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## **Press Release – 2011 National Schools of Character Finalists**

**March 1, 2011 – Washington, D.C.** – The Character Education Partnership (CEP) has named 40 public schools, five charter schools, three private schools, and two school districts as National Finalists in the 2011 National Schools of Character (NSOC) program.

“We know that amazing things happen at schools of character—students treat one another and their teachers with more respect, violence and bullying decrease, substance abuse declines, disruptive behavior diminishes, teacher morale and retention improve, school pride and parental involvement increase, achievement gaps narrow, and overall academic achievement goes up,” stated CEP President and CEO Joe Mazzola. “Schools of character contribute to a nation of ethical citizens who know what is right, have the moral courage to do what is right and, at the same time, pursue excellence. We simply need more of them.”

In order to encourage more schools to improve by using effective character education, CEP expanded its prestigious NSOC program to recognize all who meet a gold standard of excellence as outlined in CEP’s [11 Principles of Effective Character Education](#). This year’s record number of Finalists reflects the growing commitment of many of our nation’s schools to transform their school culture and increase student achievement through quality character education programs.

CEP expects to select a record number of National Schools of Character from among the 50 Finalists in May 2011 and will honor these schools and districts at the 18<sup>th</sup> National Forum on Character Education, to be held October 19-21, 2011 in San Francisco, California at the Hyatt Regency.

Those designated National Schools of Character will serve as models and mentors to schools in their regions as they work to improve. By encouraging and facilitating as many schools as possible to strive for National Schools of Character status, more social and academic transformation will occur within school environments across the country.

“These are caring schools where all students thrive, and we are thrilled to recognize their efforts and help them share their best practices with other educators,” said Lara Maupin, NSOC Associate Director.

CEP selected the National Finalists from a pool of 140 applicants based the quality of their in-depth written applications. In March and April, they will undergo a rigorous national evaluation process that will include detailed analysis of the impact of character education on academics, student behavior, and school culture. All NSOC Finalists will receive professional feedback from this evaluation to help them as they continue their improvement process.

The 50 Finalists include the two school districts, 36 elementary schools, five middle schools, four high schools, and three mixed-grades schools consisting of K-8. They represent 19 states, with the most coming from Missouri, followed by New Jersey and Michigan. Of the 50 Finalists, 25 have student populations where one-quarter or more qualify for free or reduced lunch.

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