



Fundamentals of Effective Character Education

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11 Research-Based Fundamentals

1. The Calling
2. Leadership
3. Adult Culture/Community
4. Internal Consistency
5. Developmental Perspective
6. Empowerment
7. Expectations
8. Data-driven
9. Evidence-based Strategies
10. Professional Development
11. Relationships



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The Calling

- Character education must be an authentic and central part of the mission, vision, and purpose of the school.
- It must be invoked strategically whenever changes or innovations in practice or policy are being evaluated.



Leadership

- School and/or district leadership must be authentically and deeply committed to character education
- Leadership style must correspond to character education philosophy; e.g., mission-focused, servant leadership that empowers and respects others



Adult Culture/Community

- Adults in the school must function as a caring professional learning community
- They must “walk the talk” and “talk the walk”
- They must treat each other as they want students to behave...with character!



Internal Consistency

- Schools of character have policies and practices that are consistent with each other and with the mission of the school
- Do an internal audit of policy and practice
- Students have radar for hypocrisy and inconsistency
- Not only individuals but institutions must “walk the talk”



Developmental Perspective

- The character education initiative must be constructed through a developmental lens
- There needs to be a clear understanding of where character comes from (source) and how it develops (path).
- Just as one should not raise a child without understanding development, one should not educate a child without the same knowledge



Empowerment

- Character develops in part through as sense of one's autonomy
- Character education should focus on the empowerment of all stakeholders: teachers, administrators, support staff, students, parents, community members, etc.
- A philosophy of empowerment should be at the heart of the school



Expectations

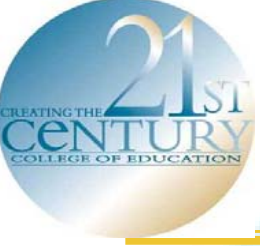
- A school of character has high expectations for both character and academic achievement.
- It also provides the effective supports (scaffolding) to maximize the likelihood that students will be able to achieve both



Data-Driven

- Effective implementation should include the collection of valid, relevant data
- It should also include the systematic feedback of and reflection upon such data to inform and improve practice.





Evidence-Based Strategies

- The implementation strategies selected should be theoretically justified.
- They should also be chosen because research has demonstrated their effectiveness.



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Professional Development

- Character education *is* rocket science!
- Schools and districts should invest heavily in professional development for effective implementation to ensue.
- A school of character is a professional learning community dedicated to quality character education.



