



ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH CHARACTER!”



**Recognition of 2018 New Jersey Schools of Character
and New Jersey's 2018 National Schools of Character
Keynote Panel and Breakout Sessions**

**May 18, 2018
Rider University
Lawrenceville, New Jersey**



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH CHARACTER

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

- 7:30-8:15 REGISTRATION AND REFRESHMENTS**
Fine Arts Building, Yvonne Theater Lobby
- 8:15-9:30 RECOGNITION PROGRAM**
2018 SCHOOLS OF CHARACTER
Yvonne Theater
- 9:45-10:00 INTRODUCTIONS AND BUSINESS MEETING**
NJASECD Board of Trustees – Yvonne Theater
- 10:00-11:00 KEYNOTE PANEL / Q&A**
Laurie Coletti, Dr. Joe Meloche, and
Jeannie Drexinger
Eileen Dachnowicz, Moderator
Yvonne Theater
- 11:15-12:00 BREAKOUT SESSION 1 - Presentations**
Fine Arts Classrooms
(See schedule following)
- 12:00-12:45 LUNCH**
Bart Ludeke Student Center
- 1:00-1:45 BREAKOUT SESSION 2 – Presentations**
Fine Arts Classrooms
(See schedule following)
- 2:00-2:45 BREAKOUT SESSION 3 – Presentations**
Fine Arts Classrooms
(See schedule following)

2018 KEYNOTE PANELISTS

Laurie Coletti, Principal, James McDivitt Elementary School



Laurie Coletti is a Kean University graduate and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education, a Master's Degree in Special Education, a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and a Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant Certification. Mrs. Coletti has been involved in education since 1979 and has taught first grade, seventh grade, pre-school handicapped, primary autistic, self-contained, and communication handicapped classes. She has served as a high school vice principal and an adjunct at Kean University. She is currently the principal of McDivitt Elementary School and has instituted various activities to enhance the elementary curriculum including: Character Education Initiative, Spelling Bee, Writing Contests, STEM Club, K-Kids Club, and Math 24. Encouraging our K-5 students to succeed and enjoy

learning is paramount. Mrs. Coletti has served as the president of the Middlesex County Principals and Supervisor's Association, and as a member of the Civil Air Patrol. She is a member of NJASECD, NJPSA, and the National Association for Elementary School Principals. Mrs. Coletti has been married for over 35 years and has three sons, all of whom are proud graduates of Old Bridge Township Public Schools.

Dr. Joseph Meloche, Superintendent, Cherry Hill Public Schools



After more than 20 years in public education, Dr. Joseph Meloche was appointed Superintendent of the Cherry Hill Public Schools on August 25, 2015. His educational background includes teaching Humanities and English at the middle school level and serving Cherry Hill as the principal of Kingston Elementary School, Carusi Middle School, and Cherry Hill High School West. In 2013, he became Director of Curriculum and eight months later was appointed the Assistant Superintendent for Pre-K-12. Dr. Meloche earned degrees from DeSales University, Holy Family University, and Widener University. As Superintendent, Dr. Meloche provides the critically essential leadership required to provide an academic environment of excellence, while motivating and engaging students to share their voices as scholars and as people.

He was recently recognized as the New Jersey PTA Superintendent of the Year for 2018 and as a "Leader to Learn From" by Education Week.

Jeannie Drexinger, Principal, Salt Brook Elementary School



Jeannie Drexinger is principal of Salt Brook Elementary School in New Providence, NJ. She has been a school administrator for 21 years, 16 of those years serving as the principal of Salt Brook. Mrs. Drexinger has been active in the area of character education for over 16 years and has successfully guided her school to be named a NJ State School of Character and a National School of Character (2011). Most recently, she assisted her district as it earned both state and national recognition (2017) as well. Mrs. Drexinger has presented at both state and national conferences and firmly believes that character education should be fun, meaningful, relevant, and, most importantly, that it should be an integral part of the school day.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

