



## AGENDA

### Middle/Upper School Conference

Friday, March 14, 2025 | Westchester Country Day School

**8:15 am Registration Opens | Continental Breakfast | Wilson Center Upper**

**8:45 am Welcome | Keynote | When Kids Lead: Empowering Today's Students to Become Tomorrow's Leaders | Dr. Adam Dovico | Wilson Center Lower**

Bold. Courageous. Innovative. Thoughtful. All leadership characteristics that we attribute to great adult leaders in our society. Unsurprisingly, we have children in our classrooms, teams, and clubs with the same traits. However, often, these virtues go unnoticed or remain hidden. As adults, we can cultivate, empower, and refine these skills in our children to create influential young leaders. Join Dr. Adam Dovico as he shares ways to build this leadership in your classrooms and schools so that we can equip today's young people to become tomorrow's solvers and innovators.

**9:45 am Break/Transition**

**10:00 am Breakout Session I:**

**Don't Leave The Left Brain Out Of The Math Classroom | Chelsea Evans, Charlotte Country Day School | Finch 607 Classroom**

This session will be an action-packed adventure, with innovative projects and activities integrating math concepts with creative, left-brain elements shared. These projects are designed to be completed with a final component that allows students to express their artistic flair. By incorporating design lab and maker space tools and fostering cross-division collaboration, these activities highlight the intersection of creativity and the systematic nature of mathematics. The projects are versatile and can seamlessly integrate into any course covering transformations, quadratics, or polynomials.

**Scaffolding Up and Down with Ancient Civilizations | MG Sheers & Cetta Errichiello | Summit School, Middle Grades Social Studies | Kester 304**

In this session, we will:

- Introduce curriculum that allows for scaffolding and differentiation
- Model questioning techniques that drive student inquiry
- Display differentiated curriculum for the same grade level and course
- Demonstrate the storyboard approach to guiding and pacing units
- Show assessment techniques- preparation, practice, formative and summative assessments

**Building a Comprehensive Skill Building Program for Middle School | Barb Kilpatrick, MS teacher and Lead Advisor at Noble Academy |Kester 318**

We will be delving into our middle school's Skill Building program, which is a daily block of time that incorporates many skills that help build resilience, self-awareness, advocacy, and academic success. Some of the focal points of our program include executive functioning skills, community and character building, and social-emotional learning. We cover topics like digital media use, conflict management, cultural diversity and inclusion, growth mindset, and others that are immediately relevant to our students' lives. Come to this session to get some new ideas and to share some of yours with the group!

**Create a Student-Led IT Helpdesk | Mer Leeson, Trinity Episcopal School, LS Digital Learning Catalyst | Qubein Center**

Empower student innovation with hands-on, collaborative solutions to real-life technology challenges at your school, showcasing their EdTech skills in action. Learn actionable steps to create and maintain a student-led IT helpdesk utilizing dynamic problem-solving through an iterative design process. Elevate your students toward mastering client-based technological support. Aid your colleagues by multiplying your school's digital helpdesk capabilities. Facilitate self-paced student-choice learning with top-tier free EdTech platforms for advanced Google suite applications, 3D designing and

printing, game and app coding, virtual reality simulation development, AI image generation, and more. Cultivate SEL skills by building student teamwork and client empathy.

**11:00 am            Break/Transition**

**11:10 am            Breakout Session II:**

**Original Research as a Curriculum |** Dean Stern, Upper School Science Teacher, Westchester Country Day School | Finch 601 (Bio room)

This program is designed to leverage my experience as a model for educators seeking to develop a course centered on conducting original scientific research in the field. Participants will learn how to guide students in using peer-reviewed literature to formulate research ideas, execute research projects, and produce scholarly papers that contribute publishable insights to their selected disciplines.

**Using AI to Support Instruction in Grammar, Morphology, and Literacy |** Anthony Myers, Assistant Director of Upper School, Summit School & Courtney Harrell, Language Arts Teacher | Kester 318

This session will explore practical strategies for teaching explicit grammar concepts through technology. We'll begin by creating passages that build morphemic awareness and discuss how AI-generated flaws can become valuable tools for teaching students to analyze and correct errors. We'll also examine sentence structure using AI models and offer practical examples for classroom deconstruction activities. Lastly, we'll explore the integration of reference tools and AI to generate word lists and tasks that foster a deeper understanding of vocabulary. Participants will leave with actionable strategies for using AI to enhance grammar and vocabulary instruction.

