

CHRIS LARSON

STATE SENATOR

September 14, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Education
From: State Senator Chris Larson
Re: Senate Bill 329

Testimony of Sen. Larson in Support of Senate Bill 329

Chairman Olsen and members of the committee, thank you for giving Senate Bill 329 a public hearing and for giving me the opportunity to speak in favor of this proposal this morning.

This legislation offers our public schools an important tool in the education of our state's children. At the most basic level, character education creates a caring school community by emphasizing respect, responsibility, honesty, kindness, and perseverance. The legislation before you today offers an opportunity for our public school administrators, principals and teachers to engage in meaningful trainings on how best to incorporate virtuous characteristics in the classroom.

As our state continues to strive for the best citizenry possible, it makes sense to start early. Today, the committee will hear testimony from the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership as well as the South Milwaukee and Brown Deer School Districts. As I represent the South Milwaukee School District, I would like to acknowledge their dedication to this program as well as their accomplishment on being named a National District of Character in 2017. Through their testimony, these individuals will tell us first-hand the positive impacts character education has had on their students and staff.

Again, thank you Chairman Olsen and members of the committee for holding this hearing today.

Sincerely,

Chris Larson
State Senator
7th Senate District

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Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senate Bill 329

September 13, 2018

Thank you Chairman Olsen and committee members for holding a public hearing today on Senate Bill 329. The legislation before you will allow the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to administer grants to school districts who put a priority on character education.

Character education is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about, and act on core ethical values. Values such as respect, justice, civic virtue, citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Most of a young student's life is devoted to time in the classroom. This time in the classroom is a great opportunity to develop and reinforce the core values upon which character is formed.

In order to promote character education and incentivize schools to put resources into training its faculty, this bill provides funding to DPI to award grants for teachers and school leaders to participate in professional development training in character education. While this funding will not be enough to support full implementation of character education within districts, I feel that this legislation is a positive step in the right direction and will provide a strong incentive for school districts to develop a program within their districts.

Schools like Brown Deer Middle/High School and school districts like South Milwaukee have been named Wisconsin Schools of Character. As such, they have been recognized for their exemplary character education programs. Later today you will hear a few examples from school leaders on the importance of character education to developing the culture and community within their schools and districts. They have shown that the best way to implement character education is through a holistic approach that integrates character development into every aspect of school life.

I want to thank Representative Rodriguez and Senator Larson for their continued support and work on the bill. I would also like to thank the school personnel who were able to take time out of their schedules to speak to the positive impact character education has had on their schools and districts.

Thank you again committee members for holding a hearing today on SB 329.

I hope to have your support for SB 329.



JESSIE RODRIGUEZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 21ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

SB 329: Professional Development Training in Character Education Testimony of State Representative Jessie Rodriguez

Senate Committee on Education

September 14, 2017

Good morning,

Committee chairman Olsen and fellow education committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 329, legislation that will allow for professional development training in character education for Wisconsin teachers.

Schools throughout the state are tasked with educating our children and teaching the skills needed to find a job, go to college and succeed in life after high school. From reading and writing to math and science, they provide our students with vital life skills that will serve them long after graduation.

The legislation before you today will give teachers the opportunity to prepare our children with another vital quality: character.

Character education is a learning process for students and adults to develop and understand core ethical values rooted in four areas: respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others.

This legislation requires the Department of Public Instruction to administer grants so that teachers and schools will have the opportunity to receive professional development training in character education. Additionally, the bill allows teachers and school administrators to use character education training for professional development requirements.

Two school districts in Wisconsin have already taken the initiative and become leaders in character education. South Milwaukee Schools in my district and Brown Deer Middle and High Schools have proudly been recognized as Wisconsin Schools



JESSIE RODRIGUEZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 21ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

