



2025 CONFERENCE PROGRAM

*May 12-14, 2025*

**Pensacola Beach, Florida**



**Samford University**  
Orlean Beeson School of Education

### *What a joy it is to welcome you to the 6th Annual Character Convening!*

Over the past five years we have learned new information about character formation, shared innovative ideas and practices, networked with colleagues, and become a family. We, once again, have the opportunity to grow our knowledge and family bonds during the Character Convening over the next few days.

The Character Family has come together in many ways to provide this Character Convening. Various organizations have sponsored meals, the convening swag, and the reception while others offered their time to plan the convening which included reading and scoring proposals. This truly is an example of a family working together to make something extraordinary happen.

The keynote sessions will be led by Dr. Liz Gulliford from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues in Birmingham, England. Her talks will focus on how character is taught, caught, and sought. What a perfect theme for our convening! There are four different breakout session times you can select to hear two presentations or a workshop during that slot. Breakout sessions are grouped by track: K-12, Faith-based, Higher Education, or Non-profit. Use the tracks and descriptions listed in the program to help you select applicable breakout sessions. And please take advantage of the evenings to connect with others over a nice meal or by the pool.

Your presence is an indication of your commitment to helping students flourish. Thank you for sharing your time, expertise, and presence at the 6th Annual Character Convening.

**Looking forward to see you in 2026 at the 7th Annual Character Convening!**

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## AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

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Monday, May 12, 2025

4-5 p.m.

Registration

*Outside Emerald Coast*

5-6:30 p.m.

Reception

*Poolside Deck*

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

7:30-8 a.m.

Breakfast

*White Sands*

8:15-8:30 a.m.

Welcome and Introduction of Keynote

*Emerald Coast*

8:30-10 a.m.

Keynote Session #1

*Emerald Coast*

10-10:20 a.m.

Mid-morning break

10:30-11:30 a.m.

Breakout Session #1

11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

LUNCH

*White Sands*

12:20-1:20 p.m.

Breakout Session #2

1:30-3 p.m.

Keynote Session #2

*Emerald Coast*

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

7:30-8 a.m.

Breakfast

*White Sands*

8:15-9:30 a.m.

Keynote Session #3

*Emerald Coast*

9:30-9:50 a.m.

BREAK

9:50-10:50 a.m.

Breakout Session #3

11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Breakout Session #4

12-12:45 p.m.

