Character Education
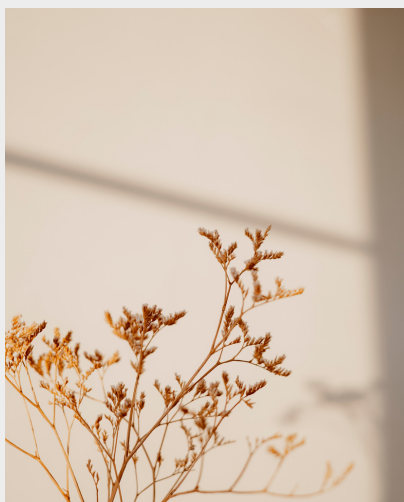# Quarterly Newsletter

OCTOBER 2022, VOL. 6

NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE 1861

Quarterly Theme

How can we make sure that we continue to improve our practices to increase the quality of education in our schools? Some new techniques of teaching, student-centered redesign, and micro-credentials might be the answer.

Newsletter Outline

In this newsletter we will explore new styles of teaching, examine how students benefit the most in the classroom, and how educators can best prepare to teach the next generation. Make sure to take a look at our special feature too! Are you worried about how this will affect you? Don't worry, we have you covered! Don't forget to read our Self-Care tips and tricks to support you through the rest of the semester.

Inside CHSD #117

CHSD #117 is a community high school district (for grades 9-12) based in Lake Villa, Illinois containing 2 separate high schools: Antioch and Lakes Community High School. But what makes this district so special? The people within it. During an interview with **Jori Bowen**, Principal of Lakes Community High School, we were able to dive deep into their efforts and experience with Character Education.

Right as you walk through the front doors of Lakes Community High School, you are greeted by a giant mural that states **"Respect + Courtesy = Pride",** the very foundation of Lakes. After the opening in 2004, Dr. Bob Christ, the first principal, led the district to find a motto and visual for all staff, students, and the community to see. This visual mural encourages a culture of character as soon as you walk through the front door. But how else do they tackle Character Education?

Inside CHSD #117

The current staff and faculty have one goal in mind: "*to maximize achievement for each student*" Jori Bowen states. To do this, Lakes intentionally blends programming in **Tier 1 Supports, Equity, and Belonging,** to create what they define as *Classroom Culture*.

For Lakes Community High School, Character Education is not a separate entity or program that the staff is trying to add, but it's an expected standard that is embedded throughout the school for students experience.

With Character Education already in place and committees to help foster Character Education at school, Lakes found North Central College's Character Education Certificate (CEC) program to align with their mission and enlisted as a cohort together.

"Thank you to all participating faculty and staff, in CHSD, for allowing us to create and inspire others through your story. We hope you enjoyed the feature!"

Located in Lake Villa, IL

After CEC at CHSD #117

There are just things that you can't tap into during a weekly meeting.

During the Character Education Certificate program (CEC), the cohort discovered what that meant exactly. Even after working together for many years, it was through the program that they learned things about each other they never knew before. This included sharing in-depth experiences, beliefs, and wishes they all have.

"We thought it would be really powerful to take an actual course as a committee together" stated Jori Bowen. "We would have common learning experiences. It's not just a one-day conference."

How has the CEC program informed your practices or efforts toward improving school culture?

After CEC, the committees now know what they need to do internally. However, their next big question is "how do you include the entire community?"

Are there any intentional/visible changes that took place afterward?

The committee members returned with the knowledge from the CEC program, and the resources they gained, they shared this learned knowledge, and are now leading their groups with the same mindset. Each participant of the cohort embraced what needed to be done in order to make the outcome deeper and more meaningful at Lakes.

Information by Jori Bowen

"We had shared learning experiences and developed a common language" Jori Bowen stated after taking the Character Education Certificate (CEC) program. Each member of the cohort was able to effectively use their learned knowledge back at Lakes.

"The cohort for us was perfect timing". The program aligned with what Lakes Community High School was trying to accomplish in their own community.

Through many additional discussions, activities, and lesson plans, the members of the CHSD cohort were able to gain further insight about Character Education.

