

# CHARACTER CONNECTION

## BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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This is your monthly issue of strategies to integrate CHARACTER COUNTS! into your class, department, and school. We are excited to feature schools in our "Spotlight on Character" highlighting engaged school-wide character experiences.

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### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

A young boy was enjoying a sunny afternoon by sailing a small sailboat at the edge of a neighborhood pond. There was just enough of a breeze to have the boat drift aimlessly in water barely a foot deep. Suddenly the wind blew the small sailboat away from shore. The young boy, now deeply worried about the possibility of losing his prized possession, stopped a man walking along pond's path and said, "Sir, my sailboat is drifting away. Can you get it back for me?" The man walked to the edge of the pond and picked up a handful of pebbles. Gazing at the sailboat that was now about 10 feet from shore, he began to toss pebbles in the boat's direction. This alarmed the boy. "Don't throw rocks and sink my boat," he said. The man replied, "I am tossing small pebbles just beyond the boat. You see son, small pebbles create large ripples and soon the sailboat will return to shore."

This story came to mind as I reflect on our efforts these past two years in the integration of CHARACTER COUNTS! with our 22 Buffalo schools. The Champion trainings, the resources that have been provided and the diligent effort of our

Mentor/Coaches, are all designed to create 'ripples.' This thinking was supported by an individual from one of the foundations funding the project. I asked this supporter as to what was his interest in funding this monumental work for Buffalo. He shared that this was a gift to Buffalo Public Schools that will pay off tremendously for the future of the city. He cared deeply about students, their families and the greater community. The thinking behind monetary support was that this was an investment in the next generation. The foundation firmly believes that "small pebbles create large ripples."

When focusing on problems, we often end up with even more problems. However, if you focus on possibilities for change in beliefs and behaviors of students and adults, you create opportunities to make a positive difference. CHARACTER COUNTS! can promote a climate where learning is valued and desired beliefs and traits are instilled. Don't forget that your school, with CHARACTER COUNTS!, is investing in the future of your community of learners. Capture the enthusiasm and passion, and engage your students in making this experience be a meaningful opportunity to grow in academics and character.

Gary Smit



**PATHWAYS TO CHARACTER**

A weekly message about what matters in our personal and professional life.

@GSmit4Character



Character should not be considered a stand alone experience in a class or school. Effective character development initiatives will focus on creating a positive school climate led by teachers who are great at their craft.

## A GREAT INTEGRATION STRATEGY

Kevin Johnson, an Iowa Middle School teacher, shared with me what his 8th grade students did in writing children's books on character for 1st and 5th grade students. This is an excellent example of what can be done when linking character to academics. It also provides an opportunity for students to go to a lower grade class and share what it is they wrote. The teacher gave permission to share the links to the books written by the students.

[goo.gl/9KixFu](http://goo.gl/9KixFu)    [goo.gl/bjeQHd](http://goo.gl/bjeQHd)

Why not think of how to involve students in being engaged in sharing the desired traits and values of CC! from their perspective.

## WHAT TO TEACH YOUNG PEOPLE BEFORE BEGINNING A JOB

1. Don't sell yourself short. Your value is measured by your values, not by your rank or status; your worth is determined by your trustworthiness, not your salary.
2. Be honest and never cheat; your most precious asset is your integrity.
3. Treat people with respect whether they deserve it or not.

4. Do more than you have to and less than you are allowed to.
5. Care about everyone who may be affected by your decisions.
6. Don't kid yourself - rationalizations simply numb your conscience and they don't change what's right.
7. Perform every task, big or small, so that all you work with will eagerly recommend you when you need it.

Michael Josephson

## LESSON CORNER - CRITICAL THINKING

In our technological and rapidly changing world, students need to be able to assimilate data and demonstrate critical thinking skills versus repeating a list of facts from memorization. Students need to be critical thinkers who can make sense of information, analyze, compare, contrast, make inferences, and demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

In the Academic Domain of CHARACTER COUNTS! one of the standards addresses critical thinking. In a College and Career Readiness Survey from 2015, it's noted that *"teachers say critical thinking skills, not scores on standardized tests, are the best way to assess whether students are prepared for success in college and the workplace"*

Here are teaching strategies to incorporate the skill of critical thinking into academic lessons:

- Assign articles for students to read on a selected topic from different points of view.
- When a student asks the question "Why?" respond with "Why do you think?" to encourage the student to draw his or her own conclusions.
- Compare and contrast topics, which allows for students to tell the ways things are similar and

different and helps them analyze and categorize information.