LUNCH

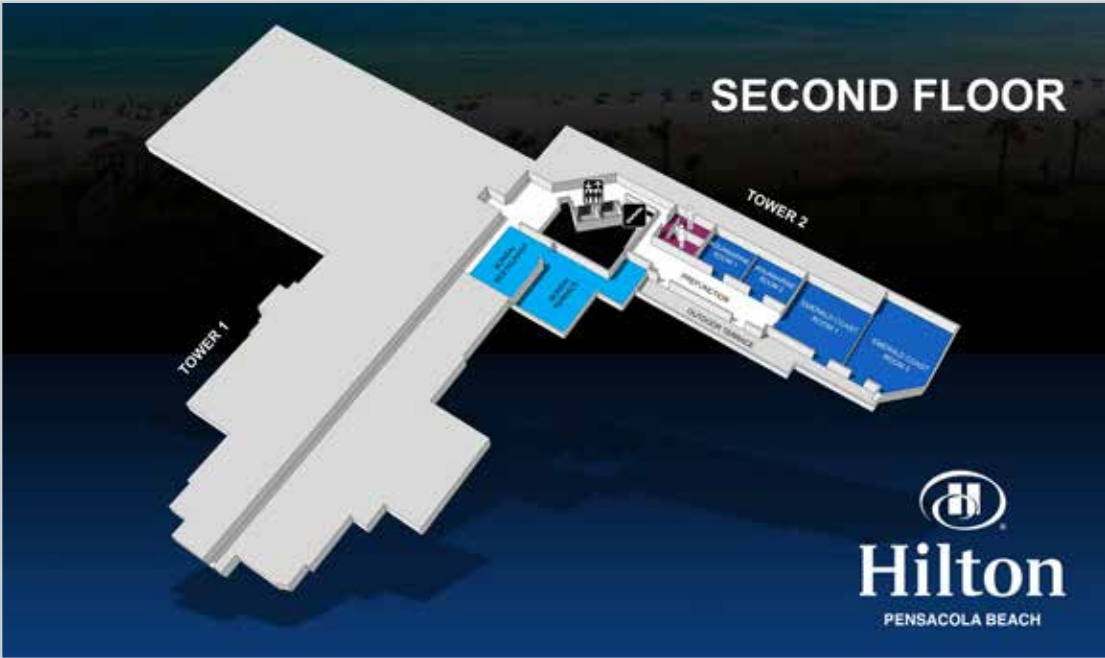
*White Sands*

12:45-1 p.m.

Closing Event

*White Sands*

## HOTEL MAP



# SPEAKER

## DR. LIZ GULLIFORD

Dr. Liz Gulliford is Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. Liz works for the *Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues* and currently teaches on the University of Birmingham's MA in Character Education. She is also an Associate Fellow of the Oxford Character Project.

Liz has an interdisciplinary background with an MA in Theology (Trinity College Oxford), MPhil in Theology and Religious Studies (Queens' College, Cambridge), and a BPS-accredited BSc in Psychology from Anglia Ruskin University. Her PhD (Queens' College, Cambridge, 2011) established a firm, critical foundation for theoretical and practical work in positive psychology, positive education, and character education, upon which she has progressively built an international reputation.

During her tenure as an Associate Professor in Positive Psychology at the University of Northampton (2018 – 2023), Liz was Co-Pi on a John Templeton Foundation funded research project on 'The role of exemplar narratives in cultivating character' (2019 – 2023), which was part of a larger network grant on moral exemplars.

Liz has carried out extensive conceptual and empirical work on gratitude, forgiveness, hope, optimism, courage, compassion, virtue ethics, moral development, positive psychology, positive education, character education and exemplarism. She has published in a wide range of journals in psychology, education, and philosophy. She has also given numerous invited presentations internationally to both academic and lay audiences.



# DETAILED AGENDA

Monday, May 12, 2025

4-5 p.m.

**Registration**

*Outside White Sands*

*Swag items sponsored by Canyon Center for Character Education*

5-6:30 p.m.

**Reception**

*Poolside Deck*

*Sponsored by Western Governors University*

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

7:30-8 a.m.

**Breakfast- White Sands**

**Southern Breakfast**, *Breakfast sponsored by University of West Alabama*

8:15-8:30 a.m.

**Welcome and Introduction of Keynote**

*Emerald Coast*

8:30-10 a.m.

**Keynote Session #1, Dr. Liz Gulliford**

*Emerald Coast*

*Top-down or Bottom-up? Embedding Character Taught in Higher Education: Revolution or Mustard Seed?*

10-10:20 a.m.

**Mid-morning break**, *Sponsored by The University of Alabama*

10:30-11:30 a.m.

**Breakout Session #1**

## Aquamarine #1

**Track: Faith-based Higher Education, Faith-based K-12, Higher Education, K-12**

**Presentation: Leading for Impact: The Five Leadership Practices That Drive Character Education**

Presenters: Jennifer Hogan, Hoover City Schools and Kay Veazey, Blount County Schools

**Track: Higher Education**

**Presentation: Character Caught- Lessons from a Summer Institute Fostering Character Education in K-12 Schools**

Presenters: Jackie McBride, Judi Jenkins, Alicia Shaw, Amany Saleh, Beverly Gilbert, Rob Williams, LeeAnne Oros, Paula Greer, Julie Milligan- Arkansas State University