BREAKOUT SESSION 1 – 11:15 AM -12:00 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Session: 1 Room: 201

Keynote Panel Follow-Up: Start Small...End Big! How to Organically Grow One School's CE Program into a District Initiative (ALL)

Presenters: Jean Drexinger, Principal, and Erika Inzano, Counselor

Affiliation: Salt Brook ES, New Providence

Description: We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility, It's easy to say, "It's not my child, not my community, not my school, not my problem." But, yet it is. In New Providence, our district's success was not about starting big and then ending big. It was about the small things that one school did over and over again that organically spread to the local community as well as to the other district schools. Join us to find out how to create that subtle buzz that brings everyone to ask, "What's going in *that* school?" "How can we have *that* in *our* school?"

Session: 1 Room: 205

Restoring Civility and Building Engagement: Teachers and Student Support Staff Partner to Help Students Take Action Together (MS)

Presenters; Dr. Maurice Elias, Director, Rutgers SECD Lab and Samuel Nayman, Project Director, STAT Program

Affiliation: Rutgers University

Description: Looking for a way to scale up SECD for secondary students? STAT- Students Taking Action Together provides natural, supportive partnership opportunities for school support personnel to co-lead and assist teachers with classroom discussions. It brings purpose-driven SECD social-action pedagogy into social studies instruction and also improves genuine dialogue, civility, and character competencies while spurring civic engagement. Join us as we demonstrate and share materials that participants can pilot back at their schools.

Session: 1 Room: 261

How to Build a Positive School Culture and Climate (MS)

Presenter: Michele SantaMaria, Special Education Teacher

Affiliation: New Brunswick Middle School, New Brunswick

Description: New Brunswick Middle School went from a priority school to a National School of Character, but the transformation wasn't always easy. A dedicated staff motivated our students to grow and succeed. We built on our successes, going from a 2015-2016 Promising Practices Award recipient to a 2017 New Jersey School of Character and then a 2017 National School of Character. We would like to share our model, accomplishments, and our journey with you and answer any questions you may have as your travel through yours.

Session: 1 Room: 263

Character-Based Learning in an Early Childhood Setting (ES)

Presenters: Natalie Liquori and Amanda LeFever, Teachers

Affiliation: Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education, School No. 51, Elizabeth

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS (Continued)

BREAKOUT SESSION 1 – 11:15 AM -12:00 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Description: Our school prides itself on exhibiting a nurturing environment that is child-centered and developmentally appropriate. Our presentation will focus on how character building is the foundation of our teaching and learning practices, and how academic and social-emotional development is key to ensuring student success. Our school motto, *Friends Care, Friends Share*, instills a meaningful message that all young learners can embrace. We provide a learning experience where every child feels welcomed, loved and academically challenged.

Session: 1 Room: 278

A Legal Analysis of Administrators, Staff and School Climate & Character Issues (ALL)

Presenter: Sandra L. Jacques, Esq., Attorney

Affiliation: Legal One, NJPSA

Description: Does your school district personnel set an appropriate example for your school community and encourage positive character development of the students? Staff play a pivotal role in the climate of a school or district. This presentation will provide a legal analysis of the responsibilities and requirements of administrators and staff and their role in school culture and climate issues.

Session: 1 Room: 280

Kinder, Smarter, Stronger Together (ES)

Presenters: Karry Corbitt, Principal, and Kelly Hansbury, School Counselor

Affiliation: Green-Fields Elementary School, West Deptford

Description: This workshop will focus on getting community stakeholders on board and invested in the development of your character education program. We will present ready-to-implement ideas that are easy and sustainable. Learn how to have kids, parents, and community members come together in a family-like atmosphere. Topics will include: Service Learning, School Ambassadors, Blaze Banner, Friday Phone Call Home, Grade Level Book Club, Kindness Ninja—ways that will make your school and community “kinder, smarter, stronger together”!

