

Extensive Outreach Projects Fulfill a National Schools of Character Goal

“Having had the opportunity to lead two schools in the district to National Schools of Character status [2001 and 2007] has helped to establish credibility for the need for character education to be the proactive piece to improving school discipline—and, ultimately, school climate and culture.

Never in my wildest dreams would I ever have suspected that we as an entire school system of approximately 25,000 students would be implementing character education district-wide. It is truly a dream come true!”

—Gail Gilbert, Principal, Rutland High School

For the first time in the history of the National Schools of Character (NSOC) program, the grants awarded to the 2007 winners provided enough funding for schools to implement extensive outreach projects. When the Character Education Partnership (CEP) originally initiated the NSOC program, the purpose was to identify exemplars in character education who could share their expertise with others. Thanks to the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation, that original goal has been realized more fully than ever before.

The creativity and breadth of the 2007 winners’ outreach projects

exceeded CEP’s expectations. Using CEP’s *Eleven Principles of Character Education* as a framework, NSOC shared their successful strategies with more than 1,450 other educators, and helped them develop their own character education action plans. Most of the winning schools planned and executed their staff development endeavors with the help of a CEP consultant. The following is a summary of the projects of nine of the ten 2007 winning schools. One school will not execute its project until October 2008.

BIRMINGHAM COVINGTON SCHOOL HOSTED A CONFERENCE FOR DISTRICT EDUCATORS AND TEAMS FROM OTHER STATES

This prestigious science and technology school for students in grades 3–8 in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, provided staff development for teams of educators from eight elementary and middle Birmingham district schools as well as from schools in Illinois, New York, and Ohio. Birmingham Covington staff presented a comprehensive video demonstrating the components of their work in character education, such as collaboration, engagement and empowerment. Part of the day, participants reflected on their own practices,

using CEP’s *Quality Standards*. Later, student ambassadors escorted participants on a comprehensive trip throughout the school.

The principal and staff also led a workshop at a tri-district institute for 110 principals interested in bringing character education to their schools. In addition, the principal and counselor led two workshops at a Wisconsin character education conference, using parts of the presentation from their outreach conference, and they led a similar breakout session in Florida at Pinellas County’s Character Camp. In all, the school provided training for 295 fellow educators.

BOYS TOWN HIGH SCHOOL MENTORED A SCHOOL FOR HIGH-RISK STUDENTS

This well-known Omaha, Nebraska, school for grades 9–12 shared its 90-year tradition through a one-year mentoring arrangement with the 20 faculty members of the Omaha Street School. Both schools deal with a challenging population of teens who have failed in other school settings and have similarly difficult family situations and substance abuse problems. Boys Town conducted a two-day workshop to train the Omaha Street School teachers in its Well-Managed Classroom program. They also conducted an Administrative Intervention workshop for administrators. In addition, Boys Town trained coaches from 35 local schools and athletic leagues in its Competing with Character program, which imparts character skills to coaches, kids, and parents. In all, the school provided specialized training to 55 educators, coaches, and parents.



A participant in Birmingham Covington School’s outreach workshop poses a question to her colleagues.

FAIRBROOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OFFERED TRAINING TO SCHOOLS FROM ALL OVER OHIO AND BEYOND

This outstanding school for students in grades K–5 in Beavercreek, Ohio, shared its best practices in character education in an all-day workshop for over 60 educators. Participating teams represented more than 20 schools, from all over Ohio and several other states. During the session, held at a church next door to the school, a consultant presented an overview of the *Eleven Principles*. That was followed by a team presentation by the principal and staff to demonstrate how the school has implemented the Principles in its own practices. Participants then had an opportunity to assess their own work in character education, using CEP's *Quality Standards* assessment tool. An important part of the training was a field trip to Fairbrook Elementary to observe Dens in action—a key component of Fairbrook's successful program. Dens are cross-grade-level community meetings led by the fifth graders in the group on topics such as service projects and anti-bullying training.

MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL DEVELOPED A MENTORING AND COACHING INITIATIVE

This forward-thinking school for students in grades 6–8 in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, developed a two-fold outreach initiative: mentoring of schools from its district and coaching of partner schools from a nearby district. The school's primary project, which will extend over two years, involves the other nine schools within its district. This year the school held a series of workshops to train volunteer teams from the six elementary schools within the district. These trainings ignited a proposal to the local board of education to conduct a summer workshop series with these same elementary school teams. The establishment of this professional network laid the groundwork to begin training of the two other secondary schools in the district next year.

Memorial's second initiative involves working with the Center for Social and Character Development at Rutgers University to coach core teams from two aspiring partner schools: one elementary and one middle school in Linden, New Jersey. These two teams then provided turnaround training for their entire faculties—50 faculty at one school and 70 at the other. In addition, Memorial thinks of itself as a “living museum,” hosting site visits and providing its partner schools and others with a behind-the-scenes view of how character comes to life through specific programs and practices. In all, the school's outreach resulted in the training of 195 educators.

