



# PRESS KIT



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**Empathy (n):  
The ability to  
understand the  
feelings and  
perspectives  
of others and  
to use that  
understanding  
to guide one's  
actions.**

*"I want my son to be respected in his classroom not because he got a perfect score on his SAT's, not because he's the smartest kid in the class. I want him to be respected because he's the best teacher in the class; because he communicates well; because he has empathy for his peers; because he's always willing to stop what he is doing to help one of his friends."*

Sal Khan, Khan Academy



## Start Empathy Press Kit

### ATTENTION EDITORS, PUBLISHERS, AND REPORTERS:

Empathy is emerging alongside reading and math as a core skill that young people must master to succeed in a world that is increasingly characterized by constant change. This trend is highlighted for the first time in a primetime telecast on ABC, NBC, FOX, and CBS News on September 11<sup>th</sup>, as part of an initiative to spark innovation in education called Think It Up (for more info, see: [www.thinkitup.org](http://www.thinkitup.org)).

In this Press Kit, you find a list of schools and social entrepreneurs that are leading this trend across the US and globally, as well as a few compelling examples of Ashoka's Changemaker Schools and Empathy Fellows that are empowering students to graduate with a sense of purpose and the courage to innovate, to challenge the status quo, and to improve the society they live in. For an example, [this video](#) from Think It Up's national broadcast introduces Changemaker High School in Tucson, Arizona, just one of dozens of Changemaker Schools across the country where empathy is the new literacy: it lies at the heart of teamwork, good leadership, and real-world problem-solving.

To tap into these stories of empathy, we have included in the following pages the contact information of Ashoka staff who can connect you to our network. Also given is data from one of our partners that illustrates why empathy and social-emotional competence is a core skill that young people will require to navigate a world of constant change, unprecedented connectivity, and complexity.

What are you waiting for? Get started:

- **Read** about Ashoka's larger vision, and explore more resources on [startempathy.org/press](http://startempathy.org/press).
- **Get inspired** by our Changemaker Schools and Empathy Fellows (a few featured below).
- **Connect** with our team to tap into our network, interview schools, fellows, and staff (including Ashoka founder and CEO, Bill Drayton), and create content that will captivate your audiences.

## Why Empathy? About Start Empathy and Ashoka

**The moment is now.** The world of repetition—of mastering a task or trade and doing it over and over—has been being replaced by one of rapid change. 60 percent of our current jobs will soon be obsolete. New rules, new openness, and new connectivity require different sets of skills just to keep up, let alone thrive. In this new environment, relationships matter more than ever, and so does empathy.

Meanwhile, society's social challenges are increasingly complex and global, where the decisions of one can affect the whole. Empathy motivates us to act and build something better together. The faster we master empathy, the faster we can shape a world where problems no longer outrun solutions.

**It's time for our education system to catch up to these new realities.** This is why Ashoka, the world's founding organization of social entrepreneurship, has created its **Start Empathy Initiative**: a global collaboration of social entrepreneurs, educators, parents and students – working to make empathy as essential as reading and math in early education.

Start Empathy has identified over 170 schools around the world who are already practicing **changemaker education** in their curricula and culture, distinctively cultivating empathy, leadership, creative problem solving, and teamwork in their students. These **Changemaker Schools** are empowering young people to step into the world with a sense of purpose, with the confidence that they can improve the society they live in, and with the moral compass and courage to contribute to the common good.

**Empathy is the new literacy:** it is the foundation our students need to succeed as changemakers in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By sharing the stories of our students, educators, social entrepreneurs, and other changemakers, we hope to create a world where every young person masters empathy.

