



CharacterPlus®

KANSAS CITY PARTNERSHIP GUIDE

2025 - 2026





OUR HISTORY:

Founded in 1988 by Sanford (Sandy) N. McDonnell, Chairman Emeritus of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation, and a small group of dedicated superintendents, CharacterPlus is now the longest-running and largest community-wide character education initiative in the country.

CharacterPlus also oversees Character.org's prestigious National Schools of Character program and the *11 Principles* framework used in schools throughout the world.



In today's rapidly changing world, academic success alone is not enough. Our students need more than knowledge—they need character. At CharacterPlus, we believe that the heart of education lies in shaping students who are not only well-informed but also well-grounded, responsible, and resilient. That's why we are dedicated to helping schools develop positive learning environments where character development is woven into the very fabric of the school culture.

WHAT WE DO

With decades of experience partnering with schools, we empower educators with evidence-based practices, character-based leadership development, and tailored support that foster strong, ethical, and thriving school communities.



OUR TEAM

The Programming Team includes ten doctoral-level school educators, professors, principals, Leadership Academy in Character Education (LACE) graduates and administrator character education experts. The majority of the CharacterPlus team has led schools to State and National Schools of Character acclaim.

OUR IMPACT

Our approach is research-informed, strengths-based, and values-centered. We work hand-in-hand with schools to support whole-child development, because we know that students learn best when they feel safe, valued, and inspired. Our committed school partners report:

- Improved Attendance
- Lower Discipline Referral Rates
- Higher Standardized Test Scores
- Climate Surveys Reporting Greater Connectedness
- 5% Higher ACT Scores
- Renewed Teacher Sense of Purpose
- Increased Sense of School Community

POSITIVE

PERCENT INCREASE
CHARACTERPLUS PARTNER
SCHOOLS REFLECT ON STATE
STANDARDS & ACT TESTING

PERCENT OF STATE & NATIONAL
SCHOOLS OF CHARACTER OUR
CHARACTERPLUS REGION
REPRESENTS NATIONALLY

NUMBER OF CHARACTERPLUS
PARTNER SCHOOL DISTRICTS,
ORGANIZATIONS, &
UNIVERSITIES

NUMBER OF DONATING
COMPANIES, INDIVIDUALS, &
FOUNDATIONS TO HELP KEEP
PARTNERSHIP FEES LOW

NUMBER OF REGIONAL
EDUCATORS PARTICIPATING IN
ONLINE WORKSHOP PLATFORM
iCHARACTERPLUS

NUMBER OF REGIONAL AND
STATEWIDE SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN
CHARACTERPLUS PARTNERSHIP
CHARACTER EDUCATION WORK

CHANGE

5+

20+

60+

200+

400+

600+

IMPACTED

Natasha Payne, Roosevelt High,
SLPS Math Teacher of the Year,
TACE Graduate

Dr. Ketina Schaffer Armstrong
Assistant Superintendent
Teaching & Learning
MVR-III School District

Dr. Jean Meyer, Superintendent,
Couch R-1 School District
Myrtle, Missouri

Lindsay Corsale, Mason Ridge
Elementary, Parkway Elementary
Teacher of the Year,
TACE Graduate

Rory O'Sullivan, J.D.
CharacterPlus Board of Directors
Acting County Counselor
St. Charles County, MO

Keri Szymanski, Principal,
Voices West Contra Costa
Richmond, CA

PARTNERS

"The Teacher Academy in Character Education helps put character at the forefront of educating students...the professional development is highly collaborative and something I can use immediately in the classroom."

"Putting character education at the center of a school's purpose is the most rewarding thing to do for student success."

"I leave dLACE each time with new understandings and ideas that fit perfectly into the direction we hope to move. I feel like we can implement successful change with regard to character education and not have it be 'just one more thing.'

"It was incredibly energizing to be around educators who are SO invested in character education and working with children!!...thank you very much for your work and for sharing your expertise! Yesterday was the BEST professional development I've experienced in years!!!"