**Room Host:** *Amy Benton, Samford University*

## Aquamarine #2

**Track: Faith-based; Higher Education**

**Presentation: Infusing Character Education in New Program Development**

Presenters: Courteney Benjamin and Bryan Gill- Samford University

**Track: Higher Education**

**Presentation: How Do You Grow? Incorporating Virtue Development into Preparatory Programs**

Presenters: Kathleen B. King- North Central College

**Room Host:** *Maureen Spelman, North Central College*

## Coral Reef

**Track: Higher Education**

**Workshop: Effective Strategies and Best Practices for Infusing Character Education in the College Curriculum**

Presenters: Dr. Celeste A. Wheat, Dr. Andrea Mayfield, Dr. Melissa Haab- University of West Alabama

**Room Host:** *Rob Williams, Arkansas State University*

## Emerald Coast

**Track: Faith-based Higher Education, Faith-based K-12, Higher Education, K-12**

**Workshop: Character Taught through Socratic Seminar**

Presenters: Robin Cayce, Lance Forman, and Kesha Walrond- Lipscomb University

**Room Host:** *Kevin Jones, University of West Alabama*

**11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

**Lunch**

*White Sands*

Market fresh salad with ranch, Grill sirloin steak, Key Lime Pie

**12:20-1:20 p.m.**

**Breakout Session #2**

## *Aquamarine #1*

**Track: Faith-based Higher Education**

**Presentation: Story Matters: A Reminder How Narrative Fosters Virtue**

Presenters: Johnathan F. Harris, Samford University

**Track: Faith-based Higher Education, Higher Education**

**Presentation: Virtuous Leadership and Emotionally Healthy Schools**

Presenters: Michael Hylen, Anderson University

**Room Host:** *Jonathan Davis, Samford University*

## *Aquamarine #2*

**Track: K-12**

**Presentation: Fostering Intrinsic Motivation to Help Create a Culture of Character**

Presenters: John Lowry, Homewood City Schools

**Track: K-12**

**Presentation: Character Education in K-12 Athletics: Outcomes and Next Steps**

Presenters: Laura Casey, Vestavia Hills City Schools

**Room Host:** *Ben White, University of Alabama*

## *Coral Reef*

**Track: K-12**

**Presentation: Developing Character through Trust in Developing Collective Teacher and Student Efficacy**

Presenters: Richard Edermann, Syfr Learning and Jane Cobia, Samford University

**Track: Faith-based Higher Education, Faith-based K-12, Higher Education, K-12**

**Presentation: Books That Build Character: Teaching Comprehension Skills Using Head, Heart, and Hands**

Presenters: Kate Scarborough, Tarsha Shepard, Hannah Kennedy- Samford University

**Room Host:** *Brenda Mendiola, University of Alabama*

## *Emerald Coast*

**Track: Faith-based Higher Education, Faith-based K-12, Higher Education, K-12**

**Workshop: Wise Interventions**

Presenters: Nancy Winfrey, Wake Forest University

**Room Host:** *Lori Doyle, Concordia University Irvine*

**1:30-3:00 pm**

**Keynote Session #2, Dr. Liz Gulliford**

*Emerald Coast*

**Character Caught:** What does a Flourishing University Look Like?



Wednesday, May 14, 2025

**7:30-8 a.m.**

**Breakfast**

*White Sands*

*Sponsored by The University of West Alabama*

**8:15-9:30 a.m.**

**Keynote Session #3, Dr. Liz Gulliford**

*Emerald Coast*

**Character Sought:** Navigating New Horizons for Character Development

**9:30-9:50 a.m.**

**Mid-morning break**

*Sponsored by The University of Alabama*

**9:50-10:50 am**

**Breakout Session #3**

## *Aquamarine #1*

**Track:** Faith-based Higher Education, Faith-based K-12, Higher Education, K-12

**Presentation:** Making Waves

Presenters: Emily Farkas and Ashley Brandon, Canyon Center for Character Education