*Want a quote from our team? Reach out to:*

*Michael Zakarias ([mzakaras@ashoka.org](mailto:mzakaras@ashoka.org)) to interview a member of the Start Empathy team.*

*Terry Donovan ([tdonovan@ashoka.org](mailto:tdonovan@ashoka.org)) to interview Bill Drayton, Founder and CEO of Ashoka.*

*To learn more about Ashoka, check out more resources at [startempathy.org/press](http://startempathy.org/press) or visit [ashoka.org](http://ashoka.org).*

**“WHAT DEFINES AND DIFFERENTIATES GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL? WE EXCEL—AND IN FACT I BELIEVE WE LEAD—IN PRODUCING CHANGEMAKERS. WE ARE WORKING TO FOSTER THIS CAPACITY SO THAT GDS STUDENTS AND ALUMNI WILL BE ABLE TO MEANINGFULLY IMPACT A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD. A CRUCIAL PART OF ACHIEVING THIS PLAN IS PARTICIPATING IN ASHOKA CHANGEMAKER SCHOOLS NETWORK, ALLOWING US TO LEARN FROM OTHER SCHOOLS’ BEST PRACTICES IN CHANGEMAKER EDUCATION.”**

**Georgetown Day**  
Head of School Russell Shaw



## Stories of Empathy from our Network

The following are a few stories of how our Changemaker Schools and Empathy Fellows are putting empathy in action.

To contact any of the schools or fellows featured below, reach out to Valentina Raman: [vraman@ashoka.org](mailto:vraman@ashoka.org). Contacts for other schools and fellows are given at end of this section.

### Changemaker Schools

#### **ARIZONA'S SUPERSTAR: Changemaker High School (Tucson, AZ)\***

*\*This school was highlighted in Think It Up's national broadcast on September 11, 2015.*

In a state that ranks 49th in expenditures on education and has the second highest poverty rate in the country, an urban high school is turning challenge into change. At Changemaker High School, 100 percent of students are actively engaged in their own projects to make the world a better place. The school recently changed its name to reflect its unique school culture, where students find ways to address real-world issues through empathy and social entrepreneurship. One student wrote an op-ed piece that was published in the *Arizona Daily Star* that helped persuade the region's electric company to stop burning coal. The experience taught her that "I can actually do something. I am making history, not just learning about it."

#### **A CROSS-COUNTRY COLLABORATION: Opal School (Portland, OR), Mission Hill School (Boston, MA), Blue School (New York, NY), and Brooklyn New School (New York, NY)**

What brings four schools, public and private, from opposite ends of America together? A shared battle: "We are constantly fighting against a diminished vision of what teaching and learning is," laments Matt Karlsen of the Opal School, explaining how conversation on empathy in education today has boiled down to cursory lists ("5 ways to teach empathy...") and similarly shallow writing. After connecting with fellow Changemaker schools in the northeast last April, the Opal School, Mission Hill School, Blue School, and Brooklyn New School set out to define, document, and share what empathy looks like among young children. "It may just be two kids passing a crayon," says Kathy of Mission Hill. To capture the beauty of these small moments, a film crew arrived at their schools last week.

#### **ENGAGING THE WHOLE STUDENT: Mission Grammar School (Boston, MA)**

This is what empathy looks like at Mission Grammar: in pre-K, the school's youngest scholars are sharing, cooperating, and learning to be good a friend to peers. By the third grade, they are masters at communicating their feelings, articulating what they see in others, and resolving conflict in a reflective rather than reactive way. By the spring of fourth grade, they take a stand to improve their community:

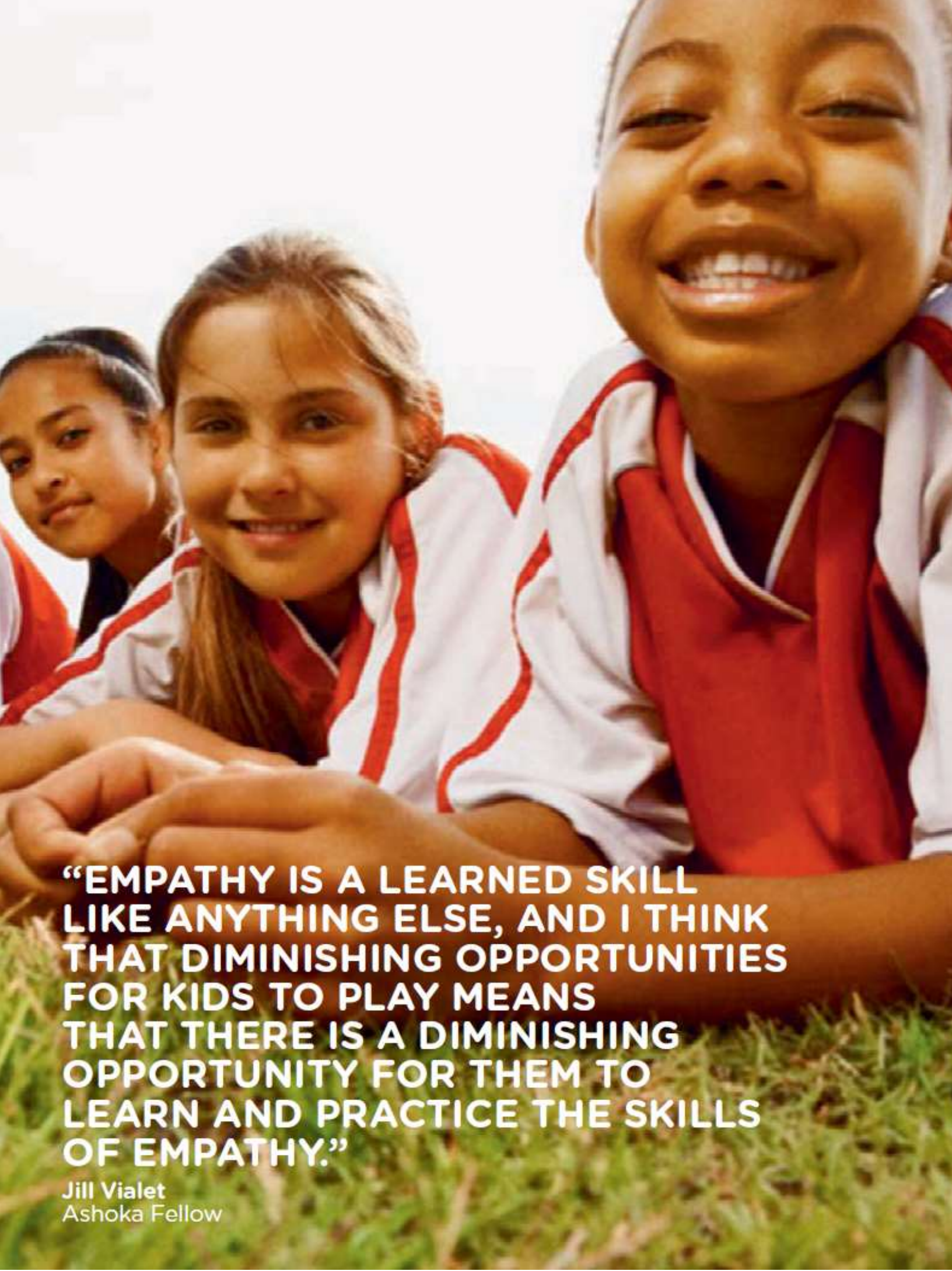
bringing recycling to the school and creating a “Peacemaking Song Book.” What’s the secret? “We support the *whole* child—emotionally, academically, and spiritually,” explains Allie Duncan, Principal at Mission Grammar. Their next mission: engaging the whole family.

## Other US Changemaker Schools

To get in touch with any of the schools below, contact Hannah Borowsky: [hborowsky@ashoka.org](mailto:hborowsky@ashoka.org).