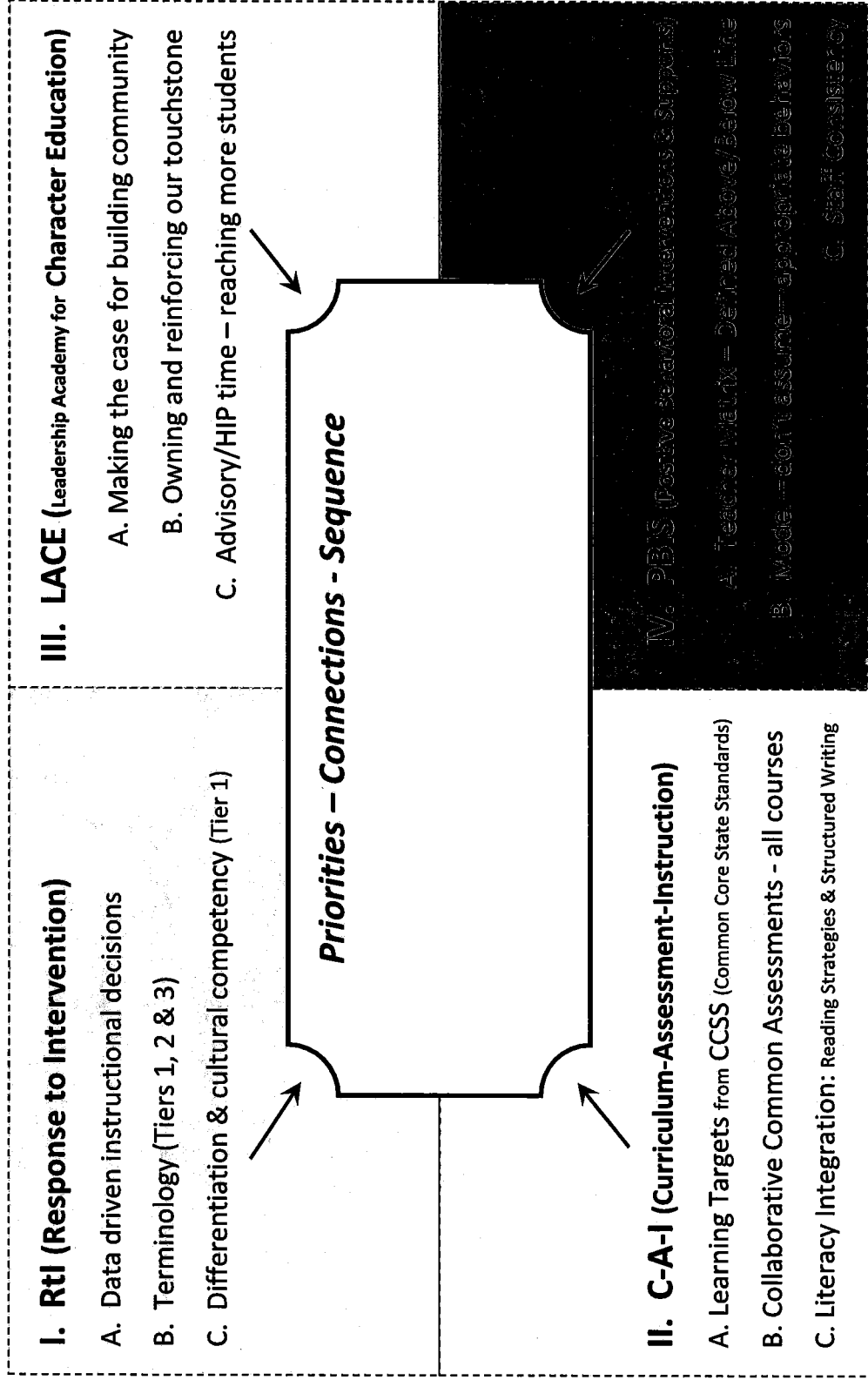
of Character. Both schools districts will serve as role models blazing the trail for the rest of our districts to follow.

Character education was once considered a core aspect of education in our country. This legislation is the first step to making sure that children develop the values that will allow them to become good people as well as good students. I encourage your support for this legislation.

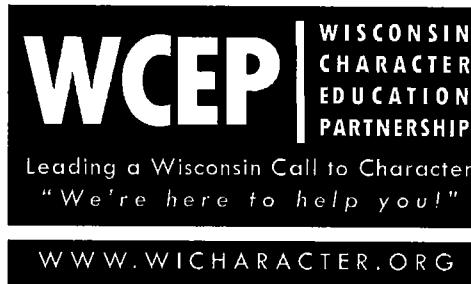
Thank you for your time.