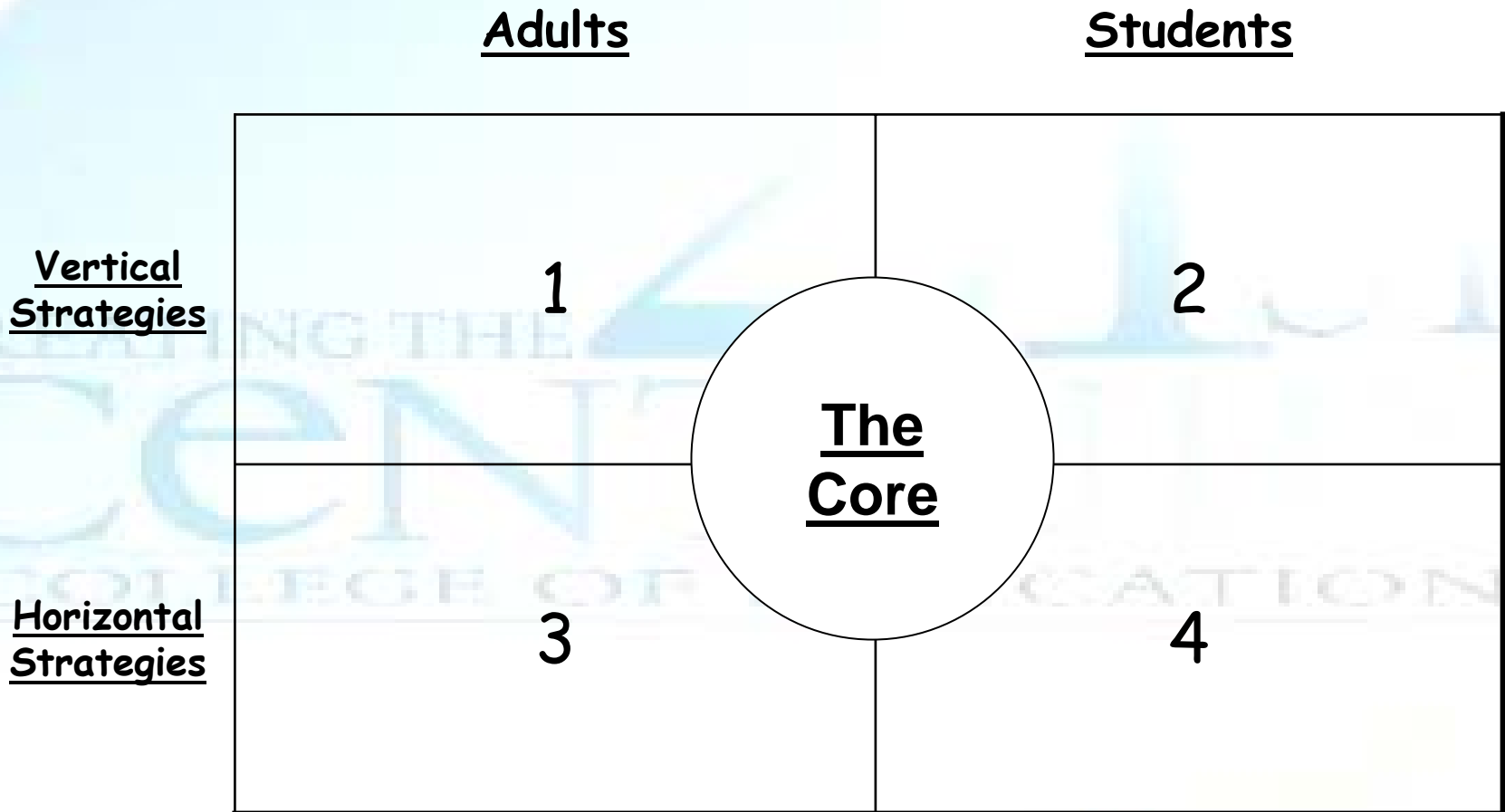
Relationships

- The 3 R's of character education are Relationships, Relationships, Relationships
- Need to consider ways to doing the same work that also build positive relationships
- Relationships should be targeted within and between all stakeholder groups