Jori Bowen
Principal

Are there any upcoming plans/goals toward applying or embedding character education in your practices, policies, or relationships moving forward?

Although there are no big policy changes yet, Jori shared about their "Eagle Way" practicum and how it needs revamping to fit the needs of the current generation. Their hope is to create a student-led team in order to update the policies and standards for students.

Deeper Thoughts and Actions

A few other staff/faculty stood out with their thoughts on Character Education and their practices teaching. **Rebecca Holst** and **Callie Tillet** generously offered their time to provide us with some additional insightful information.

How has the CEC program informed your practice or efforts in terms of learning or toward improving school culture?

Rebecca Holst

Before the Character Education program, Lakes was always talking about little and big things that would impact both staff and students at school. "The fun of teaching was lost during COVID. When students see adults having fun, it changes their mindset". To improve school culture, Rebecca is working hard to change the mindset, align actions with their standards, and lead a committee that focuses on just that. Rebecca also shared how powerful it was to take this course as a team.

Callie Tillett

"It's about social and emotional learning. We make it intentional every day." It's the idea that you *start with a connection question, where students get to learn more about others and where student-to-student and student-to-teacher connections are created.* After CEC, this idea was shared in faculty meetings and through the committees where other departments have picked up on the idea.

What is Classroom Culture? How would you define your Classroom Culture?

Rebecca Holst

To me, it's the feeling the kid has in the room or space that they are in. This includes 1)Safety, 2) a Sense of Belonging, and 3)Students letting their guard down and becoming curious about what they are learning.

Callie Tillett

The summation of both respect and rapport teachers have with students, and students have with each other is Classroom Culture. The biggest piece of Classroom Culture is Respect. Students have the willingness to ask questions, admit struggles, inform others of their struggles, create new learnings, and have feelings of inclusiveness in the classroom.

Rebecca Holst

Since the CEC program, CHSD's mindset has changed, including Rebecca's. "It's every interaction. I have to always remind myself people are making their decisions and are acting with the best intention. Nobody is trying to make it difficult on someone else." Responsibility has been a main focal point in school culture at Lakes. "That is the change that I can model, being respectful" and that has been the most specific change.

Callie Tillett

Through the character education certificate program and various research about character education, Callie hopes to develop a grid framework that presents values and examples of how those values would look in action. She believes this would fit well with their current school motto of 'Respect + Courtesy = Pride.' I think we could make this fit with our high school students as well as personalize this to alight with our school mission and values" Callie stated. Asking questions like 'What character traits do we want to see and develop in our students and what does this look like practically?' is crucial to the creation. Callie also believes these value or core words could be posted around the buildings and "become vocabulary words (or common language) that teachers and deans could use with their students."

JORI BOWEN

Jori Bowen, a former mathematics teacher, was appointed Principal of Lakes Community High School starting the 2022-2023 Academic Year. Jori first started teaching at Lakes in 2004 and since then has made a huge impact in their Character Education efforts.

REBECCA HOLST

Rebecca Holst, former social studies teacher and social studies department chair, is currently the Assistant Principal for Student Services at Lakes Community High School. Rebecca first started at Lakes in 2005 and is now responsible in helping with the Speical Education program, Social Workers, Consolers, Deans, and many others.

CALLIE TILLETT

Callie Tillet is in her 6th year of teaching as a Science teacher at Lakes and is currently in her first year as the Science Department Chair. Callie teaches two Chemistry classes and has administrative duties including teacher evaluations and budgeting for the science department.

HAPPINESS LESSON PLAN
BY JORI BOWEN

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to identify happiness in their own lives and recognize the impact it has on daily experiences.

