

The Maryland Center for
Character Education at
Stevenson University



Best Practices
Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 3
March 2011



MARYLAND SCHOOL OF CHARACTER AWARDS
Sponsored Collaboratively Through
MARYLAND CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION ,
CHARACTER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP and
MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Contact: Timothy Hayden, Program Coordinator
Telephone: 410-877-0291 - E mail: thayden@bcps.org

Baltimore, MD—The Maryland Center for Character Education is pleased to announce **EVA TURNER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** of Charles Co., **OAKWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** of Anne Arundel Co., and **VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** of Frederick Co., as the 2011 Maryland State Schools of Character.

Sponsored by the Maryland Center for Character Education at Stevenson University and the Character Education Partnership, the Maryland Schools of Character (MD SSOC) awards program recognizes schools or districts that demonstrate outstanding school climate and academic performance. The MD SSOC winners were chosen by a panel of independent reviewers who have been involved in character education and student development for many years. Maryland School of Character winners have advanced to the national level competition as Maryland's nominees for the National School of Character awards program. You can learn more about the national competition at www.character.org

Formal announcements and presentations will be made during the Maryland Center for Character Education's awards luncheon in the fall of 2011. For further information about this formal announcement and school recognition, please contact the Maryland Center for Character Education. MCCCharacter@aol.com

Contact information for the 2011 MD Schools of Character is as follows:

Eva Turner Elementary School

1000 Bannister Circle
Waldorf, MD 20602
Principal: Kathleen Morgan

Oakwood Elementary School

330 Oak Manor Drive
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
Principal: Nancy Knouse (Retired)

Valley Elementary School

3519 Jefferson Pike
Jefferson, MD 21755
Principal: Tess Blumenthal

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Best Practice for the Month of March North Caroline High School

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: North Caroline High School

Address: 10990 River Road
Ridgely, MD 21660

Phone: 410-479-2332

Contact: Brian Spiering, Principal
Brian_spiering@mail.cl.k12.md.us

Character Ed. Contact: Donna DiGiacomo
Donna_digiacomo@mail.cl.k12.md.us



Title of Best Practice: Blood Bank Blood Drive

Objectives: To have students and staff donate blood to the blood bank.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 4, 5, 8 and 10

Brief Description

Students of the National Honor Society, and their advisor Mrs. Mulligan, at NCHS planned and participated in two blood drives to help the Blood Bank of Delmarva. They placed posters throughout the school, approached teachers individually and recruited students during lunches. The school's contribution was 53 pints of blood that will help give many people a second chance. The NHS made sure that this was a positive experience for those first-time donors. Donors received T-shirts that proudly displayed the fact that they were blood donors. This was done in the hopes that it would encourage others to donate as well.

Title of Best Practice: Wounded Warrior Program

Objectives: Show support for wounded combat veterans. In rehab.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1, 2, 5 and 7

Brief Description

Mr. Parks and the girl's tennis team made Christmas cards for wounded combat veterans that are in rehab at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. A total of 65 cards were individually handmade and mailed out through the "Wounded Warrior" Program.

Best Practice for the Month of March North Carolina High School

Title of Best Practice: Breast Cancer Awareness

Objectives: Raise money for breast cancer research and increase community awareness of breast cancer.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 2, 4, 5, and 10

Brief Description

Mr. Parks and the girl's tennis team sold \$700 worth of pink breast cancer awareness bandanas. This fundraiser was done in conjunction with the Cross Court Athletic Club's Oxford Day celebration on April 25th, 2009. All money raised was donated to breast cancer research.

Title of Best Practice: Tri-lingual Education

Objectives: To promote awareness of other world languages and cultures.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 4 and 6

Brief Description

Ms. Meunier and the French Club made tri-lingual signs to be posted through out the school. These signs were in English, French and Spanish. This was especially helpful to the Hispanic students who are in the process of learning English. They also made signs promoting the study of other languages and cultures. This project was a cross curricular activity between French 4 and the Auto Technology class.