"The CharacterPlus staff who were leading TACE were doing an excellent job. The educators were all so engaged, and the atmosphere was supportive and encouraging. It really gave me great insight into the work that CharacterPlus is doing and how it affects real, meaningful change when those educators bring what they learn back to their schools."

"As our expert in character education leadership, thank you for the safety of being vulnerable and sharing wins and struggles because that's the type of environment that fosters growth. Students are happy, and staff are happy. I'm super grateful, with eyes full of tears and a heart full of gratitude. Thank you!"

THE

TEAM

Mike Park

CharacterPlus® CEO, LACE Academy, The U.S. Army Intelligence Center & School, Wharton School Executive Program, University of Alabama, Center for Character & Citizenship Affiliate Scholar, mike@characterplus.org

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Executive Director, Schools of Character Prior CharacterPlus Director of Programming, LACE Academy, nicole@character.org

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Marvin Berkowitz, Ph.D.

Lead Scholar Advisor, Retired Sanford N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education, UM Thomas Jefferson Fellow, Professor UMSL, Co-Founder The Center for Character & Citizenship

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Scholar Advisor, Teresa M. Fischer Professor of Citizenship Education, Co-Director of the Center for Character & Citizenship, College of Education, UMSL

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CharacterPlus Director of Development, Previous Chief Development responsibilities at Rx Outreach and Make-A-Wish Foundation, cburcke@characterplus.org

Heather Nadenbush

Who holds all of this team together CharacterPlus® Office Manager, Entrepreneur & Community Volunteer, hnadenbush@characterplus.org



CharacterPlus®

EBACE CharacterPlus Way dLACE  Character.org AACE Schools of Character

Kansas City Partnership \$1,750

Let's Create Schools Where Character Leads – and Every Student Belongs

We believe in the power of education rooted in character and belonging – and we're excited to partner with Kansas City schools and districts ready to lead that movement.

Join the newest CharacterPlus Partnership in Kansas City!

This is your opportunity to cultivate a culture of excellence and be recognized for it. As a CharacterPlus Partner, your school or district will gain access to a powerful suite of tools, training, and personalized support designed to help you:

- Elevate character, leadership, and school culture
- Implement proven, evidence-based strategies that build a caring, high-achieving environment
 - Use data to drive real change through climate and culture assessments
 - Pursue recognition as a Missouri and National School of Character



PARTNERSHIP PACKAGE FOR A SCHOOL OR DISTRICT

Here's what's included:



- One (1) free seat in a CharacterPlus Academy - TACE, SELf, or CACE
(additional seats at reduced partnership price)
 - Three (3) hours of expert consulting
 - C2 Audit - a comprehensive school climate/culture evaluation
- Partnership Leader Meetings and Workshops for collaboration & innovation
 - Free access to iCharacterPlus, our online programming hub
- Reduced Partnership pricing for additional CharacterPlus Programming

If you are interested in a partnership or have additional questions, please contact Debbie Rusert, Director of CharacterPlus Kansas City at drusert@characterplus.org.



Designed for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Teachers

Five (5) Full-Day Sessions Led by Top Educators & Character Education Experts

\$1100 Tuition for partner districts, \$1250 for non-partners.

The Teacher Academy in Character Education equips teachers with character development best practices and evidence-based methods that build positive character traits in students and foster thriving classrooms and school communities. Topics include:



CHARACTER EDUCATION HISTORY & FRAMEWORKS



THE ABCs of CHARACTER
(*Autonomy, Belonging, Competence*)



FOUNDATIONS OF A CLASSROOM OF CHARACTER
(*class meetings, classroom norms and core values*)



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN STUDENTS
(*intrinsic motivation, character traits, goal setting, reflection*)



CHARACTER EDUCATION CURRICULUM INTEGRATION
(*service learning, instructional strategies*)

REGISTER



DATES 10.2.25 11.6.25 12.4.25 2.5.26 4.9.26

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APPLY OR LEARN MORE -VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/TACE

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CONTACT DEBBIE RUSERT, DIRECTOR CHARACTERPLUS KANSAS CITY - DRUSERT@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG
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SELf

Inter & Intrapersonal Skill Foundations



by characterplus

Informed by research in adult learning theory, and combined with Inter and Intrapersonal and Character principles, SELf graduates will:

 Develop leaders' capacity to be their best self in order to serve students, school, and community.

