Big Reveal", where the Yavneh school community uses Character Day to vote on seven character values to focus on throughout the academic year, which they refer to as their "Keshet of Kavod". The members of the Keshet Krew, eighth grade students who serve as role models for the

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younger students throughout the year, reveal these values on Character Day during the "Big Reveal" through a skit.

- ● **Diablo Vista Middle School.** Diablo Vista (DV) Middle School is a public middle school located in the Bay Area. Diablo Vista's changes in diversity and size motivated the emphasis on character education. DV kicked off this year's Character Day by showing 30,000 Days to the entire student body. Following 30,000 Days, each teacher showed a video that Character Day host Steve Anderson had created to teach the students how to translate the content from 30,000 Days into action. Each student set a goal and then identified the character traits they needed to call upon in order to accomplish their goal.

- ● **Branchburg Central Middle School.** Branchburg Central Middle School (BCMS) is a public middle school located in Branchburg, NJ. What started as a buddy program that bridged the gap between special education students and the rest of the student body, grew into a character initiative, which includes programming like Character Day. This year BCMS's peer leaders, eighth grade students that were selected to serve as role models, showed the "Science of Character" video to the sixth grade class and led the class in a series of activities.

Each case study consisted of observations and interviews with the Character Day host, school leadership, as well as several participating teachers, students, and parents. All interviews were transcribed and coded for themes using Dedoose qualitative analysis software. A separate case study report was prepared for each site.

Survey

ImpactED and Let it Ripple collaboratively developed a comprehensive survey designed for individuals who signed up to host a Character Day event in 2017. The survey was extensively piloted in the summer of 2017 with hosts from Character Day 2016.

Overall, 4,476[1] people who signed up to host a 2017 Character Day event and had agreed to participate in research were invited to take the survey. In the two weeks the survey was open, 1,342 people began the survey and 1,156 people completed the survey, resulting in a 30% survey response rate and a 25% survey completion rate.

The survey was administered in Qualtrics and data was analyzed descriptively using Stata 13.

Findings

Below, we report findings aligned to our key evaluation questions – (1) motivation to participate in Character Day, (2) implementation of Character Day activities and resources, and (3) the impact Character Day has on individual and organizational outcomes.

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[1] Character Day hosts were asked whether or not they were interested in participating in research related to Character Day, of which 4,629 indicated "yes" or "maybe" and provided valid email addresses. Of those email addresses invited to take the survey, 152 bounced back or failed, resulting in 4,476 emails sent. In total, 4,476 valid email addresses were invited to take the survey.

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Motivation

☑ Character Day attracts new hosts each year and is growing rapidly from Class Dojo or direct contact from Let it Ripple.

Of all survey respondents who hosted a Character Day event in 2017, 73% were hosting for the first time. This finding corroborated the summer pilot finding that 81% of hosts in 2016 hosted for the first time, and the 88% of those who signed up to host a Character Day event in 2017 (whether or not they actually did) had never hosted before. This shows that much of Character Day's growth is due to attracting new participants who had never heard of the program before.

In total, about 25% of hosts who signed up indicated how they learned about Character Day. Overwhelmingly, responding hosts learned about Character Day from ClassDojo and Tiffany Shlain. All three of the case study hosts mentioned being compelled by Tiffany Shlain's passion for character education and her unique approach.

☑ Character Day was hosted in primarily public schools, which served students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

Over 80% of events hosted on Character Day 2017 happened at elementary, middle, or high schools or within entire school districts. Amongst the schools that hosted Character Day 2017, 84% were public institutions. Survey findings indicated that 21% of schools were serving student bodies where 81-100% of students received Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch (FRL), which is a commonly used proxy for low-income status. The chart below shows the proportion of students in participating schools that served students of various socio-economic backgrounds.

Students from different socio-economic backgrounds were well represented on Character Day.

