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CHARACTER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES NATIONAL SCHOOLS OF CHARACTER

29 Schools Recognized for Creating Academic and Social Culture Where Students Thrive

MAY 9, 2013, Washington, DC – Character Education Partnership (CEP) is proud to name 29 schools and districts to its roster of National Schools of Character (NSOC). Each school or district is recognized for its commitment to character education and for fostering a positive environment for social and academic learning.

Read more about each National School of Character.

The National Schools of Character will be featured at the National Forum on Character Education to take place Oct. 24-27, 2013, in Washington, DC, where they will share their secrets to success.

“Each of these schools has a uniquely inspirational story of success in education,” said NSOC Director Lara Maupin. “Schools of Character are places that foster more than just academic growth—these are nurturing educational communities that support parents in their most important job—raising good kids.”

Watch a video about the power of Schools of Character.

“Most often you read news stories about the negative aspects of education,” says CEP President and CEO Mark Hyatt. “These schools have faced the same challenges—budget reductions, increased class sizes, a lack of resources—but they’ve managed to maintain a focus on the students and holding high standards. We want to help tell the stories of these schools to give inspiration to others, to say ‘you can succeed too.’”

The National Schools of Character come from a variety of settings – urban, suburban, and rural—and 15 different states. The list includes 18 public elementary schools, 1 K-8 public school, 2 public middle schools, 1 K-8 charter school, 1 public high school, 2 public alternative schools, 3 public school districts (1 large urban, 1 small suburban, 1 high school district), and 1 national charter school “district” (headquarters). One school, Chesterfield Elementary School, is a second time winner.

Most of those selected as National Schools of Character demonstrate growth in terms of academics (increasing or high test scores), behavior (reduction in disciplinary actions), and climate (survey results show students feel safe and respected). For example, Mehlville High School’s reading scores went from 38% to 70% passing in 5 years; math scores increased from 47% to 67% passing in 5 years; meanwhile disciplinary referrals decreased 26% in 3 years.
All of the schools have created caring, supportive school communities that meet the needs of students. For example, Rougher Alternative Academy was once considered a “dumping ground” for students who were not able to thrive in mainstream schools due to multiple challenges. Now this alternative school has been transformed into an environment where all students may experience success.

“The reason this is a good school is because the teachers take great pride in their students,” says Aaron, a Rougher Alternative Academy student. “They are always there and they believe we can achieve our goals. They treat us with respect and care for us.”

Another aspect that the schools share—all reach out to parents and community members. Cleveland Elementary School has only 200 students but its attendance area covers 34 square miles.

“Despite obstacles, we began with relationships with families so we would get to know each student,” says Cleveland teacher Helen Bolen.

“Cleveland School is much more than a school,” offers Principal Michael Smolnick. “It’s a home to our 200 students, but it’s also a home to the larger community.”

Teachers will do whatever it takes to help students, despite increased challenges and decreased resources. Carmel Elementary School has faced increased enrollment (one of the largest elementary schools in the state), increased poverty, and decreased resources. Carmel turns to community resources, such as colleges, local churches and the Georgia Hope Program (which provides therapy in the home) to support families and also offers evening workshops to parents. They see tremendous gains for students when families are supported.

Assistant Principal Pam Green says, “It doesn’t matter what you throw at us, we are not going to lower our standards.”

Part of character education is putting core values into action and teaching students leadership through service. At Hanover Park Regional High School District, students volunteer as peer buddies for developmentally challenged students; students also helped design and build an outdoor classroom. An annual gallery walk created by the Genocide Studies students is visited by all students and many community members and all Freshmen Seminar classes design their own service projects.

To learn how your school can become a school of character, download CEP’s framework, the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education.
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2013 National Schools and Districts of Character

National Schools of Character:
Apollo Beach Elementary School (K-5), Apollo Beach, FL
Beasley Elementary School (K-5), St. Louis, MO
Berlin Community School (PK – 8), Berlin, NJ
Bierbaum Elementary School (K-5), St. Louis, MO
Burgess Elementary School (PreK – 5), Myrtle Beach, SC
Carmel Elementary School (K-5), Woodstock, GA
Chesterfield Elementary School (K–5), Chesterfield, MO
Cleveland Elementary School (PreK-5), Cleveland, NY
Discovery Ridge Elementary School (K–5), O’Fallon, MO
Doby's Mill Elementary School (K-5), Lugoff, SC
Hagemann Elementary School (PreK-5), St. Louis, MO
Henry C. Beck Middle School (6-8), Cherry Hill, NJ
Independence Elementary School (K-5), St. Charles, MO
Jefferson City Academic Center (9-12), Jefferson City, MO
Kay Granger Elementary School (K-5), Keller, TX
LaSalle Springs Middle School (6-8), Wildwood, MO
Madison Park Elementary School (K-5), Parlin, NJ
Mary B. Neal Elementary (PreK-5), Waldorf, MD
Mehlville High School (9-12), Saint Louis, MO
North Pointe Elementary School (PreK-5), Houston, TX
North Star Academy (K-8), Parker, CO
Rougher Alternative Academy (7-12), Muskogee, OK
Round Top Elementary School (PreK-5), Blythewood, SC
Vestavia Hills Elementary East (K-3), Vestavia Hills, AL
West Maple Elementary School (K-5), Bloomfield Hills, MI

National Districts of Character:
Guilford County Schools (K-12), Greensboro, NC
Hanover Park Regional High School District (9-12), East Hanover, NJ
Orono Public Schools (K-12), Orono, MN

National Charter District of Character:
Imagine Schools (K-12), National Headquarters in Arlington, VA

Character Education Partnership is a national advocate and leader for the character education movement. Based in Washington, DC, we are a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian coalition of organizations and individuals committed to fostering effective character education in our nation’s schools. We provide the vision, leadership and resources for school, families and communities to develop ethical citizens committed to building a just and caring world. For more information about State and National Schools of Character and how schools can improve through high-quality character education, visit www.character.org.

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