

# **International Boys' Schools Coalition**

## **Character Education in Schools for Boys**

### **Prospectus**

In June 2016, the IBSC Board of Directors approved *Character Education in Schools for Boys*, a research project that will culminate in a wide-ranging report to the IBSC membership. This initiative is the latest in a series of major research projects on boys' education commissioned by the IBSC since 2009.

About 25 – 30 IBSC member schools will participate in this two-year project, which will start in September 2016, and conclude in June 2018. The IBSC has contracted with CIRCLE — the Centre for Innovation, Research, Creativity, and Leadership in Education to conduct this in-depth research. Based in Sydney, Australia, CIRCLE is an executive agency in education that connects to 1,700 schools and organizations primarily in Australia, New Zealand, and the Asia-Pacific region, and globally through publications, workshops, conferences, consulting, and research services.

### **Project Focus**

Always central to the mission at boys' schools, character education has gained new urgency in recent years. Learning how to navigate change and complexity with a strong moral compass, building character strengths such as perseverance and grit, and understanding one's self and purpose for others are fundamental for boys' well-being as they make the journey to manhood. In truth, however, most schools struggle with this vital work — even those that claim to do a good job at it. It proves inherently difficult to define precisely what “character education” actually is, and what processes, programs, and practices impact character development.

*Character Education in Schools for Boys* will investigate and report on effective practices in boys' character education. The project will propose a well-researched framework for schools to evaluate current practices, processes, and programs in character education; sharpen strategy and planning for character education; develop meaningful and authentic outcomes; create standards for accountability, reporting, and professional learning; and communicate this focus and consensus to the wider school community. Respectful of individual school culture and tradition, this framework for character education will serve boys' schools better than prescriptive models espoused by specialist organizations and agencies in character education.

### **Guiding Questions**

This large-scale action research project will focus on questions such as:

- What are the goals and priorities for character education in boys' schools?
- How can schools position these goals and priorities into the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies and skills?
- What is the best way to embed and align character education into school strategy?

- What role does school tradition and history play in advancing the work of character education in boys' schools?
- What are the most effective practices in character education programs and teaching practice in boys' schools?
- What are authentic and meaningful outcomes for character education in boys' schools?
- What are authentic and meaningful professional standards for teachers as character educators?
- How can school leaders foster a high-performing culture for character education?

## **Framework for Character Education**

The proposed framework for character education would:

- Provide IBSC schools with a methodology and a set of survey/research instruments to evaluate their performance in character education.
- Provide IBSC schools with a design model for developing character education programs.
- Describe themes and patterns in effective practices in character education in boys' schools.
- Provide schools with a critical vocabulary and strategies for establishing meaningful and authentic outcomes for student character development.
- Provide schools with a vocabulary and strategies for establishing meaningful and authentic outcomes for program delivery and teaching in character education.
- Provide schools with a model for professional learning and performance review in character education.
- Indicate ways that a school community can engage in regular, evidence-based review and renewal of goals and practices for character education.

## **Research Methodologies**

Dr. Phil Cummins, Managing Director of CIRCLE, and Brad Adams, Director of Education at CIRCLE, will lead the research on this project. CIRCLE staff and associated external academic experts will assist them. *Character Education in Schools for Boys* will deploy a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, with emphasis on surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Using online conferencing will optimize global participation and connection. In the second year of the project, regional research workshops will be held. Research design, data collection, and data analysis adhere to professional standards.

## **Research Phases**

The project will proceed through four phases, as indicated here.

### **Phase 1**

1. Project schools are selected and introduced to the research process. (August – September 2016)

## **Phase 2**

1. An online discovery and culture capture survey on character education is conducted with key stakeholders: teachers, students, parents, school leaders, and others. (September – November 2016)
2. Project schools start the process to select and document their effective practices in character education in the curriculum, co-curriculum, and community life. (January – March 2017)
3. Project schools provide feedback on the results of the discovery and culture capture survey. Each school receives an individualized report of the survey data analysis. (January – March 2017)
4. Project schools give feedback and reflection on a draft report of findings emerging from research activities in the first year of the project. (May – June 2017)

## **Phase 3**

1. Additional targeted surveys, questionnaires, on-site focus groups, and online conference calls may be held as the draft framework for character education is developed. (October 2017 – March 2018)
2. Regional research workshops to develop and test an emerging draft framework for character education are held in the major regions. Project schools send a small team of teachers and school leaders to their regional research workshop. (November 2017 – March 2018).

## **Phase 4**

1. Regional conference calls are held with project coordinators and others to review and give feedback on the next iteration of the draft framework for character education. (May 2018)
2. Incorporating this summative feedback, the final report is submitted to the IBSC. (June 2018)

## **Selection of Schools**

We invite interested IBSC member schools to apply as a project school by 16 September 2016. The IBSC, in collaboration with CIRCLE, will select 25 – 30 boys' schools to participate in this research project. The global cohort of project schools will reflect a range of schools located in different regions and countries, as well as a range of socioeconomic student/family profiles and diversity of school types — i.e., day and boarding; independent and state; denomination-affiliated and secular; and elementary, middle, and senior divisions. The IBSC will make final program school selections by 27 September 2016, and email all selected schools.

## **Responsibilities of a Project School**

Each project school will:

- Appoint a project coordinator for communication and planning with the researchers.
- Facilitate and enable the in-school research activities associated with the project phases and schedule.
- Select some teachers and school leaders to participate in online or in-school focus groups or interviews as may be required.
- Enable a small team of teachers to attend a regional research workshop in the second year of the project.
- Coordinate with the researchers an in-school process to provide feedback on findings and recommendations associated with a draft framework for character education (in the second year of the project).

## **Benefits for the IBSC**

The significant deliverable is a comprehensive report on the research project, presenting findings that emerge from the key questions for the project and detailing a framework for character education in boys' schools. This framework will not be an "off-the shelf" program, but rather a set of guidelines and processes for schools to engage in review of their character education practices, evaluate their performance against a set of standards, plan for improvement, and demonstrate accountability to outcomes. The final report will be 200-250 pages, followed by a series of appendices. It will include an Executive Summary. There may be additional formats to report the material. There will be opportunities for presentations and workshops on the progress of the research. Lead researchers will make project presentations at the IBSC Annual Conference in both 2017 and 2018.

## **Benefits for Project Schools**

Project schools will enjoy a "front row seat" in the research process and will gain opportunities to collaborate with like-minded schools around the world. As the research phases proceed, project schools will receive regular updates and preliminary reports. In the first year of the research, schools will receive an individualized report from school data analysis. They will be acknowledged in the final report, and recognized for their contribution to this critical global research. Above all, project schools will find that their participation serves as a catalyst for school improvement in the realm of character education.

## **Cost to Project School**

Project schools will pay a participation fee of US \$2,000, paid in two equal installments on or before 1 October 2016 and 1 October 2017. To ensure a broad cross-section of schools participating in the research project, the IBSC will offer some financial assistance to project schools that qualify. Any school interested in receiving such assistance should contact Amy Ahart at [ahart@theibcs.org](mailto:ahart@theibcs.org) by 16 September 2016.