Staff Development for 2012-13: BDHS & District

BDHS Faculty Meeting Feedback/Planning – May 2, 2012



character.org



Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education From Character Education Partnership

There is no single script for effective character education, but there are some important basic principles. The following eleven principles serve as criteria that schools and other groups can use to plan a character education effort. They can be used in conjunction with Character.org's Character Education Quality Standards to evaluate available character education programs, books, and curriculum resources. Character Education Partnership has its website at <http://www.character.org>.

- Principle 1:** Promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
- Principle 2:** Defines "character" comprehensively to include thinking, feeling and behavior.
- Principle 3:** Uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive, and effective approach to character development.
- Principle 4:** Creates a caring school community.
- Principle 5:** Provides students with opportunities for moral action.
- Principle 6:** Includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.
- Principle 7:** Strives to foster students' self-motivation.
- Principle 8:** Engages the school staff as a learning and moral community that shares responsibility for character education and attempts to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
- Principle 9:** Fosters shared moral leadership and long range support of the character education initiative.
- Principle 10:** Engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.
- Principle 11:** Evaluates the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

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"Intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

A Wisconsin Call to Character

We call upon all citizens of the great state of Wisconsin to affirm the necessity of honorable character in the foundation and advancement of an economically viable and socially secure society *and* to embody this affirmation through...

Committing ourselves to making virtue – the embodiment of core ethical values in every avenue of our lives – the foundational principle and standard of measurement in all of our actions and endeavors;

Endorsing and supporting the efforts of our fellow citizens from business, government, education, industry, the trades and the community working to ensure a greater future for our state by exemplifying, teaching and upholding core universal values such as integrity, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for ourselves and for others – values that are shared by all Americans regardless of race, ethnic background, religion, or status;

Recognizing that as elementary and secondary education is the one convention that reaches almost every citizen of our state, we must encourage and support the intentional, proactive effort by parents, teachers, administrators, schools, school districts, communities and the state to instill in Wisconsin's students core universal, ethical values;

Affirming and supporting individuals, communities, schools and school districts that exemplify specific, targeted efforts to communicate and integrate into the lives of children and youth the aforementioned core character values; and by encouraging and rewarding such efforts.

We believe that Wisconsin's future will be even brighter than our luminous past as long as virtue is upheld as the standard by which our endeavors, goals, actions, and activities are measured and governed. The promise of "Forward" is also a summons – a call to character for all people of all backgrounds and walks of life who share the great privilege of calling Wisconsin home.

Month: _____ 2017

Please print and sign name, organization, previous or present responsibilities and/or community you are associated with. WE THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF OUR CHILDREN WHO ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW OUR EXAMPLE.

_____ Print Name

_____ Signature

_____ Organization/Responsibility/Community

PREFACE

Since the foundation of the Republic Americans have understood that a representative democracy is dependent upon responsible citizenship; citizens that understand and practice shared core values – values that help us build a common framework for justice, fairness, and mutual respect. Americans are overwhelmingly decent, hardworking, honest people but even the most cursory glance at the key indicators of civic responsibility in contemporary society reveals that something is going terribly wrong. Our moral compass no longer seems to point unerringly toward a “true north” of civic virtue. Historically, this diagnosis is very grim. Moral degradation inevitably leads to civic decay. People without common core values cannot construct an economically viable or socially secure society because fundamentally both the individual and collective motivation to build or invest – to extend oneself into permanence – rests in valuing something beyond oneself.

With a courageous yet realistic belief that Wisconsin could be an exemplary leader among the states, in 1851 Wisconsin’s elected representatives adopted the challenge “Forward” as the official motto of our growing state. History has proven the optimistic call to be prophetic rather than rhetorical as Wisconsin became a national leader in education, agriculture, industry and commerce while maintaining and advancing the highest standards of justice, equality, public integrity and social responsibility. People from dozens of nations speaking a myriad of languages and following innumerable distinctive customs were melded into an extraordinary, cooperative venture that became our state. Their success – and ours – is grounded in an unwavering commitment to core universal, ethical values such as integrity, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for ourselves and for others. Virtue, the individual and corporate embodiment of these core ethical values, is the bedrock upon which our extraordinary success as a state rests.

In this second half of our second century the citizens of Wisconsin continue to affirm and advance the vision and confidence of our founders by our unwavering commitment to moving “Forward.” Therefore,