 Internalize Autonomy, Belonging, Competence, and Dignity and understand its impact in creating thriving school communities.

 Embrace leading change effectively by understanding self and others.

 Experience best practices in character education.

 Build an awareness of the power of capacity mapping, future planning, inter and intrapersonal skill-building in order to affect change.

 Connect learning to evidence-based character and inter- and intrapersonal skill-building frameworks.

REGISTER



DATES

October 28, 2025
December 11, 2025
February 19, 2026



SIGN UP NOW!

SELf fee \$600 District Partner,

\$720 Non-Partner



THE IDEAL SELF PARTICIPANT

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent

Principal

Director

SEL Program Coordinator

Counselor

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

"I come in feeling disconnected and always leave feeling empowered."

"The activities have a clear purpose and lead to such great dialogue."

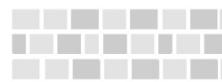
"I wish every educator and student could experience SELf!"

"SELf is a perfect mix of information and hands-on practice."

"I enjoyed every moment!"

LOCATION

Frontier Charter Schools
District Multipurpose Room
6800 Corporate Drive
Kansas City, MO, 64120



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APPLY OR LEARN MORE -VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/SELF

CONTACT MICHAEL BAROLAK, DIRECTOR OF SELF - MBAROLAK@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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Counseling Academy in Character Education

Character Education Skill-Building for Mental Health Professionals

This academy is designed to build a community of wellness for those who provide social, emotional, and mental health support to students in school settings or other sites by helping them:

- Embrace the power of self-awareness
 - Rediscover their "why"
 - Sharpen their communication skills
- Uncover strategies to rekindle their self-care

The CACE Mission

To equip social workers, counselors, and mental health providers with knowledge, experiences, and tools to rekindle their passion and commitment to themselves and those they serve.

CACE Session One

10.30.25



CACE Session Two

01.22.26



CACE Session Three

02.26.26

PARTNERSHIP ACADEMY FEE \$600 per participant. **NON-PARTNER** \$720. Lunch included. Sessions will be held at the Mid Continent Public Library - East Independence Branch



MICHAEL BAROLAK, MSW
DIRECTOR, SELf & CACE



REGISTER

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REQUEST OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/CACE

CONTACT MICHAEL BAROLAK, MSW, SR. FACILITATOR, EBACE, SELf, & CACE - MBAROLAK@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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school climates and



cultures of excellence

We are often asked by schools if we have a general assessment of how aligned their practices are with the *11 Principles*, or if there are key components missing before they apply for Schools of Character recognition. The c2Audit is based on our years of experience helping schools transform their culture and climate.

belonging

community

connected

empowered

trusted

challenged

CharacterPlus c2Audit -

A consultant from our programming team will spend approximately 2-3 hours at your school during a typical school day. They will tour the building and meet with the administration and/or culture and climate team to learn about the level of character education implementation in the school.

This process will create a list of implementation possibilities aligned with the requirements of the School of Character framework, as well as recommendations regarding the school's next steps for implementation and, if applicable, timing for applying to Schools of Character.

"This was one of the best assessments we have ever done, and it has provoked great conversations about what we can continue to improve upon! It's definitely impacting and guiding our goals for the future, too."