Session: 1 Room: 301

How to Build Character and Community through Collaborative Connections (ES)

Presenters: Christine Connelly, Teacher, & Alicia Campbell, Counselor

Affiliation: Mantua School District, Mantua

Description: Mantua Township School District prides itself on instilling lifelong virtues in students and staff. The school year kicks off with a character pep rally that honors our diverse community contributions. Students learn character virtues through daily practice, weekly lessons, and mindfulness initiatives. The district also focuses on celebrating the strengths of students and teachers via Strengths Finder/Explorer. A culminating “Big Night Out” event celebrates community, connections, and character.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS (Continued)
BREAKOUT SESSION 1 – 11:15 AM -12:00 PM
Fine Arts Classrooms



Session: 1 Room: 303

Climate Change Is Real: Simple Strategies to Positively Impact the School Community (ES)

Presenters: Edward C. Porowski, Principal, and Brooke Kirschner, Assistant Principal

Affiliation: Campbell Elementary School, Metuchen

Description: One size definitely does not fit all when attempting to positively impact the school climate, culture, and community. Campbell School's approach to climate change has been targeted, systemic, and highly successful. This session will focus upon the work accomplished by our Vision and Values Committees in bringing about true school climate change. You'll learn about initiatives such as rethinking vision/mission statements, creating a school touchstone, monthly character value programming, character breakfasts, and monthly/annual kindness challenges

Session: 1 Room: 307

Now and Forever, We Are a Community! (ES)

Presenters: Dr. Cathy Lundquist & Trudy Coppola, Teachers/CE Liaisons

Affiliation: Cedar Hill School, Montville

Description: Community means a group of people gathered together to share with, care about and support each other. The Cedar Hill character education program has built community for 20 years within each classroom, school, district, town, state and even across the Atlantic. Find out how our panel of community members, comprised of fifth-grade Character Education Committee students, teacher liaisons, middle school and high school students, parents, veterans, senior citizens, and the founder of a global organization, has forged and sustained a lasting connectedness.

Session: 1 Room: 339

Tips on Applying for a NJ, National School of Character (ALL)

Presenter: Eileen Dachnowicz, Character.org Trainer, NJ School of Character Coordinator

Affiliation: NJASECD, Character.org

Description: Feeling overwhelmed in applying for a NJ School of Character? Ready to learn a few helpful tips? A seasoned national evaluator and site visitor will ease your fears as she takes you through the process. Not only will you get a lively review of the *Eleven Principles*, the scoring rubric for both the state and national recognition, but also you'll go home with some new practices to invigorate your own program.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

BREAKOUT SESSION 2 - 1:00-1:45 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Session: 2 Room: 201

Keynote Panel Follow-Up: Hearing, Heeding, and Encouraging Voices in the Community – A Systemic Approach to Involving the Community in Character Education (ALL)

Presenter: Dr. Joseph Meloche, Superintendent

Affiliation: Cherry Hill Public Schools, Cherry Hill

Description: This session is geared toward students, family members, school staff members, building administrators, district administrators, and community members. It will be an interactive presentation that will feature a systemic process for inviting, engaging and including voices from across the educational community. This purposeful approach that has been a tremendous benefit to our district expands character education from school-based activities to district established expectations that include demonstrated community participation.

Session: 2 Room: 205

A Community-Strengthening and Data-Driven Approach to School Climate Improvement (ALL)

Presenters: Dr. Lori Guerriero and Dr. Stephen Bernardini, Managers SCTP Project

Affiliation: Rutgers University, Piscataway (a partnership with the Offices of Special Education and Office of Student Support Services at the New Jersey Department of Education)

Description: This workshop will introduce participants to a systems-level change process for promoting positive school climate developed by the School Climate Transformation Project (SCTP). SCTP is an initiative supporting schools in the use of the New Jersey School Climate Survey and other data sources to inform improvement planning. Participants will engage in activities to understand the connections between school climate data and strategies to promote social emotional learning and character development in a community-strengthening framework.