Title of Best Practice: Educational Career Enhancement

Objectives: To have students enrolled in the education major program practice and utilize various classroom skills in a real life setting.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 2, 5, 6, 7 and 11

Brief Description

Mrs. Bridwell and the students in her "teaching and early childhood program" go the elementary schools in Caroline County. They plan and assist in the various daily activities of an elementary school. Some of the activities include reading to children, tutoring, and giving one on one attention various students.

Title of Best Practice: Winter Blast – Back to Sports

Objectives: Promote exercise while engaging family and communities.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 4, 10, and 11

Brief Description

Promote exercise while engaging family and communities. Mrs. Bridwell and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes planned and carried out two evenings of games such as dodge ball, maze ball and handball. Eight county schools were represented through students, staff and family members.

Best Practice for the Month of March North Carolina High School

Title of Best Practice: Laws of Life Essay Contest

Objectives: To have students write essays showing their understanding of the eleven principles of character counters.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1, 2, 5, 6 and 10

Brief Description

Mrs. Bradner and Mrs. Harcum encouraged all of their students to participate in this essay contest. Approximately 45 students submitted essays to the mid-shore competition.



Title of Best Practice: Career Day

Objectives: Promote careers in the art field.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 2, 4, 5 and 7

Brief Description

Mrs. Rehak and the palette and brush art club students went to elementary schools on career day to paint student faces. They also talked to the students about various careers that can be found in the field of art. The palette and brush club students were role models for the day.

Title of Best Practice: Samaritan House Canned Food Drive, Adopt a little brother/sister toy drive, Pennies for Patients

Objectives: Promotes involvement and awareness of various local needs and charitable organization.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 11

Brief Description

Every year, Mr. Holmes, the Student Government Association and S.H.O.P. (students helping other students) conduct several fund drives to help local families and charities. They solicit donations from students, teachers, family members and members of the community.

In November, thousands of pounds of non-perishable food is collected and donated to local families.

In December, 75 children were “adopted” and supplied with clothing, toys, games, books and other things to help make their Christmas a little brighter.

In February, over a \$1000 was collected which went to children who have been diagnosed with leukemia.

Best Practice for the Month of March North Carolina High School

Title of Best Practice: Eagle Scout Project

Objectives: Help a scout earn their Eagle Scout badge.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1 and 10

Brief Description

Mr. Clark and the volley teams (jv and varsity) volunteered their time to help a fellow student with his Eagle Scout project

Title of Best Practice: Volley for a Cure

Objectives: The objective was to raise money for research and awareness of breast cancer.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 11

Brief Description

Mr. Clark and the volleyball teams sponsored a match between the two county high schools. The schools competed against each other to come together against breast cancer. They sold t-shirt, had raffles and door prizes and raised over \$4000 to benefit breast cancer research.

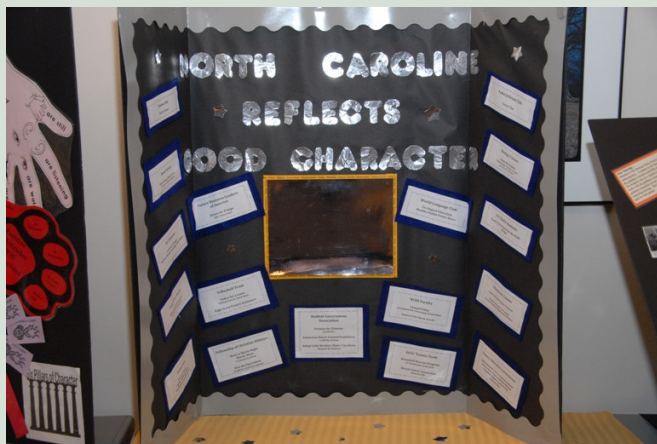
Title of Best Practice: Healthy Habits

Objectives: To promote healthy habits while broadening student's cultural awareness.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 4, 5 and 6

Brief Description

Mrs. Bradner and the AP Spanish students crested and displayed posters for a school wide campaign involving healthy eating habits, exercising and nutrition. The posters were written in Spanish with pictures visualizing the message being promoted.