Dr. Lorinda Krey, Principal



Fee:

\$500 Partner

\$600 Non-Partner

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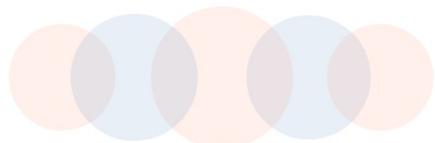
REQUEST OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/C2AUDIT

CONTACT DEBBIE BRANDT, DIRECTOR OF CHARACTERPLUS WAY - D BRANDT@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

Partnership Collaboration Meetings & Workshops



CharacterPlus partner districts understand that **regular professional development** is necessary to generate new ideas and perspectives, build the confidence of educators, create a **network of support**, and **develop a staff skilled** in character education **implementation strategies**. High-quality professional development makes character education and school climate initiatives possible. **They are held once each semester.**



PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

are designed to meet the collective needs of partner schools and districts. Their purpose is to provide character education skill-building opportunities to network, brainstorm and collaborate with other partners.



PARTNERSHIP WORKSHOPS

are full-day trainings designed to equip schools and districts with information and tools that can be used to deepen practice.

1st semester workshop topic:
Character-Based Discipline

2nd semester workshop topic:
11 Principles of Effective Character Education



This ongoing regional commitment to character education training improves the school experience for teachers, students, and families.

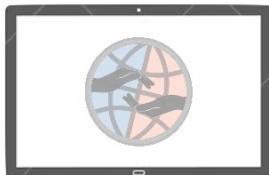
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APPLY OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/WORKSHOPS

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iCharacterPlus



As a CharacterPlus partner school district you have free access to all CharacterPlus® programming on our online platform called **iCharacterPlus**. Your access code, available through your District Leader or principal, will discount your course fee to zero. Not a member? Contact us to learn more about how to access this unique character education resource.

Online Resources Include:

- Foundational Certification in Character Education
- The Community-Building Series
- Intrinsic Motivation Resources
- The Multicultural Classroom
- The Encouragement Series
- Schools of Character
- Class Meetings

Content is focused on relevant topics in the area of **character development and student well-being** through facilitating inter/intrapersonal skill-building.

Hosted on our **Teachable** platform, the training modules are self-paced and can be utilized individually, for a PLC/grade-level/content team, or for a faculty meeting.

We remain committed to the **human interaction** you've come to expect and appreciate. In line with that commitment, some of the online modules will have **built-in opportunities** for interaction/feedback with CharacterPlus staff.

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REQUEST OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.TEACHABLE.COM
CONTACT DR. KRISTEN PELSTER, CHIEF PROGRAMMING OFFICER - KPELSTER@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG
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ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING



THE ATHLEADERSHIP ACADEMY IN CHARACTER EDUCATION by characterplus

The High School Athleadership Academy in Character Education (AACE) provides character education skill-building for secondary school athletes. CharacterPlus has adapted its K-12 evidence-based process for creating Autonomy (voice and choice), Belonging (being part of a community), and Competence (the ability to do something successfully) for high school coaches and their athletes. Annually, each participating high school selects student-athletes from every sport to attend AACE training in order to become AACE Character Ambassadors.



- 3 Two-Hour Sessions (Fall, Winter, Spring) ●
- Coaches Training (Virtual Asynchronous) ●
- Up to 45 Athleaders per session ●
- \$3,500 per High School ●
- Dates Determined in Coordination with Coaches ●
- Guidelines/Suggestions Provided to ADs Each Season ●
(AD to meet with Fall Sports, Winter Sports, and Spring Sports during season to highlight implementation of AACE programming)

AACE OUTCOMES INCLUDE:

- athletes feeling valued
- a sense of belonging for teammates
- team culture that actively includes athlete's voice
- stronger social, emotional, character, and performance skills
- model student-athlete leaders who make a positive impact on their teams, schools, and fans



What athletes and coaches say about the Athleadership Academy in Character Education's impact:

"we are a more unified family"

"this gives coaches the opportunity to work on being a transformational versus a transactional coach, which is often the default"

"we cannot wait to continue our meetings as AACE character ambassadors"

"we are creating competitive and passionate athletes who also have extraordinary character on and off the field"

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APPLY OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/AACEHIGH SCHOOL

CONTACT TODD MOELLER, DIRECTOR of AACE, CHARACTERPLUS - TMOELLER@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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AT THE TABLE

by characterplus

Four evenings designed to empower and inspire trailblazing women educators as noble women leaders share how positive character anchors a purpose-driven life. Each event includes appetizers, dinner, dessert, and heartening messages of breaking barriers through leadership and courage.