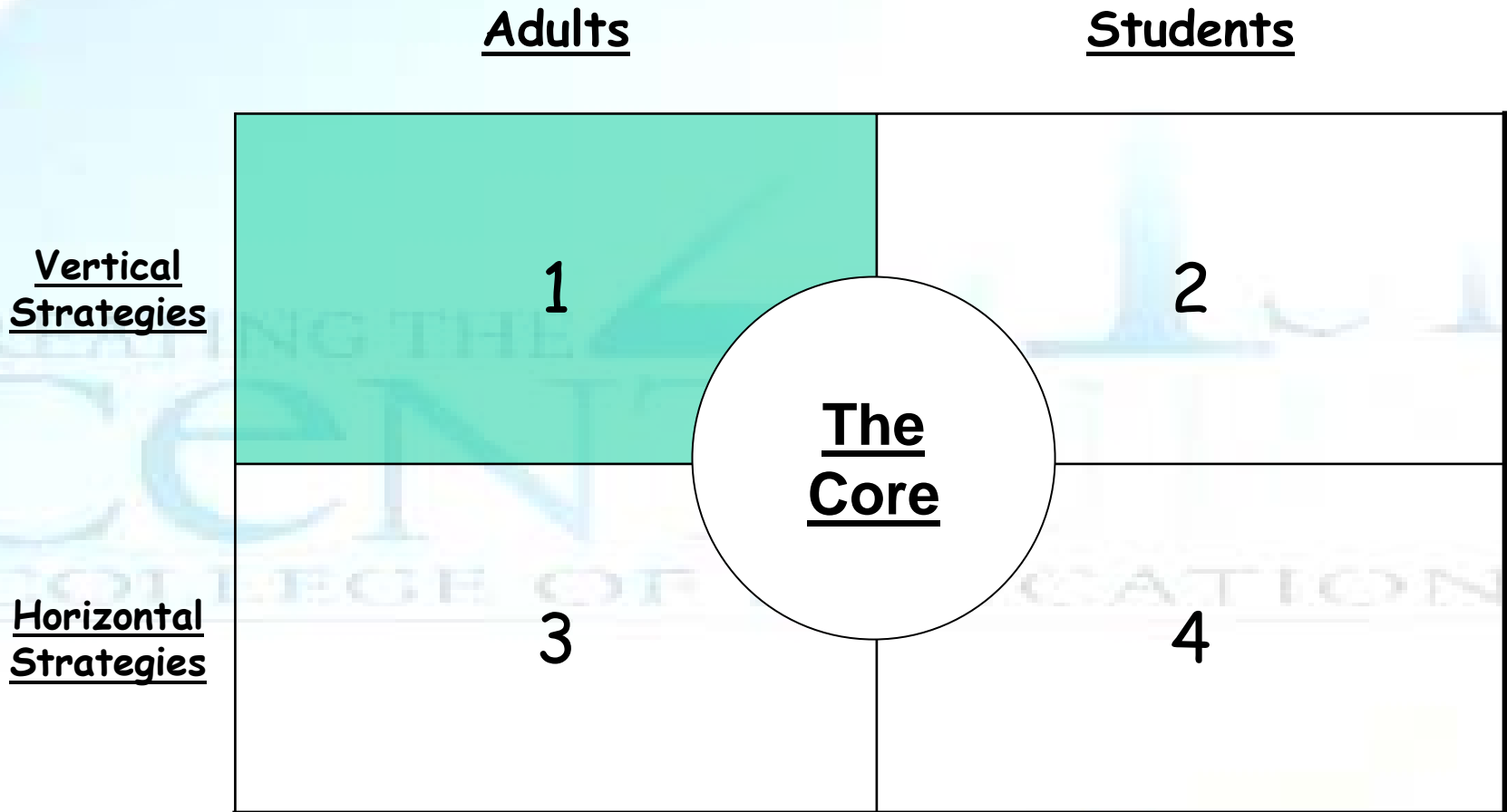


Putting It All Together



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Adult-focused Vertical Strategies