Figure 1. Proportion of Schools Serving Students by FRL Status
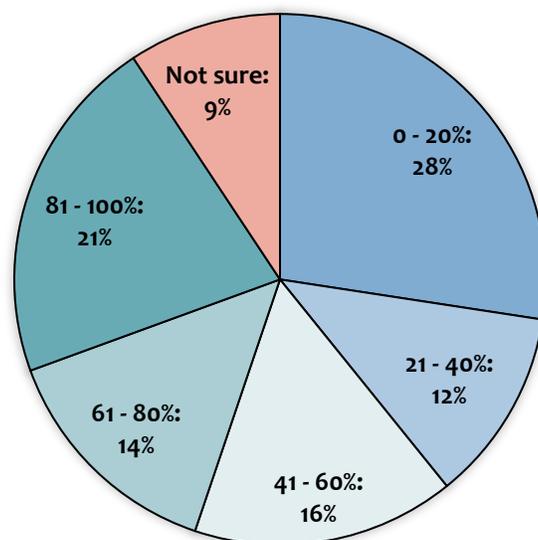
☑ Character Day hosts included individuals and institutions that are deeply invested in character education, as well as those who had not previously had character training or character education programs in place.

Both the surveys and case studies revealed that many individuals who hosted Character Day events at their organizations have a strong, existing commitment to character development and education. Of all hosts, 42% reported that they had received prior character training, and amongst those who had received prior training, 37% had received more than 21 hours of training. And, 55% of hosts reported that their organization already had a character education program in place. All three case study hosts were very articulate about what character meant within the four walls of their school and exemplified their enthusiasm for character in varying ways. For example, Steve, the assistant principal at Diablo Vista, is so deeply interested in character that he wrote his master's thesis on how to build a school culture of character. Laurie, Yavneh's Rabbi, displays commitment to character by constantly sourcing character-related ideas for the staff. Each month she sends out materials and ideas on how you can teach the value of the month, providing the support and creativity needed to maintain their strong character culture.

> "You have to teach how to show respect, empathy, and other traits – and explain the why. I really believe all of the things we ask of, want for and hope for our students really flow from core values. Our actions are a reflection of our values. Where do we put our time and our energy? I think other schools that don't focus on that should because it will simply support what they already want for their students. They are missing the why if they don't focus on character." -- Host, Diablo Vista Middle School

For those who did not already have a character education program in place, 79% were hosting Character Day for the first time, as compared to only 68% of those who did have a character education program in place. This finding suggests that Character Day serves as a great launching point for organizations that do not currently have a character education program in place.

Implementation

☑ Character Day hosts said hosting was easy and that they are likely to do it again.

Over three quarters (77%) of all Character Day hosts said hosting was easy or very easy! Only 4% said it was difficult or very difficult. When asked about hosting an event in 2018, 96% of people who hosted a 2017 Character Day event said they are likely to do so. Similarly, 94% of people who hosted a 2017 Character Day event said they would recommend hosting in 2018 to someone else. Finally, there were a number of people who signed up to host an event in 2017 but were unable to do so (the primary

> Let it Ripple makes everything look beautiful, appealing, and appetizing. And Character Day brings things together – and brings a rationale for a dedicated amount of time for character…… There is so much logic behind each resource. They are engaging. They hang the bait on the hook. And the images – they are grabbing. There is scientific evidence behind it. It is a powerful thing. Very wise that she keeps them to ten minutes. If you go over, you'll lose them." – Host, Diablo Vista

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circumstance was Hurricane Harvey). Of them, 81% of people who signed up to host a 2017 Character Day but did not actually host the event said they are likely to host in 2018.

✅ There is a desire for continuous programming beyond Character Day, particularly for younger audiences.

Interviews conducted with 2016 hosts revealed a strong desire for follow up programming throughout the year. While hosts reported enjoying the event itself, many wanted to continue to use the materials throughout the year and have taken the initiative to create their own post-Character Day curriculum. As reported in the motivation section above, 55% of the 2017 hosting organizations had a character education program already in place. Additional, year-round character-focused resources and engagement from Let it Ripple could increase this number of organizations that have character education

> *"Add even more resources."*
> *--Survey Respondent*
>
> *"I would like to see more videos geared toward children."*
> *--Survey Respondent*

programs in place and help to support those already teaching character throughout the year. In the survey, several of the hosts requested more materials and videos – and many hosts from elementary schools requested videos and other materials geared towards younger students ("kid-friendly options"). Others requested materials in different languages.

Also, just six weeks after Character Day, 31% of hosts said they had used the films or materials again. Our case study participants echoed this sentiment when they shared that the videos were great, but they hoped that there would be several more resources added over the year. On a similar note, some case study participants also shared that Let it Ripple materials could be useful to schools that have yet to integrate character into their curriculum and culture. Hosts reported that marketing and providing continuous programming to schools newer to character education could be a valuable next step for Let it Ripple.

