“This American Life contributor Tough (Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada’s Quest to Change Harlem and America) tackles new theories on childhood education with a compelling style that weaves in personal details about his own child and childhood. Personal narratives of administrators, teachers, students, single mothers, and scientists lend support to the extensive scientific studies Tough uses to discuss a new, character-based learning approach.”

—Publishers Weekly

“Turning the conventional wisdom about child development on its head, New York Times Magazine contributing writer Tough argues that non-cognitive skills (persistence, self-control, curiosity, conscientiousness, grit and self-confidence) are the most critical to success in school and life....Well-written and bursting with ideas, this will be essential reading for anyone who cares about childhood in America.”—Kirkus Reviews, starred review

**HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED**

**Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character**

**by PAUL TOUGH**

Journalist Paul Tough has written acclaimed articles about character and childhood in the *New York Times Magazine* and *The New Yorker*, and he chronicled the way one man is changing the lives of poor children in his first book *Whatever it Takes: Geoffrey Canada’s Quest to Change Harlem and America*. This fall comes his newest missive from the frontline of innovation and change, **HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, September 4, 2012).

Why do some children succeed while others fail? In **HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED**, Paul Tough
shows us that it’s not about how much information we can stuff into their brains in the first few years, and it’s not about how highly they score on tests, from preschool admissions to SATs. Tough connects the dots between groundbreaking research in neuroscience, economics, and psychology to show that the qualities that matter most for success have less to do with IQ and more to do with character: skills like grit, curiosity, conscientiousness, and optimism.

Paul Tough’s idea-packed book features a diverse cast of characters changing the way we think about how best to steer children toward success including:

- **Brooklyn middle school chess teacher Elizabeth Spiegel**, who routinely turns C and D students into nationally ranked chess players.
- **Young pediatrics star Dr. Nadine Burke Harris** in San Francisco, who is uncovering the long-lasting biological effects of stress on children. Burke Harris shows that adverse childhood experiences are a risk factor not only for school failure, but also for adult diseases such as heart disease and cancer—and she’s treating children in a very different way because of these effects.
- **Angela Duckworth**, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania who studies self-control and grit. She’s found that it is grit that best predicts high achievement in the National Spelling Bee, and it is grit that can demonstrate which cadets will survive the grueling West Point summer training course known as Beast Barracks.
- **Dominic Randolph**, the head of the prestigious Riverdale Country School, who is working to develop character in his affluent, high-achieving students. As Randolph says, “The idea of building grit and building self-control is that you get that through failure. And in most highly academic environments in the United States, no one fails anything.”

In *HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED*, Paul Tough argues for a different understanding of the idea of character. It is not an innate skill, Tough contends; it’s not something we receive because of good luck or good genes. It is molded by the environment in which we grow up. “Character can be taught not just by parents but by schools, coaches, and mentors as well,” Tough says. “Which means we all have a responsibility to help kids develop their character strengths—as well as their math skills.” Paul Tough’s indelible portraits of children trying to pull themselves back from the brink of failure suggest both the mysteries of character and the promise of brighter futures for more and more children.

**About the Author**

Paul Tough’s first book, *Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada’s Quest to Change Harlem and America*, was published in 2008. He is a contributing writer to the *New York Times Magazine,*
where he has written extensively about education, child development, and poverty. His journalism has also appeared in *The New Yorker*, *GQ*, and on the public-radio program *This American Life*.