

The New York Times

September 18, 2012

To the Editor:

In reviewing Paul Tough's new book, "How Children Succeed," Joe Nocera is in sync with a Times editorial of March 20, 1995, "A Youth Program That Worked," in which you praised the Quantum Opportunities Program. Quantum showed that poor inner-city high school students could improve grades, graduate at higher rates and get into less trouble through quality after-school mentoring that promoted noncognitive skills as well as academic excellence.

Today, some of us who are refining Quantum around the country recognize the importance of character-building and persistence by encouraging not just community service but also youth leadership. For example, in one inner-city school, student media advocacy resulted in improved standardized testing policy less biased against the poor.

Quantum and a number of the successes in "How Children Succeed" were evaluated through random assignment of youths into program and control groups. To their credit, federal agencies like the Justice and Education Departments are now encouraging such evidence-based demonstrations of "what works."

But isolated evidence-based proof is not enough. What works must be replicated to scale. For that, we need the "new will" called for by the 1968 Kerner Commission after the country's worst big-city riots.

ALAN CURTIS

President

Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation

Washington, Sept. 11, 2012