Outcomes

Character Day had a positive effect on hosts as individuals, participants and their organizations as a whole. The findings below show that hosts reported the most immediate, greatest positive changes, followed by the participants and then their organizations. Hosts are essential ambassadors for bringing Character Day and character education to organizations and creating positive change.

✅ Character Day 2017 had a very positive effect on individual hosts by all measures.

The survey presented hosts with five statements about the extent to which participating in Character Day affected them as individuals – positively or negatively. Figure 3 below shows their responses to each question. Overwhelmingly, hosts indicated that participating in Character Day positively or very positively changed their value

> *"I think knowing that we are getting ready for it makes me think about what kind of character do I want to model for my students. As I'm gearing up my lessons are they going to be strictly academic or am I going to integrate a character focus? Sometimes when you put a name on something it makes you take that self-inventory. Am I walking the walk?"-Teacher, Branchburg Middle School*

for, beliefs in, intent around, awareness of, and actions taken with respect to character.

93% of hosts responded Very Positively or Positively across all questions on how Character Day influenced them as individuals.

Figure 2. Hosts' Responses to Character Day's Impact on Themselves

Chart showing hosts' responses (Very Positively, Positively, Neutral, Negatively, Very Negatively):
- The value you place on improving your character. — 94%
- Your belief in your ability to improve your character. — 94%
- Your intent to improve your character. — 93%
- Your awareness of your own character. — 92%
- The actions you have taken to improve your character. — 91%
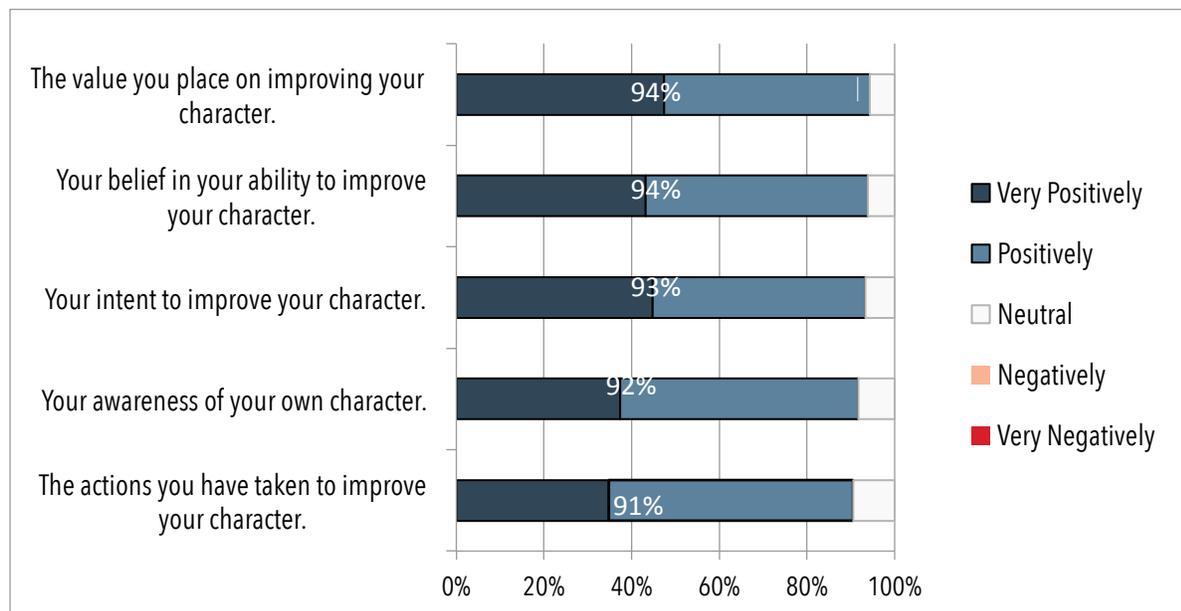
*See Appendix B for a more detailed breakdown of survey responses.

✔ Character Day 2017 had a positive effect on participants, but not as directly as for hosts.

In the survey, hosts reported the extent to which they believed participants changed as a result of Character Day. As indicated in the figure below, 91% of hosts reported that Character Day changed participants' awareness of their character and belief in their ability to implement character change positively or very positively. Overall, 85% of hosts also reported Character Day changed both participants' value for character and intention to improve character. Despite slight variation, these responses are still very high and could be due to the fact that hosts were unaware of participants' responses to Character Day.