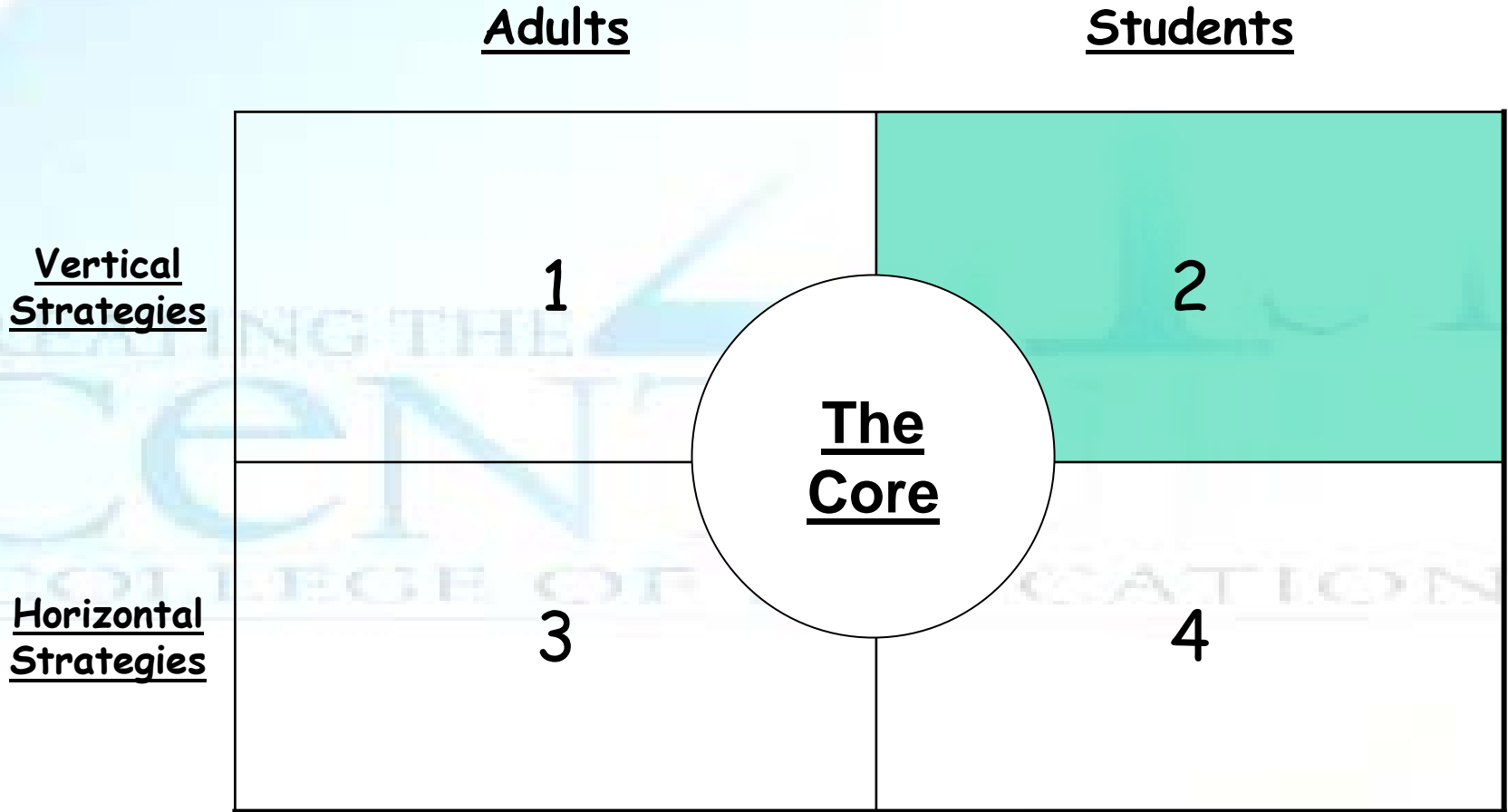
- Vertical teaming
- Buddy classrooms
- District-wide committees