Session: 2 Room: 261

“Break Out” of Old Habits by Building Better Character (MS)

Presenters: Melissa DeClementi and Beth Green, Teachers

Affiliation: Cinnaminson MS, Cinnaminson

Description: Cinnaminson Middle School set out on a journey to build character education and service learning programs over a decade ago. How did we get here? What programs have we created and/or enhanced along the way? Find out what we have learned along the way and how we have managed to turn the Me into WE. Come join us to see how CMS “escaped” old habits and “broke out” into a National School of Character. We will share our story and also some interesting messages learned while attending the National Forum in Washington D.C. #THEPOWEROFWE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS (Continued)
BREAKOUT SESSION 2 - 1:00-1:45 PM
Fine Arts Classrooms



Session: 2 Room: 263
Introduction of SEL Concepts to Parents through Experiential Workshops (ES)

Presenter: Maria Tapia, School Social Worker

Affiliation: Lord Stirling School, New Brunswick

Description: Discover how our school's Culture and Climate Committee developed experiential teaching workshops to help parents understand social-emotional skills and expectations. The first workshop, a mindfulness exercise, focused on self-awareness and self-management by using a feelings chart and a "survival guide" for managing temper tantrums. The second workshop offered an "escape room" activity where parents worked together to resolve a challenge. The third workshop accented proper communication, planning, and responsible decision-making.

Session: 2 Room: 278
The SECD Trauma- Informed Classroom (ALL)

Presenter: Erin Bruno, Director, Social Decision Making Project

Affiliation: Rutgers University

Description: This session **CANCELED!** s of adverse childhood experiences on learning and behavior, making the shift from "what's wrong with you?" to "what happened to you?" We will then discuss evidence-based pedagogy for social emotional character development (SECD) and how to use SECD to begin or enhance your journey to the Trauma Informed Classroom, where every child feels safe, motivated and ready to learn.

Session: 2 Room: 280
Accent on Mindfulness: How a School Community Has Grown through Awareness, Acceptance, and Acknowledgment. (ES)

Presenters: Wendy Becker and Jaclyn Becker, Teachers

Affiliation: Apshawa School, West Milford

Description: You've read the research documenting the social and emotional benefits of teaching Mindfulness to children, but how can you effectively train your staff in mindful practices, without asking them to "do one more thing?" This interactive session will share simple exercises and activities, infusing mindfulness practices into the classroom. The presenters will share experiences from their journey, beginning with the introduction of mindfulness into two classrooms and expanding the practices to impact the culture and climate of the building.

Session: 2 Room: 301
Building ONE Community through Character Connections (ALL)

Presenters: Dr. René Rovtar, Superintendent, and Michael Pasciuto, Robert R. Lazar M.S. Principal

Affiliation: Montville Township Public Schools

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS (Continued)

BREAKOUT SESSION 2 - 1:00-1:45 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Description: We will provide an overview of the “OneMontville” which strives to create and promote a climate of acceptance, respect, and kindness through shared values and activities that bring the residents and businesses together to celebrate our diversity. Events such as the MLK Day of Respect and Community Service and Green In Day will be highlighted. Robert R. Lazar Middle School will give a school-level perspective, describing initiatives such as a program to honor local veterans, a bus drivers’ luncheon, and a senior citizen prom.

Session: 2 Room: 303

Developing Students and Staff as Problem Solvers in any Context (ES)

Presenter: Rick Cohen, Principal/Assistant Superintendent

Affiliation: Moss School, Metuchen

Description: The Moss School Problem Solving Process teaches all students, teachers, and administrators one common process to resolve problems and make decisions together. Through a unique application of Dr. Maurice Elias’s research-based “Social Problem Solving/ Social Decision-Making,” the process is also used for solving academic problems. Metuchen has adopted this approach for its district-wide SEL Framework. Amazingly, Moss students and Metuchen teachers and leaders now use this same process to collaboratively solve academic and social problems.