**Track:** Faith-based Higher Education, Faith-based K-12, Higher Education, K-12

**Presentation:** One University's Approach: Embedding Virtue Prompts in Support of Framework Integration

Presenters: Lori Doyle, Concordia University Irvine

**Room Host:** Robin Cayce, Lipscomb University

## *Aquamarine #2*

**Track:** Higher Education

**Presentation:** Exploring Ethical Dilemmas as Pedagogical Tools in Educational Leadership

Presenters: LeeAnne Oros and Amany Selah, Arkansas State University

**Track:** Higher Education, K-12

**Presentation:** Empowering School Communities to Make Ethical & Equitable Decisions

Presenters: Maureen V. Spelman, North Central College

**Room Host:** Ashley Brandon, Canyon Center for Character Education

## *Coral Reef*

**Track:** K-12

**Presentation:** Cultivating Agents of Change

Presenters: Jennifer Underwood and Ashley Kean, i3Academy

**Track:** K-12

**Presentation:** The Role of Robotics in Building Character

Presenters: Chet Nicholas

**Room Host:** Bill Cleveland, Samford University

## *Emerald Coast*

**Track:** Higher Education

**Workshop:** Leading with Heart: Virtuous Leadership Lessons from Ted Lasso

Presenters: Jan Miller and Kevin Jones, University of West Alabama

**Room Host:** Reenay Rogers, University of West Alabama



**11 a.m.-12 p.m.**

## **Breakout Session #4**

### *Aquamarine #1*

**Track:** Faith-based Higher Education, Higher Education, K-12

**Presentation:** Tools for Strengthening Your Heart to Lead Well

Presenters: Lisa Beckham, Samford University

**Track:** Faith-based Higher Education

**Presentation:** Encouraging the Heart: Character Guided Mentorship in Higher Education

Presenters: Clara Gerhardt and Bill Cleveland, Samford University

**Track:** Faith-based Higher Education

**Presentation:** The World as our Classroom: Seeking Character Education in International Contexts

Presenters: Kara M. Chism and Clara Gerhardt, Samford University

**Room Host:** Les Ennis, Samford University

### *Aquamarine #2*

**Track:** Faith-based Higher Education

**Presentation:** Service Learning as a Gateway to Character Education

Presenters: Jeanelle Day, Kate Scarborough, Hannah Kennedy, Jane-Marie Marlin, Samford University

**Track:** Non-profit

**Presentation:** That Could Be ME!: Biography as a Lesson in Character

Presenters: Christine Drew, Syfr Learning and Jane Cobia, Samford University

**Room Host:** Tarsha Shepard, Samford University

### *Coral Reef*

**Track:** Higher Education

**Presentation:** Virtues in Action: Embedding Character Education in Teacher Preparation

Presenters: Jan Miller and Reenay Rogers, University of West Alabama

**Track:** Higher Education

**Presentation:** Rise by Rooting Down: Character Education Transformation Technology

Presenters: Aleta Forkum, Western Governors University

**Track:** Higher Education

**Presentation:** How the 11 Principles fit into Principal Leadership in Alabama

Presenters: Ben White, Casey Dykes, and Brenda Mendiola, University of Alabama

**Room Host:** Greg Hurst, University of West Alabama

### *Emerald Coast*

**Track:** Higher Education

**Workshop:** Cultivating Flourishing through Character and Life Skills Development: A Transformative Approach in a Teachers College

Presenters: Alysha Madanat, Carmen Martinez-Johnston, Kristina Valles, Megan Hennessy

**Room Host:** Michael Hylan, Anderson University

**12-12:45 p.m.**

**Lunch**

*White Sands*

Caesar salad, Grilled Chicken Breast, Pecan Pie

**12:45-1 p.m.**

**Closing Event**

*White Sands*

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS #1

### Aquamarine #1

#### **Leading for Impact: The Five Leadership Practices That Drive Character Education**

This session will explore the leadership practices of high school principals who foster cultures of character within their schools. Participants will gain insights into Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership and how these align with character education. Additionally, they will learn specific strategies principals use to model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart, as well as understand the role of leadership development programs like the Hope Leadership Academy in shaping character-driven leaders.