Previous Speakers Include:



Michelle Li

Cohost of "Today in St. Louis,"
KSDK Channel 5



Amy Shaw

President & CEO,
Nine PBS



Jey Owens, MBA

Director, Human Resources,
Champaign Unit 4 Schools



**Justine Froelker,
M.Ed., LPC**

Bestselling Author &
National Trainer



**Dr. Joyce
Balls-Berry**

Professor, Neurology,
Wash U School of Medicine



**Dr. Akberet
Boykin-Farr**

VP, Diversity & Social
Responsibility, Emerson



**Dr. Donna
Jahnke**

Assistant Professor,
SLU



**Geri Boyer,
P.E.**

Managing Partner,
Kaskaskia Engineering



**Judi
Bertels**

CEO, African
Vision of Hope



As an At the Table participant, you will grow your PLN and extend your own thinking around the power of being a woman who leads with purpose to impact those you serve. Each evening will be centered around the message from an influential woman leader who will share her story of the power of leading with and on purpose.

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APPLY OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/ATTHETABLE

QUESTIONS? CONTACT DR. KRISTEN PELSTER, CHIEF PROGRAMMING OFFICER - KPELSTER@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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Character-Based DISCIPLINE

"Maintaining the **dignity of each student while constantly working toward the long-term goal of self-directed, self-regulated, and responsible behavior."**

Humans learn and process through social interactions. Our behaviors are heavily influenced by our experiences with others. This academy explores the neuroscience behind human behavior and unpacks the essential elements that students need to be their best selves. Regardless of the discipline program your school uses, this session will enhance your practice by increasing your understanding of proactive research-based implementation strategies for before, during, and after behavior challenges occur.



ACADEMY FEE

\$600 per participant. NON-PARTNER \$720. Lunch included.

Learn to Apply:

- discipline that is structured and also maintains the dignity of both student and staff member
 - proactive strategies to improve relationships
- during-incident strategies to promote self-regulation
- post-incident strategies to encourage reason and repair

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APPLY OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/CBASE

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CONTACT ROXANNA MECHEM, DIRECTOR OF DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS - RMECHEM@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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CharacterPlus Way®

CharacterPlus Way® is an **evidence-based process** developed by CharacterPlus to **transform** school climate, **increase** academic achievement, and **reduce** behavior referrals. The three-year process was the focus of a federally funded study, with the successful results published nationally.

Results reflect that the CharacterPlus Way is a compelling process that significantly impacts school culture, resulting in healthier schools where students are engaged in more prosocial behavior with a significant reduction in discipline referrals and increases in achievement.

Customized on-site coaching and consultation services are at the core of the process. This allows schools to address their specific issues at a pace that works for their staff and students, ultimately leading to whole-school transformation. CharacterPlus Way process schools include early childhood, elementary, middle, and high schools.

CharacterPlus Way federal research grants provided data that showed when implemented with fidelity:

- staff morale was higher
- staff possessed a strong sense of purpose
- staff and students enjoyed a higher level of administrative support
- more students scored at proficient or advanced on state assessment tests
- students demonstrated more prosocial behavior
- school safety improved
- fewer student behavior office referrals occurred
- students felt greater feelings of belonging and autonomy
- and students were more likely to view the school as a community



Over the last three decades of positively impacting school culture and climate, CharacterPlus has become an evidence-based leader in assessing the critical factors that lead to great schools.

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REQUEST OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/CHARACTERPLUSWAY
CONTACT DEBBIE BRANDT, DIRECTOR OF CHARACTERPLUS WAY - DBRANDT@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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characterVISIONS

helping middle schoolers develop their best selves
by characterplus & originally created by melanie mitchell

Character Visions is a character and inter- and intrapersonal skills curriculum that impacts middle school students' sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence. The easy-to-follow lessons, based on best practice, foster collaboration between students, encourage critical thinking about themselves and the world, and help them be active participants in creating a positive classroom and school community.

