

# Annual Letter

August 31, 2021

While the past year has been turbulent, we continue to be nimble in response—and we remain steadfast in our mission to advance scientific insights to help all children thrive.

## 2021 Milestones

Even during the pandemic, Character Lab Research Network (CLRN) grew robustly:

- We facilitated 130 research studies, exploring topics that include the impact of the ongoing pandemic and issues of race, equity, and inclusion.
- Consistent with our commitment to promote student voice, we increased the number of student ambassadors from 80 to 118.
- We hosted nearly 400 district and school leaders, students, and strategic partners to our annual Convening, where several scientists shared insights from their research on our platform.
- We launched a new online portal that has dramatically improved and streamlined the researcher experience. Since its debut, our researcher Net Promoter Score has increased from 65 to 81.
- We developed a custom [registry](#) on the Open Science Framework so that all research conducted on CLRN is transparent and publicly accessible.
- Seven new articles were published in top-tier peer-reviewed scientific journals, including:
  - “[Students attending school remotely suffer socially, emotionally, and academically](#),” published in *Educational Researcher*, is the first empirical study using data collected during the pandemic that shows students studying remotely suffered socially, emotionally, and academically compared to those attending school in person. Led by Angela, this study features data collected from Character Lab’s Student Thriving Index.
  - In “[From deficit to benefit: Highlighting lower-SES students’ background-specific strengths reinforces their academic persistence](#),” published in *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, co-authors Ivan Hernandez, David Silverman, and Mesmin Destin present an intervention that frames adversity as building the resilience needed for academic success.
  - In “[Values-alignment messaging boosts adolescents’ motivation to control social media use](#),” published in *Child Development*, CLRN superuser Brian Galla and his collaborators found that framing the motivation to control social media as being aligned with social values that many adolescents care about increases self-regulation.

- In “[When policy and psychology meet: Mitigating the consequences of bias in schools](#),” published in *Science Advances*, lead author Jason Okonofua found that a combination of structural and psychological intervention strategies can mitigate the process by which anti-Black bias contributes to racial disparities in discipline.
- Christina Armenta and her collaborators published “[Satisfied yet striving: Gratitude fosters life satisfaction and improvement motivation in youth](#)” in *Emotion*, which found that spending 10 minutes per week over the course of 1 month increases feelings of life satisfaction and motivation.

We are expanding our actionable advice, based on science, for parents and educators:

- We published 40 new Tips of the Week, nearly half of which were written by guest scientists. Our email subscribers increased 39% to 34,000.
- We expanded our reach through our new syndication partnership with *Psychology Today*, adding to our existing syndications with *Education Week*, *Getting Smart*, *Medium*, *Thrive Global*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- We developed two new Playbooks: [Judgment](#), by Nobel laureate Danny Kahneman and HEC Paris professor Olivier Sibony, and [Decision Making](#) by Boston University professor Carey Morewedge.
- We formalized partnerships with a range of mission-aligned organizations, including [USA Swimming](#), [YMCA Philadelphia](#), [Qualtrics](#), [Along](#), and [nXu](#).

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

While we recognize that building an anti-racist organization requires continued work, we’ve taken important steps in our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI):

- We “graduated” our first cohort and welcomed our second cohort of Character Lab Fellows, a talent recruitment program targeted to increase representation on the Character Lab team. Both Fellows from our inaugural cohort have joined the Character Lab team in permanent positions.
- We created team professional development and learning opportunities on DEI topics and partnered with a consultancy, *Cultured Enuf*, to create an action plan to identify and meet our DEI goals.
- We completed our transition to a fully distributed workplace, which has helped us build a talented and diverse team.

## Looking Ahead

In the coming year, we are excited to embrace our core value of kaizen, improving our work in three ways:

- We will focus on partnerships with schools that serve high proportions of students who are Black, Latinx, or experiencing poverty.

- We will expand our recruitment of underrepresented scientists as members of Research Network and as writers for Tip of the Week.
- We will develop strategic partnerships that allow us to reach a broader community of parents and educators.

As always, we are grateful for your support and encouragement.

With grit and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Talamas".

Sean Talamas  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Duckworth".

Angela Duckworth  
Founder and CEO