#### **Character Caught – Lessons from a Summer Institute Fostering Character Education in K-12 Schools**

This roundtable discussion will highlight lessons learned from a two-day summer institute at Arkansas State University, where school leaders, including administrators and teacher leaders, gathered to explore the integration of character education in K-12 schools. Seventy-six participants from 18 campuses across 6 districts engaged with guest speakers to gain insights on how to incorporate effective character education programs into their school cultures. The session will share key takeaways from the university planning team and provide a preview of plans for the 2025 Summer Institute on Character.

### Aquamarine #2

#### **Infusing Character Education in New Program Development**

This session will explore how Samford University's Kinesiology department is intentionally integrating Christ-like character development into its new Master's in Sport Science program, in collaboration with the Office of Faith, Learning, and Vocation. Attendees will learn about the significance of embedding character development in higher education, with a focus on the program's alignment to the university's mission, the School of Health Professions, and national standards from the National Strength and Conditioning Association. Additionally, the session will present a draft of a character development workbook designed for both faculty and students, which will be used during the internship course to reinforce character integration throughout the program.

#### **How Do You Grow? Incorporating Virtue Development into Preparatory Programs**

This session explores the importance of character development in preparing educational leaders and introduces the virtue reflection log as a tool for personal growth. Participants will learn how students can target specific virtues for development, reflecting on opportunities to "catch" and "seek" growth throughout the week. The session will also discuss how this reflective practice can be applied in classrooms to connect character development with academic content and professional practice.

### Coral Reef

#### **Effective Strategies and Best Practices for Infusing Character Education into the College Curriculum**

This workshop highlights Project Grow, a character education initiative at the University of West Alabama supported by the Kern Family Foundation, which integrates virtues like integrity, empathy, and responsibility into educator preparation programs. Presenters will share effective strategies for revising curriculum to infuse character education, using the Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) program as a detailed exemplar. Participants will engage with practical tools, including a curriculum revision template and guiding questions, to begin shaping character-infused learning objectives for their own programs.

### Emerald Coast

#### **Character Taught through Socratic Seminar**

This workshop explores character development through a Socratic Seminar featuring an ethical dilemma from Novastone Learning. The film Social Dilemma affirms that social media is a challenging topic for school leaders with the rise of cyberbullying and inappropriate content sharing. What happens, though, when inappropriate content sharing is by an anonymous user after school hours? Is there any recourse for that, and what happens when the anonymous Twitter poster is revealed and turns out not to be who you expected in the school? This workshop's objectives will ask two questions of the participants: how do the elements of character surface in educational ethical dilemmas and how can socratic seminar be used to teach character?

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS #2

### *Aquamarine #1*

#### **Story Matters: A Reminder How Narrative Fosters Virtue**

This presentation offers a compelling reminder of the vital role good stories play in character formation, especially for educators, parents, and homeschoolers. While virtue cannot be directly taught through instruction alone, stories have the power to shape imagination and inspire a genuine desire for what is good, beautiful, and human. By exploring how narrative influences our inner lives, the session emphasizes the importance of placing rich, meaningful stories before our students and ourselves as a cornerstone of character education.

#### **Virtuous Leadership and Emotionally Healthy Schools**

This session explores the critical role of school leaders in modeling virtuous character traits to support the emotional well-being of their school communities, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Emphasizing the concept of character being “caught,” the presentation highlights how leadership impacts staff and faculty wellness, an area often overlooked compared to student support. Attendees will gain insights into the evolving demands of 21st-century school leadership, the complexities of the leadership construct, and strategies for fostering emotionally healthy, character-rich school environments.

