

Contact:

Rebecca Sipos, rsipos@character.org,
(202) 296-7743

For Immediate Release

**TWENTY-FIVE SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS SELECTED AS FINALISTS IN
PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL CHARACTER EDUCATION COMPETITION**

Character Education Partnership selects ten winners to be honored in November

February 25, 2008 . . . Washington, DC – The Character Education Partnership (CEP) has named twenty-three schools and two districts as finalists in its National Schools of Character (NSOC) awards program. CEP, the nation's leading advocate for quality character education, chose the 25 finalists from a record 149 applicants across the United States. CEP will be conducting site visits to all finalists throughout the end of April. CEP's Blue Ribbon Panel will then meet to select 10 winners in May.

"CEP applauds all the applicants and congratulates the finalists for the important work they are doing to develop young people of good character," CEP Executive Director Joe Mazzola said. "Character education is crucial for our nation's future and these schools are leaders in this effort."

Schools or districts selected as the 2008 National Schools of Character will receive the award, national recognition, and a \$20,000 grant at CEP's 15th National Forum on Character Education, *Character Is Destiny*, to be held October 17-19, 2008, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Having demonstrated the success of their initiatives through the rigorous NSOC application and screening process, winners use their grants to serve as national leaders and models for other schools and districts seeking to improve their character education efforts.

"The NSOC application process is a demanding yet rewarding one," NSOC Director Janice Stoodley said. "The finalists are to be congratulated for all the hard work they have put into their applications. CEP's site visitors can't wait to see their character education initiatives at work first-hand."

CEP selects the finalists on the strength of their written applications, which demonstrate their outstanding work in encouraging the ethical, social, and academic growth of their students through effective character education. *CEP's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*, which defines excellence in character education, guides the evaluation and selection of finalists and winners.

**Character Education Partnership
National Schools of Character Awards Program**

2008 NSOC National Finalists

Alta S. Leary Elementary School, Warminster, PA

Ankeney Middle School, Beavercreek, OH

Arlington Traditional School, Arlington, VA

Aventura City of Excellence School, Aventura, FL

Babylon Memorial Grade School, Babylon, NY

Bayless Junior High School, Saint Louis, MO

Bower Hill Elementary School, Venetia, PA

Brigantine Elementary School, Brigantine, NJ

Chesterfield Elementary School, Chesterfield, MO

Francis Howell Middle School, St. Charles, MO

Gainesville High School, Gainesville, GA
Greenfield Elementary School, Beverly Hills, MI
Hamilton Township School District, Hamilton, NJ
Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, IL
Lindbergh School District, Saint Louis, MO
Lore Elementary School, Ewing, NJ
Marengo Ranch Elementary School, Galt, CA
Mill Pond School, Westborough, MA
Price Laboratory School, Cedar Falls, IA
Rosa International Middle School, Cherry Hill, NJ
Sappington Elementary School, St. Louis, MO
Valley Park Middle School, Valley Park, MO
Waterloo Middle School, Waterloo, NY
Westwood Elementary School, Friendswood, TX
Wilton Manors Elementary School, Wilton Manors, FL

The 2008 National Finalists represent 14 states. Five states have two or more finalists: Missouri (6), New Jersey (4), Florida (2), New York (2), and Pennsylvania (2). In 2008, 20 states participated in the State Schools of Character awards program, a preliminary step in reaching the national level of competition. All but three of the 25 National Finalists were part of this process and named State Finalists in their states.

Most of the 2008 finalists are public schools although two are districts and one is a private school. Thirteen of the twenty-three schools are elementary schools, six are middle schools, two are high schools, and two have a mix of grade levels. Most finalists are located in suburban settings, although two of the schools are urban and two of the schools are located in rural areas. A number of the finalists have student populations that may be described as low-income; 7 have one-third or more of their students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

NSOC Awards Program

Each year since 1998, the NSOC awards program has recognized K–12 schools and districts that provide exemplary comprehensive character education programs that consistently yield positive results in student behavior, citizenship, school climate, and academic performance. The national awards program is sponsored and administered by the Character Education Partnership and made possible by generous support from the John Templeton Foundation, the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources, Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, and Lockheed Martin Corporation.

Character Education Partnership

CEP, based in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to developing young people of good character who become responsible and caring citizens. For more information about CEP, visit www.character.org.