

**PRESS ADVISORY:**

**Statement of Michael Josephson\* for the Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics  
Concerning the Desarrollando Carácter Initiative**

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In December 2017, the Puerto Rico Department of Education contracted with the nonprofit Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics to design and implement Desarrollando Carácter, a custom, comprehensive, multi-faceted initiative to be introduced to Puerto Rico Public schools.

This initiative is the most comprehensive, sophisticated and, by all early reports, the most effective program the Institute has ever implemented. We are eager for the Puerto Rican public to learn about this effort to improve the education and lives of Puerto Rican children and their families.

Intended to commence in the 2017-2018 school year, finalization of the contract was delayed by the hurricane that disrupted, among other things, the entire public-school system. Believing that the elements of the program designed to provide social and emotional assistance to students and special support training for educators and parents were vitally needed immediately, the Institute undertook the responsibility to implement the program under tremendous time pressure.

**Why is this program needed?**

The combined effect of long-term and ongoing economic strife and the physical and emotional trauma suffered by so many Puerto Rican families from the recent hurricane have damaged school sites and traumatized children, educators and their families in a manner that threatens the ability of schools to provide the education all Puerto Rican students deserve. The problem is compounded by the ongoing dislocation and emigration of Puerto-Rican families including students, administrators and support staff. This tumult has caused the hundreds of thousands of children who remain on the Island severe emotional stress that is likely to increase misconduct and violence on school campuses and impede or prevent effective learning. If these issues are not addressed now in a significant way the problems will surely get worse. This jeopardizes the well-being of all Puerto Ricans, especially its children.

This is the context in which the Josephson Institute agreed to undertake what most would consider an impossible task – to create and implement a comprehensive academic, character-building social and emotional support system for implementation within only a few months.

This is the most important project the Institute has ever undertaken and has been our top priority. We are confident that the Desarrollando Carácter Initiative will have a meaningful and sustainable positive impact, validating the bold and visionary decision to allocate federally provided funds to create and install the program.

**Why was the Josephson Institute of Ethics Selected?**

Basic research will show that the Josephson Institute of Ethics (a 501(c)3 a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded in 1985) is by experience and expertise uniquely qualified to meet the Department of Education's assignment to immediately implement a comprehensive student and school support

program to create a safe school climate conducive to learning, instill and reinforce core values in students help them develop critical academic and social emotional life skills.

We respectfully contend that research will also support the conclusion that there is no organization or vendor in the world with anything close to the Institute's track record and extensive collection of proprietary copyrighted materials and strategies required by this assignment: to implement a program immediately in nearly 1,100 schools, reaching approximately 350,000 students, over 25,000 teachers and more than 300,000 parents.

The Institute's custom school-based programs have no peer. Its CHARACTER COUNTS! program, founded in 1993, has been used by tens of thousands of schools for tens of millions of students in the United States as well as Puerto Rico, Colombia and Bolivia. Prior to Desarrollando Carácter, the Tus Valores Cuentan (TVC) program in Puerto Rico was the largest and most successful program of its type undertaken anywhere in the world. Whereas TVC was incrementally increased to reach about 440 schools in its third year, the Desarrollando Carácter program is reaching nearly 1,100 schools in its first year.

The stature of the Josephson Institute's CHARACTER COUNTS! program is dramatically confirmed by the fact that every year since 1993 the United States Senate has passed a bi-partisan Resolution and the President of the United States has signed a Proclamation declaring the third week in October as National CHARACTER COUNTS! Week.

The Institute's professional credentials also include a substantial array of customized ethics and leadership programs for major **sports organizations**, including Pursuing Victory with Honor, Make U.S. Proud (for the U.S. Olympic Committee) and Logrando la Victoria con Honor for the Puerto Rico Department of Sports and Recreation; **public corporations**, including Johnson & Johnson and Kroger; **government organizations**, including the IRS, Department of Defense, state legislatures and the Puerto Rico Office of Government Ethics; and **police organizations**, including the U.S. Department of Justice - Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), California Peace Officers Standards and Training, various metropolitan police departments, and the Puerto Rico Police Department.

Puerto Rico Experience. The Josephson Institute of Ethics was the logical choice of the Department of Education based on the Institute's successful and extensive experience in Puerto Rico supported by its wide-ranging array of copyrighted material and language already entrenched in many institutions throughout the Island, including all government ethics training courses.