Best Practice for the Month of March North Carolina High School

Title of Best Practice: Meows, Chows and other Bow Wows

Objectives: To raise awareness of the needs of local humane societies and to collect needed supplies.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10

Brief Description

Ms. DiGiacomo and all of her classes created a program called “Meows, chows and other bow woos.” The first step was to conduct research on humane societies in general and the local humane society in particular. They researched the mission of the humane societies, their funding, their policies, pet adoption requirements, and other things of that nature. They then created posters with the information and put the posters up through out the school. They also created announcements to be broadcasted on the school television network. Each student put either a box or a canister in a local business to collected items and money to be donated to the local humane society. They also collected money and food from members of the school community. The project culminated by bringing all of the donated items to the animal shelter. While there, students, helped out at the shelter by cleaning, gardening, walking dogs and playing with all of the animals. The students did this twice, once in the fall and once in the spring. Students collected thousands of food items and supplies and hundreds of dollars. As a result of this project, the Caroline County Humane Society has been able to start a program where they can give food to pet owners. This enables the pet owners to keep their pet instead of abandoning it or having to bring it to the shelter. Ms. DiGiacomo and the students plan to make this a bi-annual project.

Title of Best Practice: Jeans for Genes

Objectives: To raise money and awareness of cystic fibrosis.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11

Brief Description

Mrs. Neuwiller and her students research the disease of cystic fibrosis. They then create posters to raise awareness of this disease and place them through out the school building. They then have a “Jeans for Genes” day. This is where students and staff pay \$1 to wear jeans on a given day. All money is given to the “Live for a Cure” cystic fibrosis foundation. Mrs. Neuwiller and her students do this twice a year. As a result, hundreds of dollars have been raised to help this worthwhile cause.

Title of Best Practice: Wall of Fame

Objectives: To create a “wall of fame” highlighting plays that have been performed at NCHS through the years.

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11

Brief Description

Mr. Shaffer and the Drama Club collected as many pictures as possible from the numerous plays that have been performed here at NCHS. The pictures were then put in frames along with the title of the play, author, publisher and the year it was performed. The pictures were then mounted in the lobby of the auditorium and dedicated on the opening night of the fall play. Alumni and community members were invited to the dedication. The wall emphasizes the philosophies of character counts.

**“MCCE@SU School of the Year” Applications
are on-line: www.mdctrcharacter.org**

The Maryland Center for Character Education at Stevenson University (MCCE@SU) is again planning to highlight exemplar schools in the state of Maryland who have instituted, developed, and are continuing comprehensive character education initiatives in their school communities.

Each Superintendent and Character Education Coordinator were sent information regarding how to apply for a 2011 MCCE@SU School of the Year Award.

If you have any question please contact Linda Muska at MCCEcharacter@aol.com, 352-728-8771.

Download Best Practices Application, Quality Standards, and Eleven Principles at :
<http://www.mdctrcharacter.org>



Check this out:

School-Connect Optimizing the High School Experience

School-Connect develops, publishes, and trains educators in implementing *School-Connect: Optimizing the High School Experience*, a program for boosting students' social, emotional and academic skills. School-Connect staff also offer professional development in how to create supportive learning communities in high schools and speak nationally on the importance of school connectedness to adolescents' personal growth and engagement in learning.

<http://www.school-connect.net>



Check this out:

[The Virtues of a Radical Learner](#)

January 26th, 2011

This is a guest post by Dara Feldman who is a Master Facilitator and Director of Education Initiatives for the Virtues Project International. She is facilitating [introductory](#) and [facilitator](#) workshops in the Washington, DC area in February. Dara is Disney's 2005 Outstanding Elementary Teacher of the Year, an Apple Distinguished Educator, a Nationally Board Certified Teacher and is passionate about inspiring educators to bring out the best in themselves and others.

“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” Gandhi

Changing the way we think, and the language we use to express our thoughts, can help us be the change we wish to see in the world!

As a “recovering” kindergarten teacher, instructional coach, educational consultant, and the mother of two teenagers, I have witnessed first-hand how using virtues language can change our thoughts, which change our actions, and ultimately our lives! Now when I look at people and situations, I see them from the perspective of [virtues](#), their universal positive qualities of character.

The Five Strategies of [The Virtues Project](#) help bring meaning and purpose back into teaching and learning and empower students to realize their full potential. When this happens, true learning takes place, and our schools can be places of purpose, peacefulness, and excellence!