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Hosts' responses about participants' change were positive but slightly less positive than their reported personal change across all questions on the influence of Character Day.

Figure 3. Hosts' Response to Character Day's Impact on Themselves and the Participants

Value for Character — 85% 94%
Belief in Ability — 91% 94%
Intent to Improve — 85% 93%
Awareness — 91%
Action Taken — 80% 91%
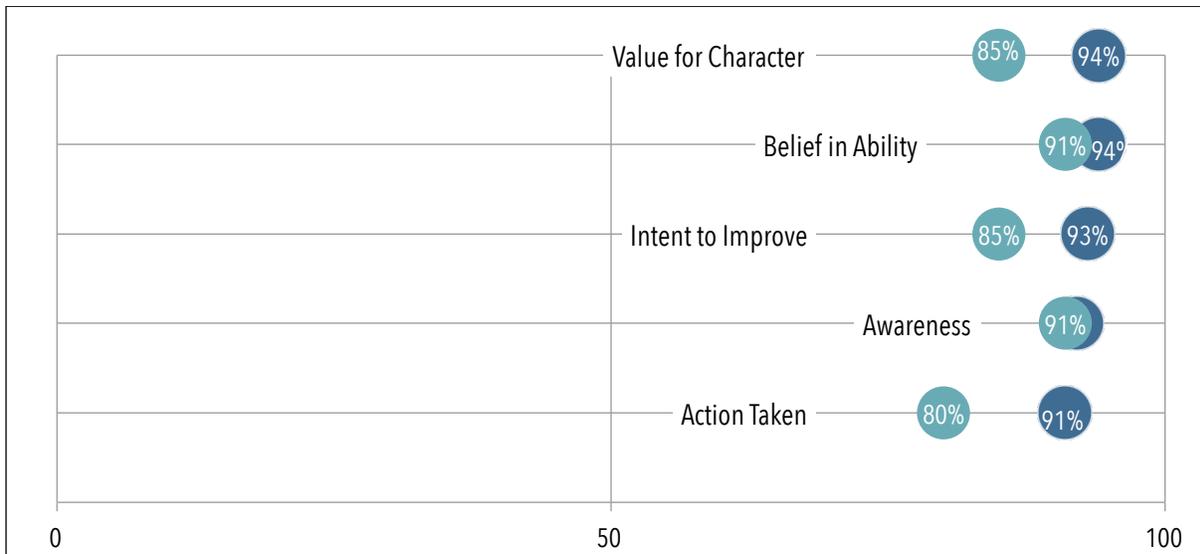
*See Appendix B for a more detailed breakdown of survey responses.

In the case studies, participants highlighted that Character Day served as a critical reminder to be aware of and to actively work on one's character. For teachers, this meant being strong models of character. For students, this reinforced the importance of character and provided an opportunity for them to take on leadership roles in demonstrating and teaching about character. In short, Character Day reminded individuals of their collective values and inspired them to stay accountable to these values as the year moves forward.

> *"Having Character Day and this programming encourages a metacognition amongst our students. They can look and label situations as courage and love. Another kid might not have the ability to reflect on things. We are constantly reflecting and analyzing in the lens of character."*
> *- Teacher, Yavneh Day School*

✅ Character Day positively impacted organizational change, but will likely require continued investment.

The survey of 2016 hosts conducted approximately 9 months after Character Day found that 80% of 2016 hosts saw their organizations efforts to support character development increase since Character Day participation, and 77% of hosts saw a positive or very positive change in the value that their organization placed on character since participating. These findings are substantially higher than what was found in 2017, when hosts took the survey only one and a half months after the

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event. This discrepancy supports the hypothesis that greater organizational change may increase with time and as changes in attitudes and actions amongst hosts and participants take effect.

As demonstrated in the figure below, 2017 hosts reported a higher proportion of neither positive nor negative change with respect to their organizations across all questions. Since the survey was administered about six weeks following Character Day, we hypothesize that greater organizational change may occur with more time. However, our research also supports the hypothesis that organizational change is challenging and may need more

"I think Character Day heightens our awareness of character. The more opportunity they have, the more it is brought up, the more it stays at the forefront. You can see a difference in our school." – *Teacher, Branchburg Middle School*

support and more year-round resources to be realized. In our case study visits, we learned that hosts use Character Day to increase awareness and spark the programming for the year, but the support for character education extends well beyond the actual day. It requires ongoing investment from leadership to integrate character practices across the school culture.