The Institute's impact in Puerto Rico began in 2010 with a comprehensive survey of more than 1000 educators, political and civic leaders to assure that all materials and training reflected Puerto Rican values and traditions. This step, as a critical part of the Josephson Institute's preparation in unprecedented.

Between 2010-2012, the Josephson Institute developed and delivered fully customized programs for:

- 1) Fortaleza - multi-day programs for senior officials including for the Governor and most department secretaries. Michael Josephson also delivered several comprehensive reports to the Governor's cabinet.

- 2) Office of Government Ethics – Josephson Institute strategies including the Six Pillars of Character and Five Principles of Government Ethics are incorporated in all required OGE training programs for state employees.
- 3) Acuden – Josephson Institute strategies and materials have been incorporated in employee training and evaluation for Puerto Rico’s pre-school programs.
- 4) Department of Sports and Recreation – The Josephson Institute developed and delivered Logrando la Victoria con Honor, sportsmanship and character-building training program for thousands of coaches and sports administrators.
- 5) Department of Education – Josephson Institute designed and offered a program on education ethics for senior managers of the Department of Education.
- 6) Puerto Rico Police Department – Josephson Institute’s original policing materials were incorporated in academy training and training for community relations officers.

Behavior Improvement. According to statistics compiled and published by the Puerto Rico Department of Education in 2011, after the first year of implementation of the Tus Valores Cuentan, instances of unacceptable behavior requiring discipline decreased by 33% while reported violent aggressive behavior went down by 20%; inappropriate sexual behavior went down 38%; situations involving police dropped by 27%.

Engagement and Support. A 2012 study (designed by an independent evaluator at Iowa State University) of 316 elementary and secondary schools serving nearly 180,000 students showed that after the second year of implementation of Tus Valores Cuentan, 86% of the school directors said that the program was effective and that they were personally committed to continue developing it at their school; 79% said the program should be expanded to all schools. The level of parent support was highlighted by the fact that more than 32,000 parents completed a survey about program and 90% said it was very important that program is continued. [See attachments].

### **Does the Josephson Institute of Ethics have the capacity to implement such an ambitious program?**

The selection of the Josephson Institute has been validated not only by its past performance with TVC and other programs, but by its current performance. In just a few months (commencing in January 2017) the institute has recruited and trained about 80 full-time educators and supervisors (many with graduate degrees in education). Interviews and training have been completed for another 20 Master Trainer/Mentors (MTs) by the end of March, increasing its staff of Puerto Rican employees to just under 100.

In addition, the Institute has successfully coordinated delivery of more than two hundred 3-day training classes in seven locations throughout the Island for about 8,000 teachers, administrators, social workers and counselors who will serve as on-site coordinators of Desarrollando Carácter. The logistical challenge of locating and renting venues and scheduling the attendance of trainees was, itself a task.

Value Conferred. While it is still early, the initial reaction of teachers, school directors and parents has been unprecedented in its uniformity and enthusiasm. Educators and parents immediately see the enormous value of the program and have expressed great gratitude for it. We urge any journalist or political figure interested in evaluating the worth of Desarrollando Carácter to visit campuses and see for themselves. Conversations with those already impacted will convince the most skeptical critic that this is a very good thing.

Scope. Once again, we call attention to both the enormous scope of the program and the necessity to flawlessly execute it under extremely difficult time constraints. The contract calls for support and training for as many as 1,100 schools, up to 350,000 students, 23,000 teachers and more than 300,000 parents.

Content: The Josephson Institute continually develops and refines copyrighted strategies used by thousands of schools and millions of children. The program designed and being implemented for the Desarrollando Carácter Initiative is the most advanced and comprehensive program ever. It includes features such as parent training and resiliency modules not previously included and a larger ratio of trained teachers per school than previous programs.

- Desarrollando Carácter is built on Character Counts 5.0 and represents a dramatic advance over the successful Tus Valores Cuentan program that dramatically improved student behavior, academic performance and parent and student engagement.
- Elements of Desarrollando Carácter are built on evidence-based research on student development and creating a positive school culture and incorporate key principles and strategies from every major recent educational initiative including: Character Development, Social & Emotional Learning, Critical Thinking, Whole Child, Common Core, Climate and Culture, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes, Change Theory, Growth Mindset, and Anti-Bullying / Pro-Kindness
- Supported by newly developed for Puerto Rico individual student workbooks to systematically help students develop the critical skills and character traits contained in the Josephson Institute's Model Standards for Academic, Social Emotional, Character Development featuring its copyrighted Four Wheels of Success.
- Desarrollando Carácter includes newly designed modules to help teachers and students develop resiliency and other emotional skills to deal with traumas caused by the recent hurricanes.
- Josephson Institute's corps of soon to be 100 MTs provide on-site technical assistance at each campus twice per month.
- MTs also present parent workshops at each campus – a feature not included in any other Josephson Institute program.
- To assure that the program is effectively implemented the Institute employs nine regional MT coordinators and two senior supervisors.
- The program includes external validation of impact.