**Resilience from Reason; Opportunities to be Resilient with Reason and Rebound |** Jenna Skarda, Ravenscroft School, Social Science Teacher | Kester 304

What is resilience and how is it fostered? Offering opportunities in our classrooms to be resilient can be a tricky balance. We will look at two extremes in classroom policy to evaluate where the opportunity for students to build resilience was stronger and weaker. Teachers will then be presented with research which offers insight into building resilience with students. Teachers will have the time to consider where their classroom fits between two cases and how to apply the research to strengthen the opportunities students have to build resilience in a way specific to their goals and needs.

**Mythmaking: A Project-Based Learning Approach to Greek Myths |** Bryce Bancroft, Heathwood Hall Episcopal School, Upper School Teacher | Finch 607

In this session, we will explore various ways to approach Greek Mythology and storytelling via project-based learning. We will engage with specific examples of projects that can be used to determine a student's skills and understanding of the material. By the end of this session, we will be able to define specific goals for classes, especially in the Humanities.

**12:10 pm            Grab & Go Lunch | Wilson Center**

**12:30 pm            Lunch & Learn Sessions: Take your lunch and head to one of the following:**

**Engaging Students with Hands-On Science: Innovative Activities for the Classroom |** Charlene Marsh, Upper School Science Teacher & Jay Thompson, Middle School Science Teacher, Westchester Country Day School | Finch 602

This is a hands-on workshop; we will model and discuss activities that allow educators to use material science engineering techniques in their classroom. You will be conducting activities from the ASM Materials Science Teacher Camp, which is a free workshop for teachers to learn how to engage students using simple, low-cost experiments that can be integrated into your existing lesson plans. This is an idea-generating workshop introducing teachers to methods that make math and core science principles more enticing and relevant to their middle and high school students.

**Overhauling Schedules: Practical Strategies for Change** with David Guidi, Fayetteville Academy, Director of Upper School | Finch 607

Just as “every action has an equal and opposite reaction,” change in a school is accompanied by an impact on existing programs. Drawing on previous and now more recent experience leading a significant schedule overhaul at his school, Dr. Dave Guidi brings firsthand insights into managing transitional moments in schools. In this session, Dave will provide an overview of strategies to effect change and help mitigate the stressors that often arise at transitional moments. Session topics include securing constituent support, defining the process, and identifying key partnerships. Join Dave as he discusses his insights on practical methods and solutions for managing change.

**Cultivating Learner Independence through Autonomy-Supportive Practices** with Jennifer Bailey, The John Crosland School, Director of Wellness and Connection | Finch 608

Attendees will learn key strategies to promote student independence and intrinsic motivation. The session will cover essential autonomy-supportive teaching techniques, including offering student choice, collaborating to create goals, and integrating self-assessment. Educators will explore balancing guidance with independence, creating a classroom environment that nurtures self-directed learning, critical thinking, and engagement. Additionally, participants will discover how to shift from a traditional teacher role to a mentorship model, guiding students toward ownership of their academic and personal growth. Practical ideas for collaboration with students will be provided.

**Zoning Your Space to Maximize Attention and Engagement** with Michelle Klosterman, Forsyth Country Day School, Associate Head of School for Teaching and Learning & Yolanda McClure, Director of Teaching and Learning | Finch 609

Leverage the built environment to drive attention and engagement. Designate specific areas for different activities to minimize distractions and maximize learning. In this session, participate in interactive activities such as classroom design challenges or brainstorming sessions with other educators who share similar goals and challenges around student attention and engagement. Leave feeling inspired and equipped to implement zoning strategies in your own classrooms.

**Personal Finance for Middle Schoolers- Empowering and Engaging Future Citizens** | Christina Frazier, Ravenscroft School, 8th grade English teacher | Kester 304

Personal Finance includes budgeting, investing, saving, borrowing, entrepreneurship, protecting oneself from scams, understanding insurance, and preparing for financial success and philanthropy. Building financial literacy and a framework for goal-setting and money management at different stages of life helps students be ready for the future. We also discuss soft skills and how to get a job. Decoding a pay stub and understanding where their taxes go and what different types of savings and investing accounts do help young professionals make informed choices in life.