Over 70% of hosts responded Very Positively or Positively across all questions on how Character Day influenced their organizations' character practices.

Figure 4. Hosts' Responses About Character Day's Impact on Their Organizations

*See Appendix B for a more detailed breakdown of survey responses.

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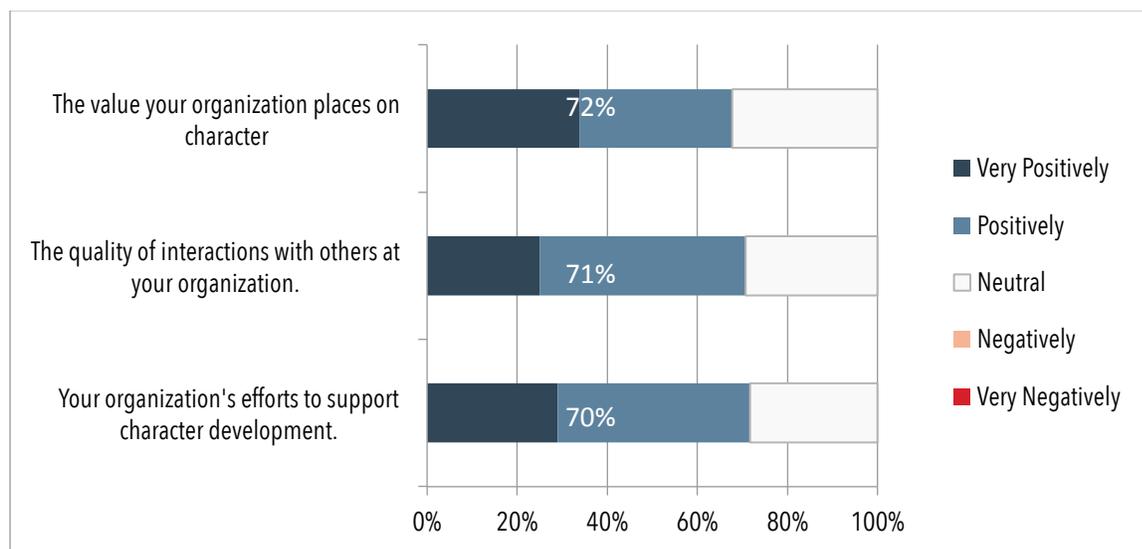
Recommendations

For Programmatic Improvement

✅ **Generate additional content that can be available for participants year-round.**

Both case study and survey results revealed that hosts and participants want to see more Character Day and character-related content from Let it Ripple. To meet this need, Let it Ripple should prioritize creating additional materials for participating organizations year round.

✅ **Provide more ongoing support throughout the year and create a clearer road map for using existing resources.**

A number of case study hosts and teachers shared the desire for additional communication with Let it Ripple, more direction in navigating the existing materials, and additional curricular materials (e.g., more detailed lesson plans) to supplement existing Let it Ripple resources. Let It Ripple should consider creating a road map that provides more detail on existing material and specific lessons and reinforcement opportunities for current character traits.

✅ **Consider releasing video/content earlier.**

Survey respondents and case study participants shared that it was challenging to prepare lessons for students in advance of Character Day without more knowledge of the new film. Many requested releasing the new film earlier to allow for appropriate planning. Also, several survey respondents outside of the U.S. reported that because they were a day ahead of the U.S., the video had not yet been released on September 13th in their countries. If possible, Let it Ripple should consider doing an earlier release of the new film.

For Future Research

✅ **Conduct needs assessments and case studies of different organization types to better understand the range of organizational needs and culture.**

We learned a great deal from the three school case studies; however, we're unsure of how representative what we learned would be in other types of organizations. While education institutions are the primary participant, we recommend conducting needs assessment and case studies of other organizational types. We also recommend further research related to change implementation within organizations. The survey showed that organizations as a whole experienced less positive change than individuals – and the reasons for this, and how to implement organizational changes, are still unknown.

✅ **Collect more robust administrative data during the sign-up process.**

There are several opportunities to improve the sign-up process that may result in stronger data collection overall. First, email addresses should be validated (through Google Forms) to eliminate errors. The sign-up data contained many erroneous email addresses that needed to be hand-corrected. In the future, this will save time and ensure all participants can be contacted. Second, the

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"organization type" options should be tightened and designed to include choices such as K-8, K-6, K-12 and 6-12. Third, it may also be useful to collect information on which materials hosts are intending to use for Character Day and for other purposes.