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\* Michael Josephson, a former law professor and founder of a successful legal education company, created the Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics in 1985 in honor of his parents. He serves without salary as President and CEO of the Institute and is the chief architect of CHARACTER COUNTS!. Mr. Josephson has personally been responsible for the overall design and oversight of the Desarrollando Carácter Initiative.

## 2012 Survey of Parents/Caregivers\*

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*A survey designed by Iowa State University asked the parents and caregivers of all students at the 316 schools participating in the Tus Valores Cuentan pilot program to indicate the impact of the program on the beliefs and behaviors of their child.*

*Proportion of parents/caregivers who said that their child was more or much more likely to:*

### **Academics**

- Believe it's important to have a good education 95%
- Want to do well in school 95%
- Think he/she can do well in school with effort 95%
- Want to graduate from high school 95%
- Wants to go to college 91%

### **Social/Emotional Development**

- Tries to understand how others feel 85%
- Understands that failing is part of success 72%

### **Character and Ethics**

- Thinks all people should be treated with respect 89%
- Takes advantage of educational opportunities at school 86%
- Helps classmates 80%
- Thinks that doing the right thing is more important than money. 79%
- Refrains from getting in fights at school 77%
- Thinks a man should not hit a woman 58%
- Thinks a woman should not hit a man 58%

*Proportion of parents/caregivers who witnessed significant improvement in:*

- My child's motivation to learn 90%
- My child's conduct in school 81%
- Faculty enthusiasm and morale 76%
- The quality of their child's education 85%
- Parent involvement 78%
- Capacity students to resolve conflicts without fighting or violence 70%
- Respectful treatment of parents/caregivers by teachers and administrators 88%

*Proportion of parents/caregivers who agree with the following statements:*

- It's important to me that Tus Valores Cuentan continues at my schools 90%
- Tus Valores Cuentan should be expanded to include all public schools 89%
- Tus Valores Cuentan has made a big difference in my child's school 78%
- Tus Valores Cuentan has improved the quality of education my child receives 78%
- Tus Valores Cuentan has improved my child's conduct 78%
- Tus Valores Cuentan is helping to make society more ethical 83%

\*more than 32,000 parents completed this survey

# Impact of Tus Valores Cuentan

## 2012 Survey of School Directors\*

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A survey designed by Iowa State University asked the 316 school directors participating in the Tus Valores Cuentan pilot program to indicate the impact of the program on student and teacher attitudes and behavior.

### Overall Assessment of Tus Valores Cuentan

Tus Valores Cuentan is much needed. I am committed to continue developing it at my school. 86%  
Tus Valores Cuentan should be expanded to all schools. 79%

### Student Attitudes and Behavior

(Percentage of directors reporting improvement attributable to Tus Valores Cuentan)

#### *Academics*

- Student engagement in education (students do homework, participate in class) 86%
- Student attendance 83%
- Student engagement with school (students participate in school activities) 75%

#### *Conduct*

- Students demonstrate willingness to help each other 93%
- Students treat their teachers with respect 92%
- Student behavior conforms to the Six Pillars of Character 89%
- Students are emotionally and physically safe at school 89%
- Students show pride in their school 89%
- Students treat each other with kindness 86%
- Students resolve conflicts peacefully rather than physical fighting 85%
- Students refrain from graffiti and littering 84%
- Students refrain from bullying 83%
- Students accept responsibility to keep public areas clean and well maintained 83%

### Teacher Attitudes and Behavior

- Teachers treat students more respectfully 90%
- Teachers are more engaged - prepared, creative and dedicated 89%
- Teacher-administrator relationships have improved 89%
- Teacher morale increased (teachers are more enthusiastic and positive about their work at school) 86%
- Teacher attendance improved 83%

\*292 of the 316 school directors responded to the survey