- Provide opportunity to restate, paraphrase, explain, and summarize facts, definitions, methods, and concepts.
- Challenge, question, and test the accuracy and validity of recommendations, claims, and assertions by identifying a) internal inconsistencies, b) the existence of contradictory evidence and opinions, c) objectivity and reliability of the sources of information.
- Evaluate the relevance of specific evidence or arguments by: a) distinguishing between facts, opinions, speculations, and feelings and b) considering the expertise, personal knowledge, character, and credibility of the source.
- Use case studies and projects that require proposing ideas and formulating plans.
- Have students relate the story to their own lives or outside events. This is the beginning important critical thinking skill called synthesizing, where students begin to use the information in new ways and apply it to different ideas.
- Telling a story without an ending and asking students to finish the story is another way by taking the information they know and creatively compile it, draw conclusions and come up with their own ending.



## SPOTLIGHT ON CHARACTER

**School #59A Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet Annex** created a meaningful bulletin board display that demonstrates school citizenship. The puzzle pieces represent students and classrooms; promoting unity across the school. 59A continues to build and encourage a caring and supportive school culture and climate.



**School #72 Lorraine Academy** showcased their pillar traits of citizenship and caring through a recent school-wide community service project. The school enthusiastically collected boxes of non-perishable food items which they then donated to a number of organizations in their community. Lorraine Academy students are learning about the importance and value of good citizenship and caring for their neighbors.



**School #355 The New Buffalo School of Culinary Arts & Hospitality** recently hosted their first parent-teacher conference night for their newly expanded grades 9-12 school. As part of their efforts to increase parent awareness about CC!, the school

hosted a CC! information table that included parent handouts and the opportunity for parents to learn more about the school's CC! initiative. Pictured are Principal Kathleen Schuta and 12th grade student leader Shelby H., who enthusiastically assisted as needed throughout the evening. The school also kicked-off its CC! action plan, which includes a "Caught with Character" incentive program utilizing tickets shown pictured, recognizing both students and adults who demonstrate positive character.



As a part of National CC! Week and Red Ribbon Week, **North Park Middle School #66** hosted a pep rally. Not only was the event fun but educational, through interactive games and activities, helping students to understand the importance of the Six Pillars in their lives.



## SPOTLIGHT ON CHARACTER

**Lovejoy Discovery School #43** continues to make great strides with their character development initiative and new Positive Behavior Counts (PBC) Team, creatively blending their PBIS PRIDE traits and the Six Pillar traits to create a monthly character focus for the 10 months of the school year. Pictured are students who were celebrated for embodying the character quality of the month. Homeroom 314 teachers, Mrs. Proietto and Mr. Wittman, added a family breakfast to involve parents in the positive recognition for those students who lead the way through positive behaviors.



**Native American Magnet School #19** opened its first school store in November! Students earn Eagle Bucks by demonstrating the character trait of the month and have an opportunity to shop once a month at the Eagle Store. A multitude of prizes have been generously donated by the school's teachers and administrators. Students and teachers alike are excited about the Eagle Store and have seen a great improvement in student behavior as a result!



### RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING EFFORT IN PROMOTING CHARACTER

This school year, we are recognizing individuals and school teams that are truly making a difference in the implementation of CHARACTER COUNTS! We are proud this month to acknowledge these outstanding efforts of dedicated and committed educators.

#### CHAMPION OF THE MONTH

**Mike Phinney School #355 The New Buffalo School of Culinary Arts and Hospitality**

Trained Champion Mike Phinney came to School #355 this academic year from a previous CC! school. At both schools, Mr. Phinney took a leading role in the building's CC! initiative. At 355, Mr. Phinney has helped create a school-year CC! action plan. He will also be assisting the school's Mentor/Coach in providing an overview to teachers on CC! classroom resources and implementation strategies, as well as

the coordination of a spring CC! student leadership training. Mr. Phinney has integrated CC! within his support services to students. He demonstrates positive commitment, enthusiasm and leadership not only as a trained CC! Champion, but through his position as the school's guidance counselor.

