An Introduction to Intellectual Virtues
The Cambridge School

The What
What are intellectual virtues?

“Intellectual virtues are the character traits of a good thinker or learner.”\(^1\)

“Intellectual character is the part of your character—your dispositions to act, think, and feel—that pertains to thinking and learning.”

The intellectual virtues are distinct from the moral and civic virtues.

The Three Dimensions of an Intellectual Virtue

1) **Skill**
   Do you have the appropriate tools and strategies to employ intellectual virtues?

2) **Motivation**
   Do you have the right motivation of using it to deepen your knowledge of something or understand truth more fully?

3) **Judgement**
   Do you have the appropriate and necessary sensitivities to recognize the occasions that call for intellectual virtue?

The Why
Why educate for intellectual virtues?

Intellectual virtues are considered “thick concepts” that provide a way of fleshing out educational goals at The Cambridge School.

Cambridge School Goals

- **Lifelong Learner**
- **Critical Thinker**
- **Love of Learning**

The cultivation of intellectual virtues is a concrete way to build habits of mind that work toward accomplishing these goals in our students.

- **Rigorous Curriculum**
- **Mindful of Student**

The intellectual virtue approach “is necessarily rigorous...due largely to the fact that intellectual virtues themselves aim at a deep understanding, while caring for the character of the student.”

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