### *Aquamarine #2*

#### **Fostering intrinsic motivation to help create a culture of character**

This roundtable discussion explores how fostering intrinsic motivation supports character development in an Elementary National School of Character. Centered on the themes of care, autonomy, competence, and interest, the session will invite participants to engage in dialogue about creating supportive, empowering, and engaging learning environments. Attendees will share and reflect on strategies that help students feel valued, take ownership of their learning, build resilience, and develop a lasting love of learning—key components of both motivation and character growth.

#### **Character Education in K-12 Athletics: Outcomes and Next Steps**

Explore the Coaches for Character curriculum and its impact on K-12 athletics and school culture through insights gained from the first cohort. Next steps, curriculum changes, and preliminary data from Cohort 2 will also be discussed. Coaches for Character is an

in-service for middle school and high school coaches developed by high school athletic staff in collaboration with Samford University, specifically aimed at developing tools necessary to weave character development into the athletic arena.

### *Coral Reef*

#### **Developing Character through Trust in Developing Collective Teacher and Student Efficacy**

This session will explore the importance of self-assessment, goal setting, and progress monitoring in improving both student learning and school performance. By applying these strategies to both individual students and the school as a whole, participants will learn how to foster a culture of trust and character. The session will emphasize how a personal and collective sense of progress, driven by the belief that effort leads to improvement, can strengthen both academic outcomes and school community development.

#### **Books That Build Character: Teaching Comprehension Skills Using Head, Heard, and Hands**

This session highlights a collaborative approach to integrating character education into educator preparation programs and K-12 classrooms. By using high-quality children’s literature and questioning strategies, preservice teachers scaffold their ability to teach character traits to future generations. Participants will learn about the process of selecting literature, creating character-focused questions, and developing a resource library for character education lessons, with insights from year two findings and extensions of the practice.

### *Emerald Coast*

#### **WISE Interventions: A Framework for Integrating Character Development into Existing Course Design**

This workshop introduces the WISE Interventions framework, a non-prescriptive approach to integrating character traits into existing course designs without requiring course redesign. Focusing on the affective learning domain, the framework helps students connect their personal integrity to their academic performance, encouraging them to align their values with their work. Participants will have the opportunity to apply the framework in their own contexts and engage in idea-sharing with colleagues to explore practical ways of incorporating these interventions into their teaching.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS #3

### Aquamarine #1

#### **Making Waves**

This engaging session brings together PK-12 and higher education educators to share innovative strategies and practical tools for character education. Participants will explore the Caught, Taught, and Sought model, access robust resources—including a 200+ page activity book—and learn about a free, asynchronous professional learning series. Whether you're a newcomer or a seasoned practitioner, this collaborative forum offers fresh insights to support and strengthen character development in educational settings.

#### **One University's Approach: Embedding Virtue Prompts in Support of Framework Integration**

Dr. Lori Doyle of Concordia University Irvine will present a collaborative initiative to integrate virtue prompts—focused on honesty, compassion, humility, and courage—across university programs as part of a servant leadership character framework. This two-year project engaged faculty at strategic points, fostering buy-in and collegiality, while embedding virtues into both undergraduate and graduate curricula. The session will highlight practical prompt examples, share insights from the process, and discuss a validated survey instrument developed to assess project outcomes.

### Aquamarine #2

#### **Exploring Ethical Dilemmas as Pedagogical Tools in Educational Leadership**

This explores the use of ethical dilemmas as a powerful tool to enhance character teaching and ethical decision-making in graduate-level educational leadership training. Through a case study involving current and aspiring school leaders, participants analyzed complex school-based scenarios using the Character-Centered Leadership and Ethical Dilemma frameworks to navigate moral complexities. Findings highlight how this approach deepens ethical awareness, reveals differences based on gender and character education exposure, and supports the development of responsible, principled leadership in schools.