NEWPORT MILL MIDDLE SCHOOL BECAME A CATALYST FOR DISTRICT PARTICIPATION

This exceptional school for students in grades 6–8 in Kensington, Maryland, is considered a star in its district (Montgomery County Public Schools) because of its demonstrated ability to help minority students succeed at the same rate as other students. The principal and staff shared their successful strategies in a day-long staff development workshop for educators from over 20 schools. The majority of attendees were school counselors from a cross section of the district's elementary and middle schools. Staff from Newport Mill explained the program they had developed in response to the needs and values identified within their community, which included a peer leaders program to stop bullying. They also explained the effectiveness of their monthly parent workshops that encourage families to rethink their own values and how they are instilling them at home. Later in the day, a consultant helped participants assess their schools using the *Quality Standards* in order to develop an improvement plan. Newport Mill faculty led attendees in small-group discussions of faculty buy-in, service learning, and student leadership. At the end of the day, the school had inspired



A guest speaker at Pinellas County Schools' Character Camp demonstrates the power of working together to accomplish a goal.

35 educators to return to their schools and create their own initiatives.

PINE POINT SCHOOL WILL CREATE A FORUM FOCUSED ON SERVICE LEARNING

This unique private school for PreK–9 students in Stonington, Connecticut, plans to execute its outreach project in October 2008. They will work with the Association of Independent Schools and/or neighboring secondary schools to create a forum with a focus on service learning.

PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS EXPANDED ITS CHARACTER CAMP

This progressive district for PreK–Adult students was the first large school district ever to win the National District of Character award. For its outreach project the district expanded its existing two-day Character Camp into a regional training. The event included educators from across the state of Florida and out of state, and from both private and public schools. In the past, attendance was capped at 300; this year larger attendance was allowed, and it rose to 511. For the first time, St. Petersburg College partnered with the district to host the event. The conference featured three keynote speakers and 44 breakout sessions. Winners of CEP's State and National Schools of Character and Promising Practices awards presented at many of the breakout sessions. District staff led a plenary session where they highlighted the alignment of the district's

character education initiative with the *Eleven Principles*. Manny Klimis, a vocational teacher from Tarpon Springs High School, said, “[the conference] has to rank as one of the best I have ever attended in 33 years.” In addition to the expanded conference, the district has re-established a resource team to provide ongoing character education training throughout the district.

RADIX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SPONSORED TWO STATE-WIDE CONFERENCES

This ambitious PreK–4 school in Williamstown, New Jersey, embarked on a mission to bring character education and the *Eleven Principles* to educators across the state. Radix joined with the Center for Social and Character Development (CSCD) at Rutgers University to organize two state-wide conferences that showcased the New Jersey schools that have won CEP or state awards in character education. Radix staff presented at both conferences, providing details on how they used the *Eleven Principles* to create a positive school environment and foster systemic change in all areas of the school.

Radix and CSCD held the first conference in partnership with the Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC) in Sewell, New Jersey, with 10 schools presenting workshops focused on the *Eleven Principles*. They held the second conference at Rutgers University, with 14 schools presenting. Over 250 participants attended the two conferences, which also constituted the inception of a state-wide association for character education: the New Jersey Alliance for Social-Emotional and Character Development.

SACRED HEARTS ACADEMY HELD A UNIFYING CONFERENCE FOR PAROCHIAL AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This extraordinary all-girls academy for PreK–12 students in Honolulu, Hawaii, honored the Hawaiian culture of

By inspiring over 1,450 educators to begin or enhance character education efforts in their respective schools, CEP estimates that the 2007 NSOC have affected approximately 258,500 students.

Ohana (family) in its outreach project. The school held a Building Communities of Character conference for 40 elementary school educators from six parochial and six public schools in Oahu and Maui. After a consultant presented an overview of the *Eleven Principles*, educators worked together on understanding the *Principles*, applying them to their particular schools and sharing what had worked in their own educational experiences. Sacred Hearts then demonstrated how the Academy had addressed the *Principles* in every aspect of school life, showcasing its outstanding work in building relationships through *Ohana* Circles and Homeroom Circles and in helping the community through service-learning projects. Later in the day, participants focused on the needs of their individual schools and designed action plans after completing the *Quality Standards* self-assessment.

SKYVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BEGAN WITH A VERTICAL TEAM APPROACH

This enterprising elementary school for students in grades PreK–5 in Lizella, Georgia, became the impetus for the schools in its feeder pattern, and ultimately its entire large school district, to get involved in character education. The school held a staff development day for teams of educators from all five of the other schools in its feeder pattern. Fortunately, the former Skyview principal, who had also been the principal of another National Schools of Character elementary school, is now the principal of the high school in Skyview’s feeder pattern. After a consultant oriented participants to the *Eleven Principles*, this former Skyview principal, along with the current principal and faculty members, shared their best practices in

character education, using the *Eleven Principles* as a framework for telling their story. The district’s deputy superintendent and reporters for two local television stations were present for the event as staff gave examples of successful strategies they had employed. After their presentation, the participating teams used the *Quality Standards* to assess their schools’ efforts in character education.

The event helped develop a unified character education initiative across grade levels, soon to be emulated by the entire district. The school board has initiated a three-year plan that includes a focus on character education using the *Eleven Principles* as a framework. After a district-wide *Quality Standards* self-assessment, the district will choose three *Principles* to address the first year, and four to address each subsequent year of implementation. This district-wide initiative will include periodic monitoring of established performance measures at the school level. Forty-nine schools, with a total of about 25,000 students, will be affected.

Effectiveness of CEP’s Vision

Providing the means for NSOC awardees to share their expertise with other educators has exponentially increased the numbers of students receiving guidance in their moral development. By inspiring over 1,450 educators to begin or enhance character education efforts in their respective schools, CEP estimates that the 2007 NSOC have affected approximately 258,500 students. Results like this help prove to CEP that the goal that was set 11 years ago of providing successful school and district models of effective character education has been met with resounding success.