## CHAMPIONS TEAM OF THE MONTH

### School #67 Discovery CC! Team

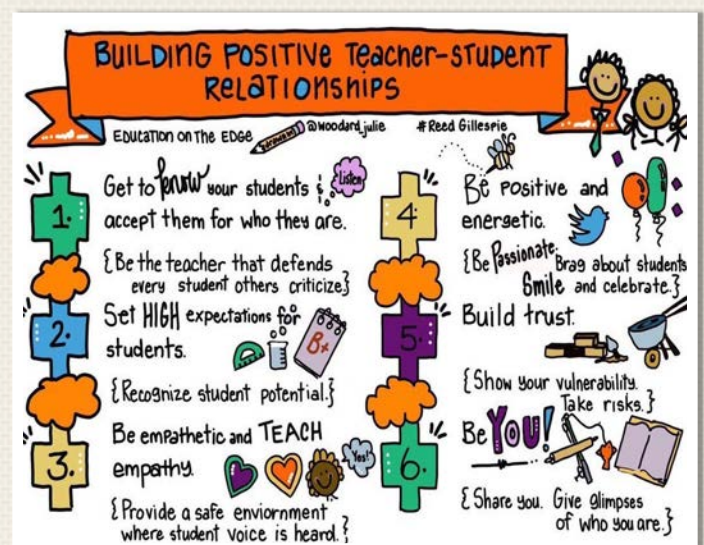
Discovery's CC! Team meets monthly and consists of both trained and non-trained Champions including the Principal, Assistant Principal, one Physical Education teacher, four Special Education teachers, and five General Education teachers. The team created a year-long schedule to regularly highlight specific CC Pillars. The team also identified Words of the Week that align to the monthly traits. The traits and words are read daily during morning announcements, and the Word of the Week is posted in classrooms. The team also aligned activities within the CC resource books. The activities and discussion points are incorporated during restorative circles. The students have been having deep conversations around the CC! Pillars during this time. Beginning in December, Homeroom Parent Representatives will take photos of the students that are identified as exhibiting the CC! Pillar of the month. The photos will be used to create a CC! Bulletin Board in an effort to celebrate and recognize students for promoting the Six Pillars of Character. A goal of the CC! Team is to create a school-wide reward system to celebrate student success, establish clear behavior expectations, reduce office discipline referrals, and build a positive school culture. Discovery's CC! committee has shown strong commitment to meaningful, school-wide CC! implementation.

## ADMINISTRATOR OF THE MONTH

### Mark Shoemaker, Assistant Principal 59A

Mr. Shoemaker has been a positive supporter of CC! since its inception at both 59 & 59A in 2017. Having

served as AP at both buildings, Mr. Shoemaker has encouraged natural integration within the classrooms and overall school environment. In addition to supporting the efforts of the CC! Champions, school-wide CC! - related activities, parent awareness efforts, integration of CC! and the Six Pillars language within all facets of the school - he himself demonstrates a committed and caring attitude towards 59 & 59A's students, faculty, staff and families. Last spring, Mr. Shoemaker invited the CC! Mentor Coach in to the school to facilitate a side-by-side presentation (with a resource officer from the Buffalo Police Department) to students on safety, responsibility, citizenship and overall good character. He meets regularly and maintains excellent communication with the Mentor Coach, and is always open to new ideas and guidance for continued success of the school's CC! initiative. Thank you for your enthusiastic dedication and partnership Mr. Shoemaker.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

On-going support and Professional Development is a critical component of our multi-year project. to provide Buffalo educators with resources to help in the implementation of CHARACTER COUNTS! A library of PD videos has been produced that can be shared with school faculty throughout the year.

Two recently produced videos are now available:

- Lesson 17: Is Your Classroom Management Plan a Thermometer or a Thermostat? <http://bit.ly/2yj1htY>
- Lesson 18: How to Build Resilience in Students <http://bit.ly/2OJvcPD>

All videos are also posted on the Buffalo Public Schools website: <https://www.buffaloschools.org/Page/86213>

Learn more



If you have any questions related to CHARACTER COUNTS! or your team would like additional ideas or support, please contact your Mentor/Coach that is assigned to your school. You can also contact Gary Smit, [gsmit@charactercounts.org](mailto:gsmit@charactercounts.org)