#### **Empowering School Communities to Make Ethical & Equitable Decisions**

This proposed project aims to enhance the ethical and equitable decision-making skills of K-12 educators through monthly professional development sessions focused on collaborative problem-solving. Educators will build their capacity for critical analysis and decision-making using an ethical dilemma reflection framework, which they will

then apply in their classrooms to model and teach these skills to students. In collaboration with higher education and K-12 educators, developmentally appropriate decision-making frameworks and curricular experiences will be designed to help students practice and internalize these skills, ultimately fostering both character and competence in educators and students alike.

### Coral Reef

#### **Cultivating Agents of Change**

This presentation showcases how i3 Academy, a charter school in Birmingham, Alabama, aims to fulfill our mission to cultivate agents of change. We prioritize character development and restorative practices to empower students to repair harm and flourish in their lives and communities. Through advisory in morning circles, core values in our house system, restorative discipline, as well as self-management and accountability through our SOAR Matrix and cards, we will use this presentation to display how we embed character throughout our school and prepare scholars through a whole-child approach.

#### **The Role of Robotics in Building Character**

This session will explore how robotics can be a powerful tool for character development by fostering teamwork, critical thinking, and resilience. Through problem-solving and collaboration in building and programming robots, participants develop communication skills, perseverance, and a growth mindset. Robotics teaches individuals the value of persistence, creativity, and shared responsibility, helping them grow both technically and personally.

### Emerald Coast

#### **Leading with Heart: Virtuous Leadership Lessons from Ted Lasso**

This session explores how virtues, as outlined by the Jubilee Center's Virtuous Education Framework, combined with the humor and wisdom of Ted Lasso, can transform educational leadership in the face of rapid change. Participants will reflect on the challenges instructional leaders face, such as equity gaps and evolving expectations, and explore how virtues like courage, humility, compassion, integrity, and gratitude can foster thriving school communities. Through engaging activities and real-world scenarios, attendees will develop actionable strategies to address challenges, build community care, and create ethical, inclusive school cultures, leaving with a Virtuous Leadership Toolkit to guide their leadership practices.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS #4

### Aquamarine #1

#### **Tools for Strengthening Your Heart to Lead Well**

Leadership is not for the faint of heart. This session focuses on ways to get stronger in Who We Are, so that What We Do can have a greater impact on our work in schools. The dispositions of educational leadership, drawn from PSEL Standard 2, have been translated into six commitments for becoming a Commitment-Based Leader. This session will explore insights, tools, and practices to build commitment in leader dispositions that foster strong relationships, professional ethics, educational equity, effective communication, and character to benefit the whole child in schools. Course activities from Samford University's Master's in Educational Leadership serve as the backdrop for ongoing research in this area.

#### **Encouraging the heart: Character-guided mentorship in higher education**

This session explores how effective mentoring in education can model and instill values such as integrity, respect, responsibility, and humility, which are key components of character education. Presenters will discuss a five-stage mentoring process—modeling, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart—and its role in cultivating future educational leaders. By combining mentoring with real-life experiences, this approach helps educators internalize ethical values, build leadership capacity, and develop decision-making skills essential for impactful leadership.

#### **The World as our Classroom: Seeking Character Education in International Contexts**

This session explores how international learning and mission experiences provide unique opportunities for educators to integrate character education by fostering values such as empathy, respect, and cultural understanding. Participants will learn how students, through cohesive group dynamics and real-life experiences, internalize virtues, develop relationships, and model desired behaviors in diverse settings. The session

highlights practical strategies for facilitating character development through self-reflection, journaling, and cross-cultural interactions, emphasizing the role of educators in guiding students to grow through service and connection with others.

### Aquamarine #2

#### **Service Learning as a Gateway to Character Education**

This presentation explores how service learning in Samford University's Teacher Education program fosters character development in pre-service candidates through ten hours of community-based service. Drawing from two years of reflective feedback, the session examines how candidates engage with the six pillars of character—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship—alongside the eleven principles of effective character education. Attendees will gain insight into how structured reflection helps candidates define character, recognize their influence on others, and understand the deeper impact of service on both personal growth and professional practice.