Session: 2 Room: 307

Building Positive Classroom Communities with the New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning Competencies (ALL)

Presenter: Luiz Pereira, Coordinator

Affiliation: NJ Department of Education, Trenton

Description: A representative from the New Jersey Department of Education will provide updates detailing the Department’s work on social and emotional learning. In this session, the audience will be provided with information and strategies on how to implement the NJ Social and Emotional Learning Competencies in their classrooms as a way to support the development of a positive classroom community. Not only will you understand the rationale behind the competencies, but also you will leave with some useful practices to implement them.

Session: 2 Room: 339

One Size Does Not Fit All (ES/MS)

Presenter: Patricia Carr, CORRECT Coordinator

Affiliation: Oxford Central School, Oxford

Description: Just as each student has a learning style that best serves his or her individual needs, a community has its own special “personality” that must be addressed in implementing a successful education program. Oxford Central School’s CORRECT program (Courage, Optimism, Respect, Responsibility, Empathy, Citizenship, & Trustworthiness) is driven by the ever-changing needs of our school community. Our “Caped Crusaders” – a team of character superheroes – provide inspiration in our school and also spread the word to other New Jersey schools.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

BREAKOUT SESSION 3 - 2:00-2:45 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Session: 3 Room: 201

Keynote Panel Follow-Up: Community Awareness: Impact of Service Learning (ALL)

Presenter: Laurie Coletti, Principal

Affiliation: McDivitt School, Old Bridge

Description: Service learning teaches us important lessons in life through service, but it also has the power to make the curriculum more meaningful. Participants in this workshop will share strategies and ideas for enhancing the school community and reaching out to the community at large. These ideas may be used to support a caring community, promote tolerance, form positive relationships, increase social responsibility, and connect service with the curriculum.

Session: 3 Room: 205

Restoring the Village: Practices for Building Character and Community (ALL)

Presenters: Rosalyn S. Barnes, Principal, and Ronieka Thomas, School Counselor

Affiliation: Watters School No. 24, Jersey City

Description: It takes a village to raise a child, but do we as educators support students and colleagues when its community is fragmented? This presentation will provide an overview of restorative practices, its importance and its use as a vehicle to build character in students and staff. We'll also discuss the implementation of the M.O.S.A.I.C. SEL curriculum, its core values (compassion, optimism, creativity, generosity, and responsibility) and how to restore relationships from harm. Interactive activities will provide an opportunity to put theory into practice.

Session: 3 Room: 261

A Focused and Reflective Service Learning Program (MS)

Presenters: Nick Rizzo, Technology/STEAM Specialist, Anthony DiBartolo, Joyce Kassekert, and Lisa Corsey, Teachers

Affiliation: Bell Oaks Middle School, Bellmawr

Description: Bell Oaks has developed a comprehensive, reflective service-learning approach. All students, grades 5-8, participate in a service-learning program centered on addressing and responding to homelessness in Camden County. Bell Oaks works closely with the Joseph House and Cathedral Kitchen in Camden. During their years here, students work with these organizations, raise funds, gather supplies, make meals and even visit both locations. This focused, student-centered approach has had an enormous impact on both the homeless and our students.

Session: 3 Room: 263

Inviting the Community to be a Part of the Culture (ALL)

Presenters: John Daly, Principal and Amy Najarian, School Counselor

Affiliation: Madison Park Elementary School, Old Bridge

Description: This session will examine and review various components of successful community-building programs starting at the school level. The components touch on academic, social, and emotional needs. Participants will unpack various themes and activities that engage students, parents, and staff. Themes include: Postiive Energy, Growth Mindset, Mindfulness, and Teamwork.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS (Continued)

BREAKOUT SESSION 3 - 2:00-2:45 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Participants will examine and discuss how to incorporate them into existing practices that support building community through character.

