(1) “It is the role of education, as an instrument of American Society, to help develop the mental and emotional resources that young people need to cope with the demands of their lives, now and in their future: resilience, efficacy, self-regulation, flexibility, confidence, positivity, self-reliance, interdependence, and, yes, even a sense of humor.” (Costa & Kallick, p. 8)

Through incorporation of working on different dispositions in the school these attributes can be accomplished. Most schools align their mission statement with these descriptive words and through awareness of dispositions these goals can be met. It is important to not only understand what answers a student can get correct, but also how those students will behave when they do not know the correct answer.

“Our desire is to make curriculum, instruction, and assessments more balanced so that students have the opportunity to learn, practice, and demonstrate the development of dispositions. We want our children to develop those dispositions that lead them to become lifelong learners, effective problem solvers and decision makers, able to communicate with a diverse population and to understand how to live successfully in a rapidly changing, high-tech world.” (Costa & Kallick, p. 15-16)

There will be many associated with implementing a change in the way we view success. There are many forms of assessment that are not being utilized through the standard testing that we have in place now. It is important to look at how students produce knowledge, not only looking at how they reproduce knowledge. The authors continue to come back to the point that a critical attribute of intelligence involves not only having information but also the ability to act accordingly with that information.
“Intelligent people plan for, reflect on, and evaluate the quality of their own thinking skills and strategies. They are spectators of their own thinking. Metacognition means becoming increasingly aware of one’s mental processes and strategies and the effects they produce in others and on the environment: forming internal questions as one searches for information and meaning, developing mental maps or plans of action, mentally rehearsing prior to performance, monitoring those plans as they are employed -- being conscious of the need for mid course correction if the plan is not meeting expectations.” (Costa & Kallick p. 55-56)

This involves being aware of the bigger picture and making plans for the future to be successful at understanding our strengths and weaknesses within the content knowledge. Metacognition is our ability to know what we know and what we don’t know. This is a way for us to plan a strategy, be conscious of what we actually employ during the act of problem solving, and reflection after we have completed the task.

“Therefore, one of the most worthwhile dispositions for students to acquire is that before starting on a new unit or study, some form of metacognitive reflection on what is already known promotes the new learning about to be undertaken.” (Costa & Kallick p. 70-71)

The brain works on a pattern basis and draws off of previous knowledge. There is great power in associating previous knowledge with what students are about to learn, making connections, a road map of sorts. Intelligent humans learn from past experiences and are able to construct meaning from one experience and bring that meaning with them to apply to a new situation that is similar in nature.

“Translating the labels of the dispositions into actions and tactics by asking students to envision what they would see people doing or hear them saying if they are, for example, accurate and precise,
empathetic, or curious. For insights to be useful, they need to be generated from within, not given to individual as conclusions.” (Costa & Kallick p. 31)

It is important to keep the student actively engaged in the entire process of formulation dispositions to enacting them, labeling them, and even role playing with them. To give them a sense of what these dispositions look and feel like, to break the old habits and form new ones.

(2) List of Key Terms and Definitions:

● Dispositions- A habit, a preparation, a state of readiness, or a tendency to act in a specified way.
● Cognitive- mental habits, what goes on in the mind
● Hardwired- manifested within a person from the get go
● Problem- any stimulus, question, task, phenomenon or discrepancy for which an explanation is not immediately known.

The 16 Habits of Mind identified by Costa and Kallick include:

● Persisting
● Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
● Managing impulsivity
● Gathering data through all senses
● Listening with understanding and empathy
● Creating, imagining, innovating
● Thinking flexibly
● Responding with wonderment and awe
● Thinking about thinking (metacognition)
● Taking responsible risks
● Striving for accuracy
- Finding humor
- Questioning and posing problems
- Thinking interdependently
- Applying past knowledge to new situations
- Remaining open to continuous learning

(3) The authors in this text make a very strong argument regarding the values we want out of our education system, are not aligning with what we are measuring in actual schools. There is a large focus on standard based tests which measure the amount of content a student can regurgitate. While we should be shifting the focus onto a broader spectrum, including looking at and putting a value on dispositions. The habits of mind are a way to act intelligently when you do not have the answer to difficult questions. It involves developing a disposition that encourages intelligent thinking when faced with dilemmas and uncertainties in ones work. It involves the use of known information and acting on that information in an intelligent way. It requires the development of patterns that allows someone to think about a problem they are faced with, and come to a better understanding of this problem.

(4) (a) The authors of Dispositions, would argue that the roles and responsibilities of teaching involve looking at and dissecting the different dispositions present, or not present, in their classroom. They would also encourage educators to take some time to determine which dispositions are important in their particular community and school. It would also be imperative that lessons plans incorporate these dispositions that are identified as core values. It would be a teacher's responsibility to encourage students to reflect upon how they used target dispositions and how they could improve their use of them. These dispositions are what really lead to success or failure, in the understanding of, and mastery
of, given standards in the academic world. It is the responsibility of the teacher to reposition a new way to think about how people learn and how to incorporate that into the lessons plans. In an outcome based learning environment, it is typical to have objectives for students to meet, the created standards, then instruction is given, after that there is an assessment of the information learned. However it is dispositions that really, at the core of learning, lead to success or failure in the mastery of given standards and success on the assessment.

(b) Dispositions extends a key theme within Milners text, Start Where You Are, But Don’t Stay There, that we must hold all students to high standards. Teaching through the use of dispositions would continue to raise that bar for students. It would challenge them to not only be able to perform well on content based initiatives, but to be able to “activate relevant content knowledge.” (Costa & Kallick p. 2)

It would be important for students to be held to a high standard on dispositions such as thinking interdependently, persistence, listening and metacognition, this would really make a well rounded and adjusted student. They would be poised for success within and beyond the academic realm and hopefully lessen the disparities within the power structures in todays society.

(5) I learned from the author that I have a tendency to partake in “conversational narcissism”. I learned that to be more of an effective listener, I need to listen with an intent to understand what the person is saying. Instead of trying to think of myself and my responses to what they are saying. That it is imperative that I can paraphrase what a person said without putting my bias or opinion into it. I also learned that there are many dispositions that I excel at and there are many that I lack a lot of skill in. I know that I will always be working on improving my habits of mind. Specifically I need to work on taking a reflective stance while in the middle of active problem solving. It will be a grand task to make these dispositions a habit and fully employ the skills needed to help my students make them habits as well.