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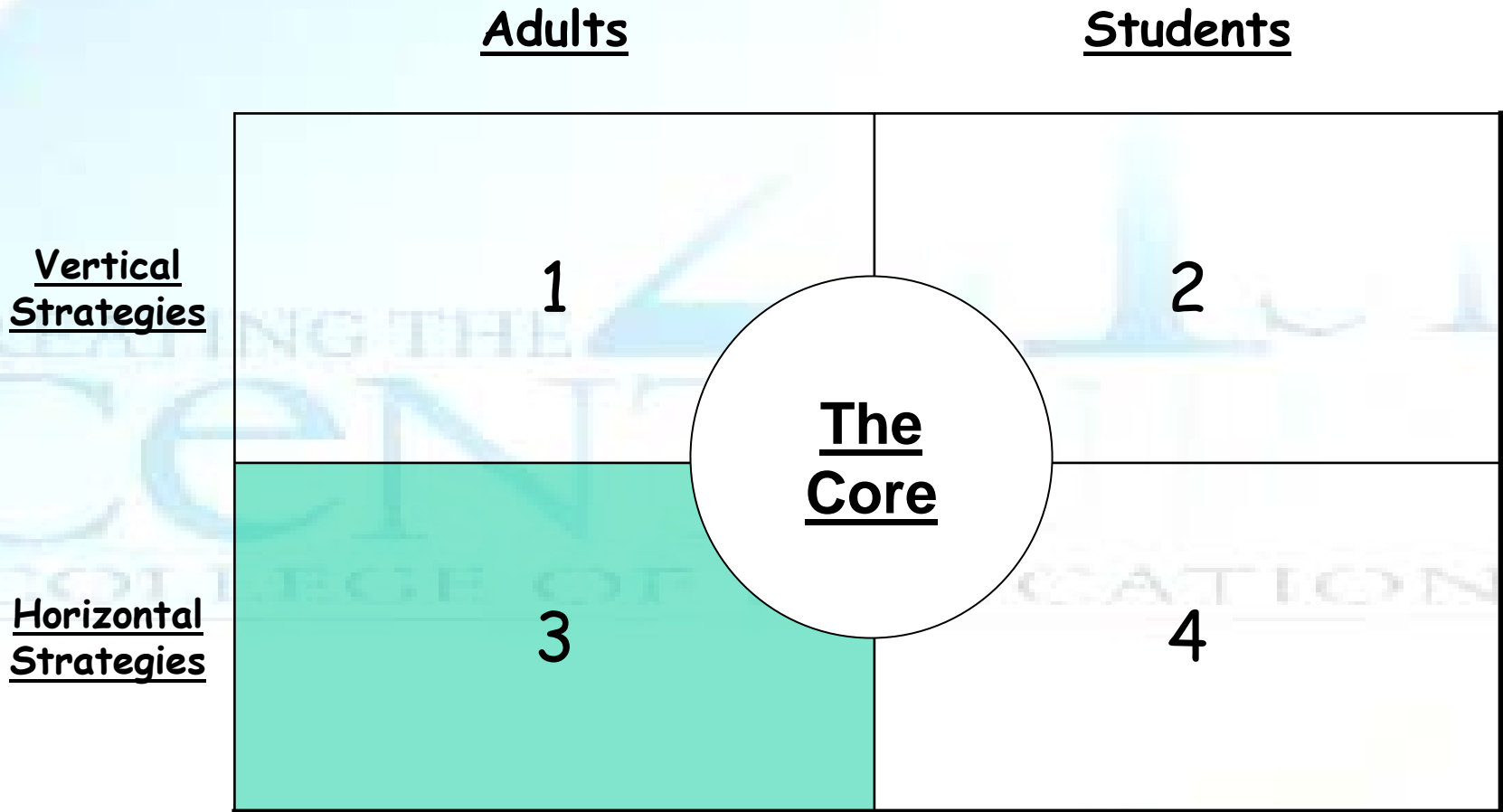
Student-focused Vertical Strategies

- Dens
- Buddy classrooms
- School-wide student legislature
- Multi-aged advisories
- Cross-age peer mentoring/tutoring