Session: 3 Room: 278

Motivation, Movement, and Mindset (ES)

Presenters: Linda Patterson and Paula Pennington, Teachers

Affiliation: A. Russell Knight Elementary School, Cherry Hill

Description: Interested in discovering some instructional strategies for creating a growth mindset in your classroom? Participants will learn how to utilize the innovative thinking skills of students, and plan responsive instruction that establishes positive student relationships, promotes critical thinking and high expectations. We will touch on research that shows how growth mindset instruction empowers students and enhances academic success: *Grit* by Angela Duckworth, *Focus* by Daniel Goleman, *Drive* by Dan Pink, *Growth Mindset* by Carol Dweck, and *The Highly Engaged Classroom* by Robert Marzano.

Session: 3 Room: 301

Fostering a Closer Community through Curricula and Acceptance (HS)

Presenters: Ross Stanger, Supervisor of Instruction, and Terry Kuhnreich, Social Studies Teacher

Affiliation: Vineland High School, Vineland

Description: Our presentation combines the goals and objectives of a high school social studies course entitled “Search for Conscience” with a district initiative called “Hate Has No Home Here.” The initiative is city-wide and has expanded throughout Cumberland County by moving its tenets into curricula, common language, and practice so that the community and students feel safe and valued. “Search for Conscience” helps build bridges between the high school and other schools through a message of anti-bullying, tolerance, acceptance, and respect.

Session: 3 Room: 303

Character Education in Preschool...Is That Even Possible? (ES)

Presenters: Jamillah Parker, District Social Worker, and Cordalia Sullivan, Assistant Principal

Affiliation: Early Childhood Educational Center, Pemberton

Description: Character education can begin as early as preschool! This session will show that building a positive school culture and climate begins with the adults: a school’s administration and staff help to create the culture and climate of a school for they must first model the values. Character education is embedded in research and evidence-based preschool curricula; however, it is the behavior of the adults that makes it more meaningful. This session will provide activities and suggestions to help early childhood programs instill the core values in their students.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS (Continued)

BREAKOUT SESSION 3 - 2:00-2:45 PM

Fine Arts Classrooms



Session: 3 Room: 307

Data-Driven Decision-Making and Planning for School Climate Improvement (ALL)

Presenters: Dr. Patricia Heindel, College of Saint Elizabeth, & Elizabeth Warner, United Way of Northern New Jersey, Co-Directors

Affiliation: School Culture and Climate Initiative

Description: The HIB legislation of 2011 mandated that NJ schools must assess and address school climate. However, schools often lack the resources and supports to assess climate in valid and productive ways. In this interactive workshop, participants will discuss the characteristics of a positive school climate, what drivers of climate have been identified from past research, and what tools and strategies are available to collect and use school data for successful school climate improvement efforts. You'll also learn some best practices for climate teams.

Session: 3 Room: 339

Facing Language and Culture Barriers? Woo your Parents in Novel Ways! (ALL)

Presenters: Eileen Dachnowicz, NJSOC Coordinator; William Trusheim, NJASECD President; Kathleen County, Tara Orsini, Teachers, Joseph D. Sharp, Cherry Hill; Andreia Milano, Vice-Principal, Nicole Webb, Counselor, Terence C. Reilly, School #7, Elizabeth; Marilyn Quinones, Assistant Principal, Michelle dos Santos, Teacher, West End School, North Plainfield

Affiliation: NJASECD

Description: Research shows us that building a sense of community is important in creating a school of character and that parent engagement is vital to achieve this. What does a school do when many parents do not speak English and they face the daily challenges of poverty and alienation? Come join this interactive session where panelists from three NJ Schools of Character discuss non-traditional ways that they used to create a family in students, parents and the wider community. You'll leave with many innovative strategies that you can replicate in your own school.



NJASECD would like to thank all of our presenters for sharing their expertise and experience during the 2018 Annual Conference! If you would like to share details of your work in character education, school culture and climate, and/or social-emotional learning, please consider proposing a presentation for our 2019 Conference.

NJASECD is an all-volunteer organization. We could always use more dedicated volunteers. If you would like to be a part of NJASECD, contact us via email at njasecd@gmail.com!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE at www.njasecd.org