GRADE LEVEL: Grade 9 - Freshman Foundations Activity

MATERIALS:
- Padlet (free online tool used as discussion boards)
- Video clip: <u>What is the Happiness Advantage?</u> (0:00 - 1:57)

PREPARE:
- (5-10 minutes) Create a Padlet page with a prompt that says, "Happiness is...". Have students contribute where they can use pictures or words to describe or define happiness.
- (10-15 minutes) Spend time debriefing on student contributions making sure to emphazie:
    - No single meaning
    - Relative to the person experiencing it - "subjective well-being"
    - Three measurable components: pleasure, engagement, and meaning

ENGAGE:
- (3 minutes) Watch 'What is the Happiness Advantage?' video
- (5-10 minutes) Discuss the video and this statement with an elbow partner - We can't control what has happened, but we do have 100% control over the meaning we give the events in our lives.
- (5 - 10 minutes) On a notecard, individually and silently, write down at least three things that make you happy. Commit to changing your lens and seeing these things every day for two weeks. The commitment is private and personal agreement to intentionally look for the positive in the day. When you see one of the three things you identified that makes you happy, pause and focus on how it makes you feel. Intentionally look for the things that make you happy.

Reflect: *1 week later*
- (10-15 minutes) Come back together to discuss the impact of focusing on happiness in your day.
    - Is there a noticeable chang in your outlook?
    - Are you more productive?
    - Are you more willing to attack a challenge?
- (5-10 minutes) Brainstorm how to help others see happiness regularly.

8

Student-Centered Classroom Design

What exactly is a student-centered classroom?

It is an environment where the focus of instruction is shifted from the teacher to the student, with the **end goal of developing students who can be autonomous and independent**. This is done by placing the responsibility of learning in the hands of the students. This includes helping students develop the skills for independent problem-solving.

In traditional classrooms, the teacher is the center of the learning experience while students assume a more "**passive**" role. In contrast, student-centered learning takes the interests of students and gives them a choice and voice. This way students take a more "**active**" role in their educational experience. This can be achieved by altering their learning experience, or even the classroom physically.

Strategies for Student-Centered Learning

Classroom = Community

Often in a traditional classroom setting, a teacher might do most of the talking and students are directly listening. But, in a student-centered classroom, the emphasis is on a community where the student speaks and the teacher listens, facilitates conversation when needed, and thanks the students for their participation. The teacher acts not only as an educator but as both **facilitator** and **activator**.

Trust & Communication

A student-centered learning environment can not exist without trust and open communication. Trust and open communication are achieved by always being fair with students, listening to them, and allowing them to speak when needed. Seems like a tall order? Well, it is. However, it's ideal to have a classroom culture where students feel they have a voice and feel heard in return.

Integrating Technology

This is all about engagement. The better you engage students in an activity, the more they will want to be involved in the learning process. Technology is one of the most effective tools schools currently have. Allowing students to be creative with the use of free web tools to present, curate, and share information for projects and tasks is most beneficial.

Mutal Respect Guides Behavior

A classroom without rules? Seems a little far-fetched right? Well, when students spend half their time learning, the other half is trying to keep from being bored. What is the point of no rules? **Engagement**. If you keep activities engaging, the behavior will rarely be an issue. Try decreasing the number of rules and fostering mutual respect instead.

Opportunity to Lead

Providing opportunities to lead is a great way to develop a student-centered learning environment that fosters engagement and growth while **empowering students to take ownership** of their learning experience. This can happen in all age groups and all classes they engage in.

It doesn't matter if you're a kindergarten teacher, high school instructor, or college professor; developing a student-centered learning environment will help your students become **independent learners.** They will ultimately take charge of their own education - students who are curious, eager to learn, and willing to do whatever it takes to be successful will go far.

For more visit **EducationCorner.com**

New Ways of Teaching

Modern teaching is one of the newest methods that is taking the education world by storm. **Modern teaching** is a **high activity-based curriculum that centers the learner's mind, allowing them to be involved in the learning process.** Over recent years, there have been visible changes in teaching style. In contrast to memorization practices, modern teaching introduces interactive methods where results can be visibly seen. Modern teaching focuses on **questioning**, **demonstration**, **explaining, practical** and **collaboration** methods while creating activities for students.

Modern teaching methods help build or develop useful skills and learning knowledge. Elements of modern teaching methods may include:

- **Learner-centered**
- **Task-based or activity-based**
- **Resource-based**
- **Interactive in nature**
- **Integrative in nature**
- **Peer collaboration techniques.**

*All of these methods can be found in further detail at **EDUVoice.in**.*

The use of science and technology has dramatically increased in the educational world. With this increase, there is also an immense need for innovation and creative minds to explore the unknown and unrevealed areas of various fields. To cope with the changing modern world, we must incorporate modern ways of teaching in order to survive.