The Virtues Project is a global grassroots organization that INSPIRES INDIVIDUALS to live more authentic, joyful lives, FAMILIES to raise children of compassion and integrity, EDUCATORS to create safe, caring and high-performing learning communities, and LEADERS to inspire excellence and ethics in the workplace. It is practiced in more than 97 countries and has been honored by the United Nations as a model global program for all cultures.

Below is an overview of the [Five Strategies](#) of The Virtues Project that, when utilized, can be used for personal, professional, and organizational transformation.

1. Speaking the Language of Virtues

Language shapes character. The words we use have great power to discourage or to inspire. The Language of Virtues inspires cooperation and replaces shaming and blaming with personal responsibility and respect.

Students rise or fall according to our expectations, and we as teachers can act like mirrors. How we respond to our students sends a powerful message to them as to whether we believe they are capable, worthy human beings.



Check this out:

2. Recognizing Teachable Moments

Recognizing the life lessons and virtues in daily situations strengthens our humility and confidence to learn from our mistakes. Instead of negatively labeling students, we call them to act on the qualities of their character. There are no mistakes, just learning and growth opportunities.

3. Setting Clear Boundaries Based on Restorative Justice

Clear boundaries based on respect, restorative justice, and reparation provide a positive approach to school-wide discipline and create a climate of peace and safety. Personal boundaries protect our time and energy.

4. Honoring the Spirit

We energize positive school and community spirit by treating each person with dignity, and by creating a shared vision of who we are and how we want to treat one another. The most empowering way to create a safe, caring, respectful learning environment is not only to require it, but also to inspire it through acknowledgments and celebrations, creative expressions through the arts, and daily modeling of the virtues.

5. Art of Companionship

Often when we are having problems or feeling down, we don't want someone else telling us how to fix things. We merely want to be listened to. By being deeply present, listening with compassion and detachment, and offering clarifying questions and virtues acknowledgments, this counseling approach empowers individuals to find their own wisdom in answering life's challenges.

These five strategies have transformed my life as an educator, wife, and mother and continue to help me live a more joyful, peaceful, purposeful, and meaningful life.

I invite you to check out the [30-minute introduction](#) I created for the NEA (National Education Association) which gives an overview of The Virtues Project in schools. To get to the heart of the matter, you may want to jump to the end of the introduction and listen to what a high school junior says about our "civil mission."

"Idealists dare to have big dreams and then act as if they are possible ... Idealism does not mean that you are an idle dreamer. Idle dreamers just WISH that things were better. Idealists do something to MAKE things better." (The Virtues Project).

Check this out:

What will YOU do to make things better?

We have no idea what tools and knowledge the first graders of today will need to be successful in the world when they graduate from high school in the year 2022 (if they haven't dropped out first). However, we can be sure that they will need virtues, [performance character](#) such as purposefulness, diligence, perseverance, strong work ethics, positive attitude, creativity, self-discipline, as well as moral character such as integrity, justice, caring, respect, responsibility and cooperation to be happy, healthy, contributing members of society.

“Greatness is not found in possessions, power, position, or prestige. It is discovered in goodness, humility, service, and character.” ~William Arthur Ward

Thank you for your commitment to transforming education and the courage and idealism it takes to realize our potential as Radical Learners.