#### **That Could Be ME!: Biography as a Lesson in Character**

This session will showcase a project that integrates character education across disciplines with a STEM and workforce development focus, inspiring high school students to write and illustrate stories about Alabama STEM professionals who overcame challenges to succeed. Participants will explore the "That Could Be ME!" books created by 34 student writers and illustrators, designed to inspire children to envision themselves in careers they may never have considered. Attendees will hear from the authors and illustrators, as well as the professionals featured in the books, and learn how to promote character development through the arts and literacy in their own educational settings.

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## BREAKOUT SESSIONS #4 *Continued*

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### *Coral Reef*

#### **Virtues in Action: Embedding Character Education in Teacher Preparation**

This interactive session highlights how the University of West Alabama integrates virtues education into its undergraduate teacher preparation programs, using the “Caught, Taught, and Sought” framework from the Jubilee Center. Participants will engage in activities based on preservice candidates’ experiences, exploring how virtues like responsibility, compassion, and professionalism are developed through observation, instruction, and reflection. Attendees will leave with practical tools to embed virtues education in their own programs, enhancing ethical decision-making, collaborative teaching, and student-centered learning.

#### **Rise by Rooting Down: Character Education Transformation Technology**

This session focuses on transformational learning, using nature as a model for change, and emphasizes the importance of mentorship and coaching in character development. Participants will explore a blueprint for belonging, examining the intersections of nature, connection, behavior, SEL power skills, and ethics. Attendees will gain practical strategies for fostering a character education mindset and creating transformational learning experiences that promote growth, community, and belonging.

#### **How the 11 Principles fit into Principal Leadership in Alabama**

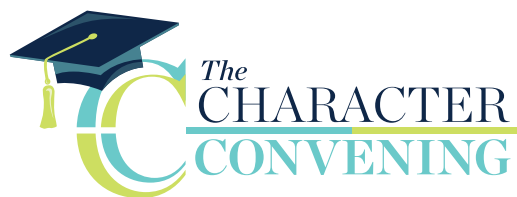
During this session, we will look at the new Alabama Standards for School Leadership. The 5 Domains of Principal Effectiveness have been identified as 1. Visionary Leadership 2. Instructional Leadership 3. Managerial and Operational Leadership 4. Relational Leadership and 5. Innovative Leadership. We will investigate natural integration of the 11 Principles Framework into the Principal Standards.

### *Emerald Coast*

#### **Cultivating Flourishing through Character and Life Skills Development: A Transformative Approach in a Teachers College**

This interactive session will explore the transformative potential of Communities of Practice (CoPs) in embedding character education and life skills development within teacher preparation and educational leadership. Using Arizona State University’s (ASU) Principled Innovation (PI) framework, the session integrates virtues, resilience, and ethical decision-making to foster human flourishing in education. Participants will engage in hands-on activities, such as structured reflection and scenario-based problem-solving, to learn how to model and integrate character education within their own institutions. The session will also present findings from a multi-year study showing the impact of CoPs on faculty development and student success. Attendees will leave with a replicable framework for creating CoPs to advance character education and build a culture of reflective practice in their schools and institutions.





## 6th Annual Higher Education Character Convening Evaluation

At the indicated time, please take a few minutes to complete this short evaluation of your experience at the convening using the QR code.

# Thank you!

*A very special thank you to the universities that helped plan the Character Convening 2025.*



**Samford University**  
Orlean Beeson School of Education



**UWA** | The UNIVERSITY of  
WEST ALABAMA  
-College of Education-

**Leadership for Character**

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA** | College of  
Education



## SEE YOU IN 2026 AT THE 7TH ANNUAL CHARACTER CONVENING!