Academy for Global Citizenship (Chicago, IL)  
Anansi Charter School (Taos, NM)  
Belmont-Cragin Elementary (Chicago, IL)  
Blue School (New York, NY)  
Bridport Central School (Bridport, VT)  
Brooklyn New School (New York, NY)  
Central Park East 1 (New York, NY)  
Changemaker High School (Tucson, AZ)  
Christa McAuliffe School (Saratoga, CA)  
City Neighbors High School (Baltimore, MD)  
Coral Canyon Elementary (Washington, UT)  
Cottonwood Creek Elementary (Coppell, TX)  
Cunningham Elementary School (Austin, TX)  
Cypress Hills Community School (New York, NY)  
E.L. Haynes Public Charter (Washington, DC)  
Eastwood Elementary School (West Fargo, ND)  
Environmental Charter High School (Lawndale, CA)  
Ephesus Elementary School (Chapel Hill, NC)  
Georgetown Day School (Washington, DC)  
Granville T. Woods Elementary (New York, NY)  
Highlands Elementary School (Edina, MN)  
Hyde-Addison Elementary School (Washington, DC)  
Inspired Teaching School (Washington, DC)  
John Stanford International School (Seattle, WA)  
Khalsa Montessori School (Tucson, AZ)  
Kyrene de los Cerritos Elementary (Phoenix, AZ)  
Lake Forest Park Elementary (Lake Forest Park, WA)  
Lighthouse Community Charter (Oakland, CA)  
Lusher Charter School (New Orleans, LA)  
Malcolm X Elementary School (Berkeley, CA)  
Mary Buren Elementary School (Guadalupe, CA)  
Maury Elementary School (Washington, DC)  
Mission Grammar School (Roxbury, MA)  
Mission Hill School (Boston, MA)  
Momentous Institute (Dallas, TX)  
Mount Vernon Presbyterian School (Atlanta, GA)  
Mundo Verde Public Charter (Washington, DC)  
Namaste Charter School (Chicago, IL)  
North Glendale Elementary (St. Louis, MO)  
Oak View Elementary (Silver Spring, MD)  
Opal School (Portland, OR)  
Orchards Elementary (Lewiston, ID)  
Park Forest Elementary School (State College, PA)  
Project School (Bloomington, IN)  
Promise Heights Partnership (Baltimore, MD)  
Prospect Sierra School (El Cerrito, CA)  
Rainbow School (Asheville, NC)  
Saint Ann Academy (Bridgeport, CT)  
Salem Hills Elementary (Inver Grove Heights, MN)  
Sammamish High School (Bellevue, WA)  
San Diego Cooperative Charter (San Diego, CA)  
San Miguel Elementary (Sunnyvale, CA)  
Sequoyah School (Pasadena, CA)  
Shady Hill School (Cambridge, MA)  
Spring Mill Elementary (Indianapolis, IN)  
St. Madeleine Sophie School (Bellevue, WA)  
STAR School (Flagstaff, AZ)  
Summit Elementary (Casper, WY)  
Sustainability Academy (Burlington, VT)  
The Nueva School (Hillsborough, CA)  
Thomas Magnet School (Shelbyville, TN)  
THRIVE Academy (Baton Rouge, LA)  
Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School (New York, NY)  
Two Rivers Charter School (Washington, DC)  
University of Wyoming Lab School (Laramie, WY)  
Urban Montessori Charter School (Oakland, CA)  
Voyager Academy (Durham, NC)  
Westtown School (West Chester, PA)  
Youth Initiative High School (Viroqua, WI)

We also have over 100 schools globally (44 in Europe, 37 in Africa, 27 in Latin America, and 7 in Asia). If you would like to connect to a Global Changemaker School, contact Dana Mekler: [dmekler@ashoka.org](mailto:dmekler@ashoka.org).