Advantages of Modern Teaching

1. Strong Cognitive Thinking Skills
2. Bringing Prefrontal Cortex into Life
3. Exploring New Things
4. Developing Unique Patterns of Learning
5. Application-based Skills
6. Learning Relevantly to the Increasing Needs of our Environment

Modern Teaching Methods

Collaborative Learning 🤝

In this teaching method, every student is part of the success of a group while trying to reach the desired result. Students learn how to communicate, self-regulate, and develop listening skills. Students present their ideas and expect a response when they are in group learning.

Spaced Learning

In this method, teachers repeat a lesson multiple times until students understand it entirely. However, it's more than just reteaching the lesson. **Anne Kasa,** NCC character education certificate program facilitator, states, "it is meant to connect learning to other areas that build knowledge connections and to revisit the topic throughout the year". It helps build confidence and students more success opportunities.

Flipped Classroom

This method has students study new material at home by themselves and then practice the same material at school. Teachers can choose to record lessons and allow students to have the ability to stop and rewind the lesson while trying a problem. One suggestion is frontloading information in a place of delivering all new content via a recording, provided by **Anne Kasa**. There are also varying degrees of flipped learning opportunities. When efficient, the teacher is able to dive into small group learning and 1:1 conferring.

Self-Learning

Through their curiosity, students get motivated to explore the subjects they are interested in. Teaching students to operate the internet and find results themselves helps them to be self-dependent and gives them an understanding of the content. Teachers could benefit from allowing students to bring new ideas to the table.

Stayed tuned for more in-depth looks at Modern Teaching in future newsletters!

*For more information visit **EDUVoice.in**.*

Use of Maker Learning

Modern teaching isn't the only current trend in education. Maker learning has been on the rise in the educational world. According to SoeOnline.American.edu, **maker education** is "an approach to learning that centers students' interests and directs them to an awareness of design." **Approach**, **mindset**, and **community** are some core fundamentals of maker learning.
The idea of maker learning is less about the final product created by students and more about what a student learns while making it. Originating in the maker movement, sparked by Make magazine, a community of do-it-yourself and technology-driven individuals developed the idea of maker learning and its intentions for better learning.

*Visit **Code.Org** for more information*

Benefits of Hands-On Learning

Retention

One major benefit is the increase in information retention. Studies have shown that hands-on learning helps engage both sides of the brain, leading to stronger neural connections & the ability to store more information.

Attentiveness

The interest generated by creating and moving rather than sitting behind a desk allows students to care about a project in a deeper way. When students are more excited, they're more willing to learn a new concept.

Experimentation

Hands-on learning allows students to experiment, exploring new areas rather than learning from a lecture. This can help them discover interests that can lead to a career. Students can also gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses through trial and error of projects.

Self-Care Tips & Tricks

Why We Compare - The Character Lab

Comparisons are how we obtain information and make sense of our everyday lives, providing a reference point. However, comparing ourselves with others has been detrimental to our mental health. So what do we do about the human instinct to compare? Compare yourself only to who you were before. **Don't** emphasize comparisons with other people.

Do encourage yourself to strive for excellence. Focus on where the comparison is not me-to-you, but rather **me-to-me.**

How To Define Success - The Character Lab

Thinking of outcomes might be the main prize but can be a hollow victory. After working hard to meet the goal, our first response is to celebrate. But what comes after that? How do we capitalize on wins without going backward? When we think of a goal as one step in a longer journey, not the final destination, we're more likely to keep up the practices that led to the reaching that goal. Success isn't a short-term win; it's activities you do after you achieve that gold star. That attitude helps you keep up the hard work that moves you forward. **Don't** define success as a destination. **Do** reflect on the steps it took to achieve your goal. Life is a journey, not a destination. Keep everything **step-by-step** and cherish what you have accomplished so far, you deserve it.