Character Visions helps middle schoolers explore:

- the character traits they would like to live by •
- what is happening in their community and how to make a positive impact •
- connections to school and other students •

Character Visions **Levels 1 and 2** are currently available, and **Level 3** will be available for the 26-27 year.



PARTNER DISTRICT COST: \$250/level/school
NON-PARTNER: \$300/level/school

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REQUEST OR LEARN MORE -VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/CHARACTERVISIONS

CONTACT DR. EMILIE JOHNSON, CHARACTERPLUS SENIOR FACILITATOR-EJOHNSON@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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educators beyond the classroom

For hundreds of children in your school district, their bus driver, custodial staff, lunchroom team, before-school care, nurse, para-professionals, and administrative assistants are the first educators they interact with as they begin their school day. As a result, your school's character initiative is put in motion long before students enter the classroom. Ensure your school thrives with every interaction with Culture Carriers by CharacterPlus. Build positive character and inter- and intrapersonal skills with your educators beyond the classroom.



Culture Carriers will help your school community by:

Creating **stronger bonds and a sense of belonging** for all support staff in your school

Giving bus drivers and all support staff the **tools to strengthen relationships** on buses, in the lunchroom, and throughout the building

Providing students an **increased sense of belonging and safety** in every school setting

Building an **in-depth understanding of why each staff member matters** in this effort, and how their actions and words strengthen school climate and culture

Sharing **real-world examples** of how students view all adults in their school community as role models

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REQUEST OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/CULTURECARRIERS

CONTACT LYNN CLAPP, DIRECTOR OF CULTURE CARRIERS - LCLAPP@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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The District Leader Academy in Character Education (dLACE) is a grant program for Missouri school districts that develops district-level champions for character development and school climate initiatives. The process CharacterPlus uses determines strengths and suggests strategic enhancements to ensure districts use research-based practices that make their schools the best places for teaching, learning, and personal growth.



Grant awardees will participate in workshop sessions, personalized coaching, and leadership training in character development.



Through participant workshop sessions, coaching, on-site training, quarterly regional meetings, and school observations, district leadership will be equipped to guide their district's character and climate initiatives.

 **IN COORDINATION WITH DESE**

- *Travel Expenses Paid*
- *Five Days of Learning*
- *Character Education Starter Library*
- *30 Consult Hours*
- *District Climate Survey*
- *iCharacterPlus Online Programming Access*
- *Funded by DESE & CharacterPlus*
- *No cost to you!*

"Our mission is to educate and empower lifelong learners. Empowerment is fueled by character. The most valuable commodities for future adults are the ability to show strong character, be respectful, be able to work cooperatively, and have strong personal ethics. Having these qualities is just as important as academic knowledge."

2023-2024 dLACE Graduate

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APPLY OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/DLACE

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State Schools of Character



Character.org, part of the CharacterPlus family, is one of the nation's most respected and influential voices in character development and overseeing the prestigious Schools of Character certification nationally. CharacterPlus guides school leaders through the application and manages the evaluation process, which includes a site visit and a detailed, in-depth feedback report.



The School of Character Certification evaluates the fidelity of the implementation of *The 11 Principles of Character Education*. This includes demonstrating competence in areas such as:

-  Embedding **comprehensive, intentional, and proactive** strategies that promote core ethical and performance values
-  **Fostering** self-motivation and providing opportunities for moral action
-  Offering **a meaningful and challenging** academic curriculum for all learners
-  Fostering **shared** leadership among staff and building long-range support of character education

Everything you need to know

- State Schools of Character Process Overview
 - Application Writing Mentors
 - Promising Practices Information
- State Schools of Character Application Best Practices



CharacterPlus

APPLY OR LEARN MORE - VISIT WWW.CHARACTERPLUS.ORG/SCHOOLSOFCHARACTER

CONTACT DEBBIE BRANDT, MISSOURI SOC COORDINATOR - DBRANDT@CHARACTERPLUS.ORG

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