**1:20 pm**                      **Break/Transition**

**1:30 pm**                      **Breakout Session III:**

**Quick, Easy, Powerful VR for the Classroom** | Bill Kanzinger, Cape Fear Academy, STEM Elective Teacher (*please bring a laptop to this session*) | Qubein Center

Creating powerful, dynamic VR lessons with CoSpaces can be easy to set up and provide impactful lessons to integrate into any curriculum. Students can build their own worlds, create ancient cities, design museums, and then walk through their projects with VR Goggles. Interactivity can be achieved with block programming or Python to add even more depth to what can be created.

**Reviving Creative Writing in the Middle School** | Lilla Clark, Trinity Episcopal School, 8th Grade English Teacher | Kester 318

This session will help participants explore ways to build creative writing lessons into their curriculum. Whether you teach Language Arts and need some new prompts, want to add an element of historical fiction to your Social Studies class, or add creative writing to a science project, this session will explore ways teachers can coach their students through writing workshops and revision circles.

**Designing Effective Math Practice** | Leigh Fresina, Trinity Episcopal School, MS Dean, ELA Teacher | Kester 314

Discover innovative ways to make math homework more effective and enjoyable. This session explores strategies to balance skill practice with critical thinking while keeping students engaged. Learn how to structure assignments for mastery, incorporate fun activities like math puzzles and gamified challenges, and use technology to boost understanding.

Ideal for middle school educators, this presentation offers practical tools to help students build confidence and foster a lifelong love of math.

**Embracing the Design Process in the Middle School Classroom | Amy Schenck, Middle School English, Marketing & Communications Assistant | Westchester Country Day School | Kester 302**

This session will focus on implementing the design process in middle school education, emphasizing the importance of testing and redesigning. We will explore strategies to create a classroom environment where mistakes are seen as valuable learning opportunities rather than setbacks. We will quickly review the design process, discuss ways to encourage a classroom culture that celebrates experimentation and learning from failures, and work on quick hands-on activities and techniques to integrate the design process into various subjects.

**2:30 pm**                      **Break/Transition**

**2:40 pm**                      **Breakout Session IV:**

**Cultivating Curiosity: Strategies to Inspire Lifelong Learning | Erin Eftink, Middle & Upper School Social Studies, Westchester Country Day School | Kester 304**

One of the strategies to get kids inspired and excited about learning but also get the teacher's creative juices flowing is the use of simulations in class. Gather with other middle school educators to share the strategies to engage students in content. The session will begin with a review of the research on simulations in the classroom. Then, we will do a brief walkthrough of the simulation: "The Samurai Game" (where students learn about the roles of feudal Japan by becoming a member of Japanese society and playing out different rounds of academic & luck challenges). The session will then open up to other educators to share examples of lessons that have inspired students in their classrooms.

**Leveraging Technology in the Classroom | Teresa Denmark, Westchester Country Day School, middle school technology and math teacher| Kester 306**

As technology evolves, teachers must embrace various digital tools to support their work and engage students in new and exciting ways. This session will provide practical strategies and resources. Participants will leave with a list of digital tools and techniques. They will learn when, where, and how to use them to engage students in learning in the digital age.

**Why Study History? Students Use It To Solve Today's Challenges | Todd Jones, MS and US Social Studies Teacher, Cape Fear Academy | Finch 607**

Why study history? We study the past to understand the present and build a better future. This is the central question for social studies classes, in which students are engaged because they play active roles in decision-making and see value in what they are learning.

Join us in learning about social studies classes in which units are centered on modern-day national and global challenges. Equipped with knowledge of history, students collaborate to address these challenges while representing prescribed interests.

**Developing Systems Thinking & Life Skills Through Community-Based Challenges | John Cowan, Salisbury Academy | Finch 609**

Participants will gain insight into the challenge-based learning (CBL) approach used at the Salisbury Academy Upper School to teach systems thinking, project management strategies, and life skills. SA upper school students engage in year-long projects that connect community service to content knowledge through life skills. Participants will explore the stages of implementation and support for challenge-based projects and collaboratively brainstorm ways they may implement challenge-based learning in their schools and courses.

**3:40 pm**                      **Adjourn**