**“EMPATHY IS A LEARNED SKILL LIKE ANYTHING ELSE, AND I THINK THAT DIMINISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR KIDS TO PLAY MEANS THAT THERE IS A DIMINISHING OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO LEARN AND PRACTICE THE SKILLS OF EMPATHY.”**

Jill VIALET  
Ashoka Fellow



## Empathy Fellows

### **BUILDING BALTIMORE: Thread, the new social fabric**

Co-founded by [Sarah Hemminger](#), CEO and Ashoka Fellow

In the wake of violent rioting in Baltimore last spring, Thread is rallying up the city's youth with renewed vigor. "We are radically recreating the support structure for youth," says Sarah Hemminger, CEO and Co-Founder of Thread, an organization that is reinventing the traditional mentorship model by weaving together extended "families" of underperforming high school students, committed volunteers, students' biological families, and community-based collaborators to create a supportive structure where every young person thrives. This year, Thread is growing their reach to 3000 students in Baltimore. Given that 100 percent of Thread's students have graduated high school within 5 years of joining the organization, the team expects to move the needle on the city's graduation rate significantly. In the wake of this year's devastating riots and the reality of a segregated city, Thread is overcoming community barriers by inviting *all* Baltimoreans to invest in its young people. To them, investing in the city's youth is investing in Baltimore, and investing in Baltimore is investing in America.

VIDEO: [An extended "family" for at-risk youth](#) (2:00)

### **IMAGINING A BETTER FUTURE: The Harry Potter Alliance's new campaign**

Co-founded by [Andrew Slack](#), Movement Director and Ashoka Fellow

"There is this crazy debate we're having in education, and it doesn't make sense to me in any way," says Andrew Slack, referring to students' unequal agency in the national conversations about education reform - where talk of test scores and teachers' unions overshadow the voices of young people. "We need a revolution in learning that really respects the humanity of our students." Conducting what he calls "cultural acupuncture" - seizing powerful threads in our popular culture, and directing that energy toward positive social ends - Andrew is inviting young people to be changemakers in a way that is authentic and relevant. In 2005, Slack co-founded the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), an organization that makes activism accessible to youth by connecting real-life social issues to the ones Harry and his friends face in the books. Now Slack has shifted his focus to launch the Imagine Better Project, a movement to create learning environments that give rise to the complex inner lives and civic potential of all youth. The first steps taken: creating a re-imagined curriculum based on past HPA campaigns, and building a community to stimulate our collective "civic imagination".

VIDEO: [Be The Hero You Read About](#) (2:53)

### **FIGHTING STRESS IN SCHOOLS: Turnaround for Children**

Founded by [Pamela Cantor](#), M.D., President/CEO and Ashoka Fellow

Not every child has the same trigger. Violence, insecurity, loss, hardship and disruption - these are the challenges facing children growing up in poverty. These students - one in five in the United States - carry these challenges to the schoolhouse door. "Chronic stress affects your brain chemistry, working memory and functions," states Pamela Cantor, Founder, President, and CEO of Turnaround for Children, an organization that has partnered with 11 high-poverty schools in the U.S. to transform public school culture and mitigate the impact of traumatic stress on child development. Turnaround's targeted intervention begins with building

trust, training teachers to manage and diffuse destructive behaviors in the classroom. “It’s one thing when there is one or two children in the classroom facing adversity. But when there are 25 under stress, learning gets derailed for everybody.” On the agenda for this year: giving schools a framework for turning around their schools on their own.

Video: [Preparing Classrooms for Poverty](#) (2:24)

### **ELIMINATING SELF-DOUBT: Eye-to-Eye**

Co-founded by [David Flink](#), CEO and Ashoka Fellow

Eye to Eye is out to reclaim the negative labels that have been placed on so many young people who learn differently than the average student. “While ‘LD’ legally means ‘learning disability’, to others it means ‘learning differences’ and to many it means ‘living with doubt’,” explains David Flick, Co-founder and CEO of Eye-to-Eye, the only national mentoring movement that pairs young people with LD/ADHD with college and high school mentors who have been similarly labeled. The organization, which was founded by individuals with LD/ADHD, helps youth “come out” about their learning differences, self-advocate in their communities, and achieve their own definitions of success. “We see our young leaders as changemakers: they will be future bosses, entrepreneurs, policymakers.” Eye-to-Eye is building the national conversation by inviting celebrities to share openly about their LD/ADHD, and will be releasing a special announcement in the coming months.

