

## How Do Children Succeed?

### Read Paul Tough's Answer in "How Children Succeed"

Late last year, journalist Paul Tough visited the Department of Education to discuss his recent book [How Children Succeed](#). Tough characterizes his book as being concerned with two principal issues: recent research on the importance of non-cognitive skills as a factor in children's success in school and in later life; and the success of experimental interventions based on this research that are designed to improve outcomes for children, especially those from disadvantaged homes. Tough's presentation of the issues draws on research from various disciplines, including neuroscience, psychology, economics, and pediatrics.

Through the stories of various youths whom Tough met during his reporting work, he attempts to make the connection between the stress suffered by children from disadvantaged homes and the experiences of these children in school and later in life. A second part of his argument stresses the centrality of non-cognitive skills for the ability of these children to succeed. Various descriptions and categorizations of non-cognitive skills exist in the research literature. One summary list cited by Tough includes the following seven skills: zest, grit, self-control, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism, and curiosity.

According to the evidence Tough cites, deficits in non-cognitive skills have their origins early in life. Therefore, he advocates assisting low-skilled parents to help their children develop the skills. He thinks there are a variety of promising evidence-based interventions, but no one specific approach, that make parents who are coached in using them better able to help their children develop the pertinent skills. The early years, according to recent research, are optimal for maximizing the effectiveness of such interventions.

Tough also insists that these skills can and should be taught in school. He is concerned, however, that many of the interventions he finds promising are not classroom-based, but rather are employed only by psychologists and early childhood specialists. Turning his focus to recent attempts to improve the academic achievement of children, especially high-risk children, Tough argues for teaching a mix of cognitive and non-cognitive skills in schools.

For evaluating the evidence underlying Tough's argument, the following scholarship, along with other studies he cites, is essential: James Heckman, Nobel-prize winning economist from the University of Chicago; [Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance: A Critical Literature Review](#), a report of the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research; and the scholarship of Angela Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania.

## Digital Learning Day Offers More Activities

Digital Learning Day 2013 will be held on Feb. 6, launching a variety of activities at the national and local levels. In concert with a national focus on digital learning during February, the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network ([OTAN](#)) for adult learners will host its [Technology and Distance Learning Symposium](#) (TDLS) on **Feb. 22–23, 2013**, at Berkeley Adult School in Berkeley, Calif. The symposium will feature promising practices, strategies, lesson ideas, technology integration, and distance and blended learning.

The TDLS is targeted to administrators, coordinators, and teachers who are planning for or already implementing distance, blended, and online instruction, as well as integrating technology in the classroom. [Registration is open through Feb. 14, 2013.](#)

The event program so far includes Online and Blended Instruction Delivery; Moodle—Your Learning Management System; Presentation Tools in the Classroom: Interactive Whiteboards, Document Cameras and More; Productivity Tools for Classroom Projects; Web-based Activities; and Online Resources for Adult Education. **For more information, including the final schedule, and to register, please access [Technology and Distance Learning Symposium](#).**

**Adult educators may wish to access the [Digital Learning Day](#) site to learn more about this national campaign to celebrate teachers and publicize successful instructional practices and effective uses of technology in classrooms. The Feb. 6, second annual Digital Learning Day, will provide access to activities, ideas, and collaboration opportunities. To date, some 16,000 teachers representing 46 states, D.C., and more than 3.3 million students have signed up to participate.**

To culminate Digital Literacy Day activities, the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) will hold a **Digital Town Hall on Feb. 6, 2013, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. (EST)**. The town hall will focus on how excellent teaching, combined with effective technology, can make an impact on improving America's schools, particularly those that serve high-risk and high-poverty populations. It will profile teachers, students, schools, and districts that are implementing digital learning in innovative and successful ways. National policy and education leaders will attend as part of a live studio audience. **Interested parties may sign up now to watch the live simulcast of the [Digital Town Hall](#).**