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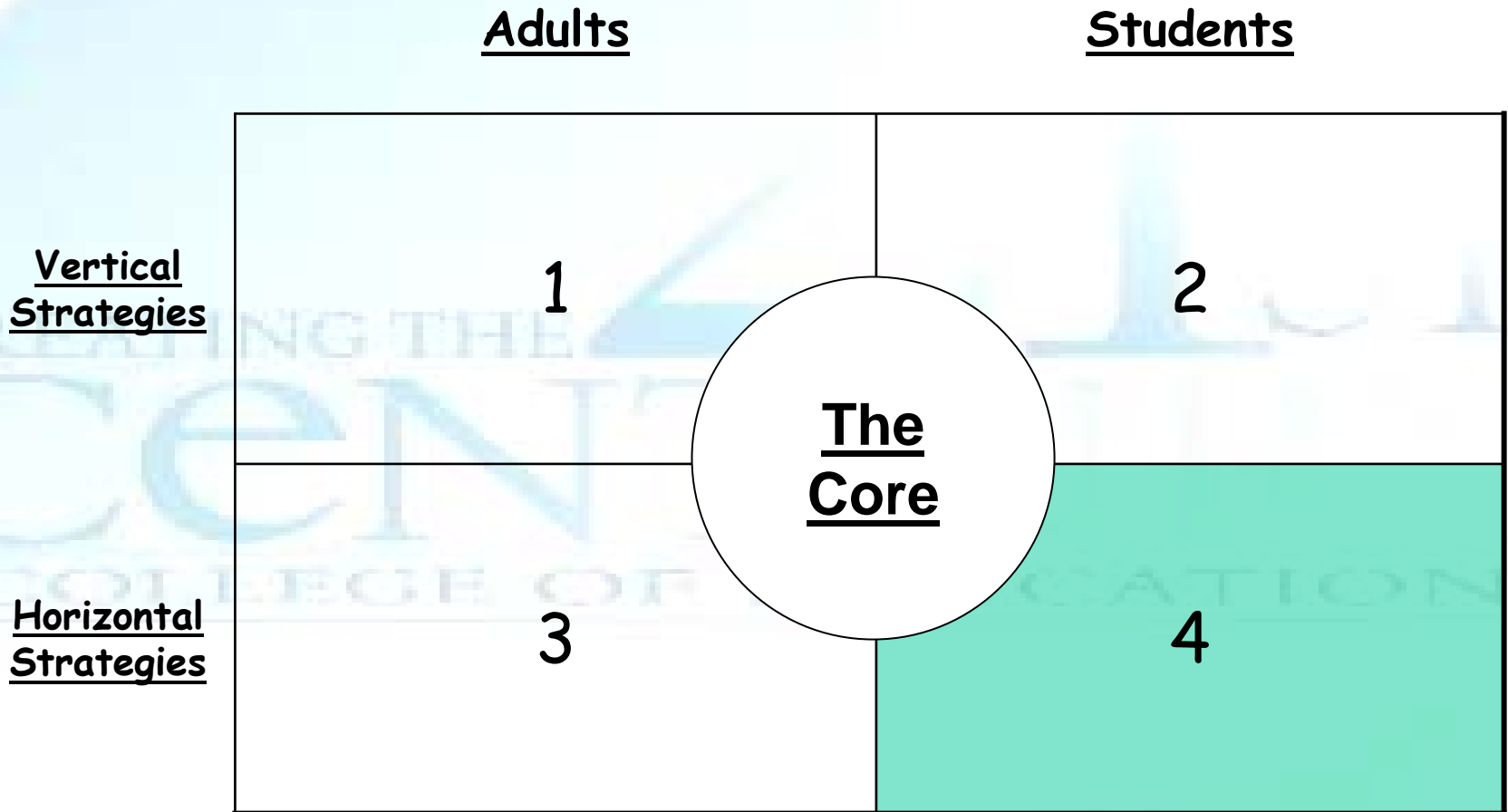
Adult-focused Horizontal Strategies

- Academic teams
- Academic departments
- Grade level teams
- Democratic staff meetings
- Professional Learning Communities
- Peer evaluation/feedback
- Including support staff