✅ Track use of materials on Character Day and throughout the year.

It is possible that many of the materials downloaded and used from Let it Ripple may have been used in Character Day events that were not officially registered and/or used throughout the year, but not on Character Day. Let it Ripple should consider requiring an email address to download materials, where individuals must also specify the purpose for which they are accessing content. Email addresses will also allow for year-round follow-up on the use of materials.

Appendix

Appendix A: Logic Model

Character Day Logic Model

INPUTS/ RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES/ IMPACT
Financial Resources: • Foundation support • Sponsors **Human Resources:** • Let It Ripple staff • Character Day consultants • Filmmakers • Event hosts & participants • Past participants • Panel speakers **Physical Resources:** • Films • Discussion kits, hands-on & online • Characterday.org • Character (Every) Day Resource Hub • Character Every Day Mobile app **Other Resources:** • Partnerships • Social media networks • Email listservs	**Pre-Character Day:** • Partner summits • Partner panels • Social media & press outreach • Cold marketing • Engaged marketing • Participation at conferences **Character Day:** • Events • Film screening • Live Global Q&A • Social media campaign **Post-Character Day:** • Use of website resources and Character Day app • Partner character education efforts	**Increase awareness of Character Day:** • Number of events and participants • Social media analytics (e.g. number of mentions) • Type of and response to marketing materials (e.g., sign-up rate, click rate, open rate) • Social media engagement (impressions) **Increase participation in Character Day:** • Number and types of organizations participating • Number, size, and types of events • Social media engagement (mentions, hashtag uses), types of users **Sustained engagement in Character Day:** • Website analytics (e.g. number of return users) • App downloads and usage • Social media engagement (continued activity)	Increase self-efficacy (individual's belief in ability to change behavior) Increase value of character development Increase intent to develop character strengths Shift culture of organizations to support character development Make connections across different sectors	Develop character strengths: • Wisdom • Courage • Humanity • Justice • Temperance • Transcendence Reduced bullying and violence in schools Increase sustained engagement in character development across sectors Increase interdisciplinary work on character development and education	Improve quality of life: • Improve student outcomes • Increase productivity and enjoyment in work place • Increase sense of wellbeing and life satisfaction Shift culture: Character development is ingrained in daily life (Character Day becomes Character Every Day) Improve quality of character education

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Appendix B: Survey Data Results

Host Results

Statement	Very Positively	Positively	Neither Positively nor Negatively	Negatively	Very Negatively	% Positively or Very Positively
The value you place on improving your character.	47.4%	46.9%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	94.3%
Your belief in your ability to improve your character.	43.2%	50.7%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	93.9%
Your intent to improve your character.	44.8%	48.5%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	93.3%
Your awareness of your own character.	37.3%	54.3%	8.2%	0.0%	0.0%	91.7%
The actions you have taken to improve your character.	34.8%	55.7%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%	90.5%
Overall Individual Impact						92.7%

Participant Results

Statement	Very Positively	Positively	Neither Positively nor Negatively	Negatively	Very Negatively	% Positively or Very Positively
Participants' awareness of their character.	24.4%	66.7%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	91.1%
Participants' belief in their ability to improve their character.	21.8%	68.9%	9.0%	0.3%	0.0%	90.7%
The value participants place on improving their character.	21.2%	63.9%	14.5%	0.4%	0.0%	85.1%
Participants' intent to improve their character.	22.2%	62.6%	14.9%	0.1%	0.1%	84.8%
The actions participants have taken to improve their character.	18.0%	62.1%	19.0%	0.4%	0.4%	80.1%
Overall Participant Impact						86.3%

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Organization Results

Question	Very Positively	Positively	Neither Positively nor Negatively	Negatively	Very Negatively	% Positively or Very Positively
Your organization's (school, company, program, etc.) efforts to support character development.	28.7%	42.3%	28.1%	0.9%	0.0%	71.0%
The quality of interactions with others at your organization (school, company, program, etc.).	25.1%	45.6%	29.3%	0.0%	0.0%	70.7%
The value your organization (school, company, program, etc.) places on character.	29.1%	29.1%	27.8%	0.0%	0.0%	58.3%
Overall Organizational Impact						66.7%

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