Other Resources:

Great Good Magazine Podcasts
- Happiness Break: A Note to Self on Forgiveness
- Happiness Break: A Meditation to Connect to Your Roots
- Hapiness Break: How To Be Your Best Self

🎖️ Rise of Micro-Credentials 🎖️

Micro-credentials, also known as digital badges or nano degrees, are mini qualifications that demonstrate knowledge or skills in a given area. According to Trade-schools.net, **70% of higher education institutions** offer **some type of alternative credentialing**.

Micro-credentials offer a **quick return on investment** for students who might be unsure about the overall value and time commitment of a degree. They can also offer additional qualifications that a degree might not cover.

With a trend of **accessible and affordable learning opportunities** to enhance existing resumes and support career shifts, micro-credentials seem to fit the bill. EducationDynamics.com reported an increase in demand and availability of these stackable programs increased over the last couple of years, possibly due to the pandemic and needed shifts in careers.

LAUNCHING IN 2023:

Micro-Credential Program

- **100% Online Curriculum**
- **Self-paced**
- **Interactive learning via Rise 360**
- **Available on Canvas**

SELF AS A MORAL & ETHICAL LEADER

CHARACTER EDUCATION

MODULE 1

NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE
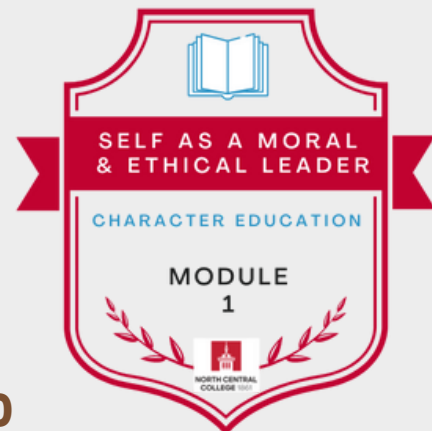
Complete the program and earn a **digital badge** to use on online platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, and more!

Contact **Julie Nagashima** for more information!

Updates & Announcements

The North Central Team welcomes teachers, administrators, and specialists who have participated in any one of our Character Initiatives to:

Character Initiatives Gathering

Thursday, November 10th, 4:30 - 6:30 pm
Wentz Science Center
131 South Loomis Street, Naperville, IL

A Networking and Collboration Event

- Educational Leadership candidates & alumni
- Character Education Certificate students
- 2021-2022 Leadership Academy participants

Upon registration, you will receive a free DOT "digital business card". Set up your digital card and bring it to the event for networking!

Why Attend?

- Expand your Professional Learning Network
- Access a directory of contacts
- Meet and share ideas about enhancing school culture
- Gather resources to take back to your school

Register Here

or scan the QR code

DEADLINE OCTOBER 31ST

CHARACTER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Do you know anyone who is interested in learning about character education? Look ahead to our Cohort Start Times!

Spring 2023

Cohort: Jan 9 – Feb 11
Feb 12 – Mar 18
Mar 19 – Apr 11

Register Today!

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

A formula for Leading a School Culture of Character! The Leadership Academy is offered in partnership with **IL ASCD**.

- Full-year of training (6 sessions)
- Special Pricing for groups
- Professional Learning Networks
- Mini-grant opportunities
- Speaker Series

Register Today!

MASTERS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A program focused on the moral purpose of building the capacity of our graduate candidates so they go forward and bring Culture of Character practices into the heart of school communities.

- Identify and develop your own sense of a leadership role.
- Learn how to create a safe, supportive, and nurturing culture including character frameworks.
- Develop your ability to put systems into place and advocate for students.
- Advance your ability as a school leader to create environments that promote character development.

Scan for more info!

CONTACT US

CONNECT WITH US TO SHARE!

JORDAN MILLER

LEADERSHIP, ETHICS, & VALUES GRADUATE ASSISTANT

JEMILLER@NOCTRL.EDU

JULIE NAGASHIMA

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP; COORDINATOR OF CHARACTER EDUCATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

JNAGASHIMA@NOCTRL.EDU

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS:

Marsha Webster
Character Initiatives Outreach and Recruitment Coordinator

MBWEBSTER@NOCTRL.EDU

Sharon Wysoglad
Character Education Project Director

SAWYSOGLAD@NOCTRL.EDU

https://www.northcentralcollege.edu/program/character-initiatives