VIDEO: [From Learning Disability to Learning Difference](#) (2:34)

### **Other Ashoka Fellows working in youth years**

To get in touch with any of the schools below, contact Brittany Koteles: [bkoteles@ashoka.org](mailto:bkoteles@ashoka.org).

Abby Falik (Global Citizen Year)

Aleta Margolis (Center for Inspired Teaching)

Alexandra Bernadotte (Beyond 12)

Andrew Mangino (The Future Project)

Bill Jackson (Great Schools)

Chris Balme (Spark)

Dana Mortenson (World Savvy)

Darell Hammond (KaBOOM!)

David Castro (i-LEAD)

David Domenici (See Forever)

David Levin (Knowledge is Power Program)

David Wish (Little Kids Rock)

Eboo Patel (Interfaith Youth Core)

Elisabeth Stock (Computers for Youth)

Ellen Moir (New Teacher Center)

Eric Dawson (Peace First)

Eric Glustrom (Educate!)

J.B. Schramm (College Summit)

Jeff Edmondson (Strive Together)

Jill Vialet (Playworks)

Jim McCorkell (College Possible)

Jim Thompson (Positive Coaching Alliance)

John Danner (Rocketship Education)

Jose-Pablo Fernandez (Parents Alliance)

Kristin Hayden (OneWorld Now!)

Larry Rosenstock (High Tech High)

Louise Langheier (Peer Health Exchange)

Mary Gordon (Roots of Empathy)

Michael Feinberg (KIPP)

Michael McCullough (Quest Bridge)

Mike Marriner (Roadtrip Nation)

Mike O'Brien (iMentor)

Molly Barker (Girls on the Run)

Morgan Dixon (GirlTrek)

Nick Tilsen (Thunder Valley CDC)

Norman Atkins (Relay Graduate School of Education)

Philipp Schmidt (Peer 2 Peer University)

Rafael Alvarez (Genesys Works)

Rajiv Vinnakota (SEED)

Scott Hartl (Expeditionary Learning)

Tomas Alvarez (Beats Rhymes & Life)

Trabian Shorters (BMe Community)

Tyrone Bledsoe (Student African American Brotherhood)

## Additional Resources:

### Studies of Empathy's Impact on Youth

Below are a few findings from a study on the impact of social-emotional competence (empathy) on children and families conducted by our partner, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The RWJF Foundation supports research and programs throughout the nation which are working to build a Culture of Health.

We have included this data here to freely use in the creation of your own content.

- For every one-point increase in a child's social competence score in Kindergarten, he/she was 54% more likely to earn a high school diploma
- For every one-point increase in a child's social competence score in Kindergarten, he/she was two times more likely to attain a college degree
- For every one-point increase in a child's social competence score in Kindergarten, he/she was 46% more likely to have a full time job at the age of 25
- For every one-point decrease in a child's social competence score in Kindergarten, he/she had 54% higher chance of having negative interactions with the police
- For every one-point decrease in a child's social competence score in Kindergarten, he/she was 64% higher chance of having time spent in juvenile detention
- Pro social skills mattered more than other factors such as race, geography, gender, family etc.

*For the full study, "How Child Social Competence Impacts Well-Being as an Adult", please visit: <http://bit.ly/1TFDQOw> . To access RWJF's related resource on the topic of social emotional learning and social skills, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1NunfwT>*

*For more tools, research, and literature that we share with our network of Changemaker Schools, visit [startempathy.org](http://startempathy.org).*

Let's inspire:



**Every  
child**

**Every  
parent**

**Every  
teacher**

**Every  
principal**