

Helping Your Students Find Themselves



John Creger
American High School
Fremont CA

School should pursue the question "Who am I?" to whatever depth and height we can bear the answer. This is a cosmic voyage that should be the first goal statement in every school district's curriculum guide, before that stuff about being good citizens and productive workers. Those will happen as fallout from self-development.

~ James Moffett, 1992



We have been shown many powerpoints about learning to accept others who are different from ourselves. Wouldn't it help us to accept others if we learned something about ourselves?

~ Samika Yedur, AHS class of 2021



Erin's Creed

The Personal Creed Project

The project:

- guides students in upper elementary, secondary and college English courses to reflect on their life experience to discover what they value;
- weaves weekly reflections through a course, culminating in presentations students experience as life-changing rites-of-passage, community events enabling self-disclosure and vulnerability;
- helps students address six of ten Common Core anchor standards in writing, and six of six in speaking and listening. The project adapts readily to most English courses;
- generates sustained enthusiasm across the country, provoking deepened notions of learning and curriculum.

Creed Project Contents

Step I: Main Influences That Shape Me

6 Weekly Installments

Step II: My Short List of Most Significant Influences

2 Weekly Installments

Step III: Influences I Most and Least Value

3 Weekly Installments

Step IV: What I Stand For / My Draft Creed Values

3 Weekly Installments

Step V: Critiques of Draft Creed / Revised Creed Values

3 Weekly Installments

Step VI: Personal Creed Presentation

- 1) Main influences to shape me (my life experience)
- 2) The values I stand for (my personal creed)
- 3) Qualities to develop in myself to live my creed next 10 years
- 4) The difference I want to make in others' lives

Step VII: Living My Creed

Goalsetting - Researching - Volunteering

Creed Step 1A

1) List

- Taught moral values *
- Moving often*
- Gender
- Parents' divorce
- Chinese culture*
- American culture
- Living with different people at different times

2) Circle (starred)

3) Reflect

- Moral values are important in my life because I try to follow what my conscience tells me to do, no matter what. As a child I was educated about “doing the right thing” and was rewarded and punished accordingly; while growing up, I stuck to my clear ideas of right and wrong. Even in times where right can have devastating consequences for me and wrong is so much easier to accomplish, I strive to do what’s right and the satisfaction of following what I think is fair and correct, despite the turmoil that it sometimes brings into my life, is something that absolutely shapes who I am. *When it becomes hard to distinguish between what is “right” and “wrong,” I turn inwards to imagine the outcomes of either decision and seek the one which is most beneficial to others.*
- I would not be the person I am today without moving often because the constant change of environment has caused me to interact with people and things in a different way. Since I switched districts and houses every few years or so for a large part of my life, I learned to not cling too tightly to friends or material things and developed an ability to adapt quickly to new situations. However, this has also lead to some loneliness and isolation which may have caused me to slip into a depression a while ago. *A sort of insecurity of being easily-replaceable and forgettable still haunts me today because every time I change environments, I know that people go on without me in their lives and that it doesn't make much of a difference in the end.*
- Chinese culture has affected me because I was brought up in a family where academic excellence is emphasized and having a good future (college, jobs, etc.) is repeatedly mentioned during childhood. Because of this upbringing, my school accomplishments are decent and I am working towards getting into a prestigious college and pursue a

Designing a Course with Questions, Readings, and Projects to Balance Academic Skills and Student Development

Year-long Course Question				
How can a sophomore help build a caring world?				
Quarter Questions	Quarter 1 Connections	Quarter 2 Violence	Quarter 3 Women	Quarter 4 Values
	How can a sophomore develop deeper connections with self, world, and others?	Why do human beings so often choose violence over caring? And how can we change this?	How can the struggles and contributions of women guide us toward a more caring world?	How can knowing what we value help us in our journey toward a more caring world?
Readings	Poems from Rumi and a sampling from traditional and contemporary sources of world wisdom Films/Nonfiction	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> <i>The Metamorphosis</i> <i>Night/Maus/Anne Frank</i> Lit Circles Options Films/Nonfiction	<i>Jane Eyre</i> <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> Lit Circles Options Films/Nonfiction	<i>Les Miserables</i> <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> <i>Freedom Writers</i> Films/Nonfiction
Projects	World Wisdom Project	Personal Creed Project		Research Project
Writing	Timed Writes Full Process Arguments	Personal Reflections Full Process Arguments	Speeches Timed Writes	Personal Reflections Presentations <u>Research Presentations</u>



We need to think differently about readiness. Stop making kids ready for school, and start making school ready for kids.

~ Yong Zhao (2017)

author of *What Works May Hurt: Side Effects in Education* (2018)