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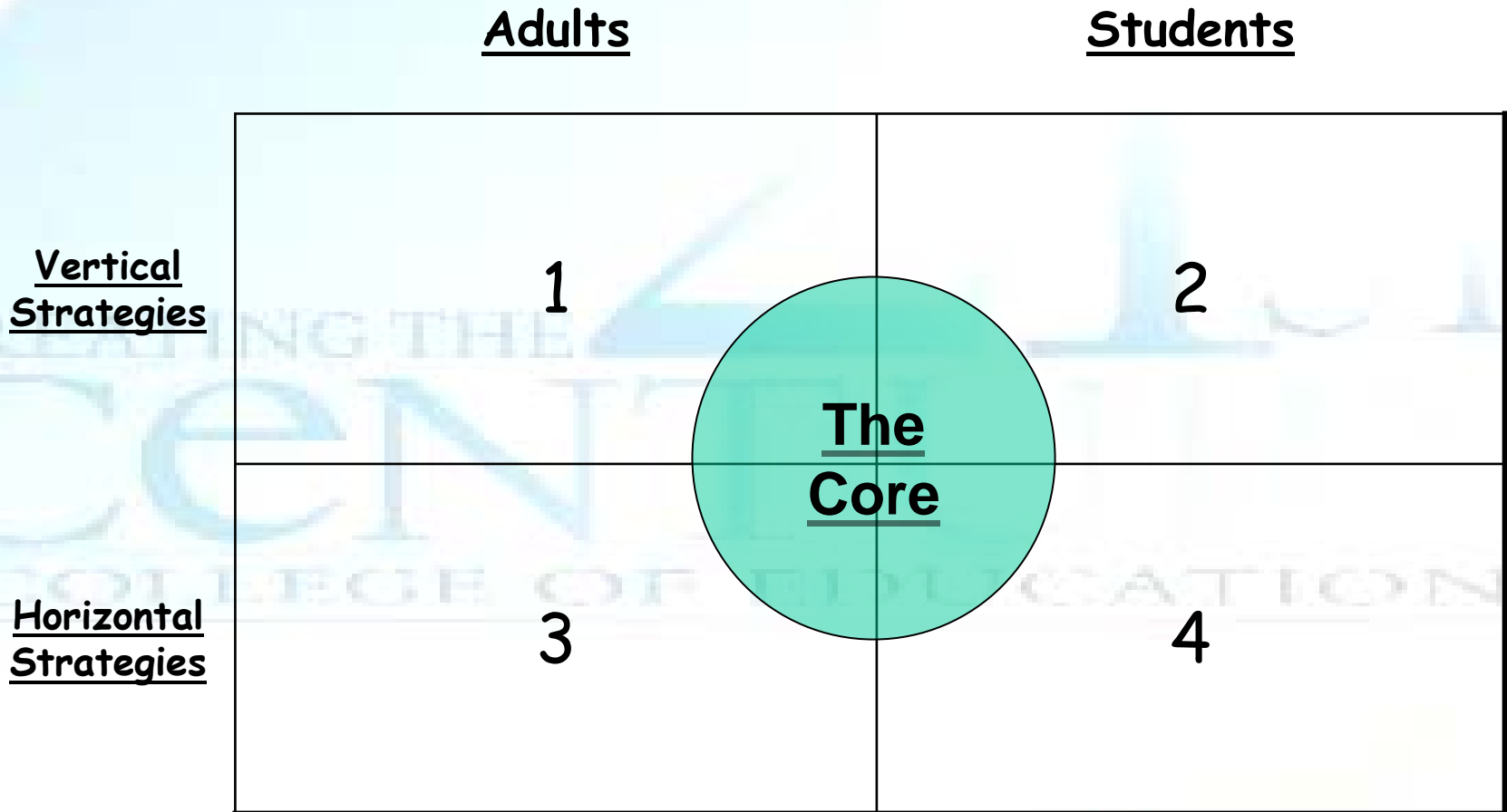
Student-focused Horizontal Strategies

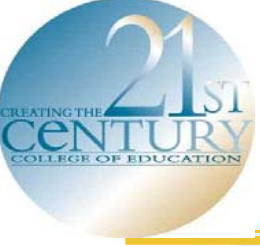
- Class meetings
- Peer mediation/conflict-resolution
- Peer counseling
- Student judiciary
- Cooperative learning
- Grade level service projects



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THE CORE

- Mission
- Vision
- Values
- Touchstone
- Professional Development
- Leadership



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