With much enthusiasm,

Dara

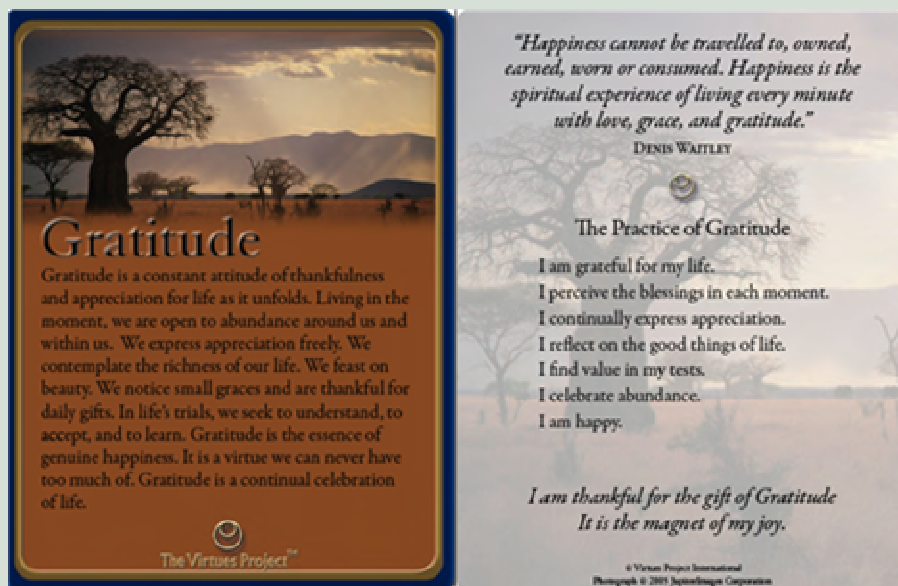
dara@heartofeducation.net

<http://www.giftsofcharacter.org/virtuesandstrategies.html>

<http://www.virtuesproject.com/>

<http://www.giftsofcharacter.org/5strategies.html>

<http://neacademyondemand.frameworker.com/presentations/Virtues%20Project.html>



Check this out:

Goal Setting for Students!

How to set and achieve goals in the classroom.

Learn more about goal setting, responsibility, making better decisions, respect, determination, and setting priorities.

Click here: <http://www.goalsettingforstudents.com/>

Bullying in Schools: A strategic Solution

by

Joseph W. Mazzola

President & CEO

The Character Education Partnership

Bullying in our nation's schools is rampant. Consider the following data points from the 2010 Federal Bullying Prevention Summit: every day, 160,000 students stay home out of fear of getting bullied at school; 1 in 3 students will be bullied this year (about 18M young people); 75-80% of all students observe bullying; and, depending on definition, 15-35% of students are victims of cyber-bullying.

Fortunately, our elected officials and others are now taking bold action. To their credit, for example, 43 states have passed anti-bullying legislation. At the national level, several different agencies co-hosted the (first ever) Summit mentioned above. The event included over 100 respected scholars, authors, psychologists, nonprofit and corporate leaders, government staffers and students.

I had the honor of representing CEP at the Summit. The key takeaways were: (1) bullying in schools is widespread; (2) the ramifications are very serious; (3) we need to learn more through research; (4) several government agencies are truly committed to taking this issue on; (5) policies and definitions need attention and clarity; (6) there are 67 programs that claim to combat bullying; (7) none of them has been shown to be effective through research; and (8) there is no simple, silver bullet solution.

"...if educators are serious about mitigating and eradicating bullying in schools, they will need to take a broad and strategic approach--one that focuses on the school's entire culture."

As with all complex and chronic problems in our schools, narrowly focused intervention strategies typically fail to make a lasting impact. Zero tolerance policies, hallway posters and such all sound very good in theory. There is no doubt that they are also implemented by well-meaning people who really do want to make things better. However, according to many experts, such measures are shallow in nature and, therefore, fail to achieve their intended purpose, especially over the long haul.



Bullying in Schools: A strategic Solution

So, having said all of this, if educators are serious about mitigating and eradicating bullying in schools, they will need to take a broad and strategic approach—one that focuses on the school’s entire culture. Beyond having a good strategic plan to guide the entire process, success requires committed leadership, hard work, collaboration with all stakeholders, tenacity and lots of patience. Remember, cultural change takes time, so think “crock pot,” not “microwave oven.”

As for the guiding strategic plan, CEP can help. We offer an excellent resource for this very purpose—one that goes to the heart of school culture. It is free of charge online. I am referring to the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education. One school leader referred to the principles as a “GPS system” to guide one along the path of meaningful change. To learn more about them, or to download a copy, please go to the CEP website, www.character.org.

Following the *11 Principles* will help curb violence at your school and drive other positive changes. We know this to be true from managing the National Schools of Character program for 13 years. It has given us a rich and extensive database of case studies that consistently show how violence and other problems decline as culture improves. At the same time, other important metrics also move in the right direction—including academic achievement.

A safe, caring, supportive school culture doesn’t just solve problems. It also creates an environment where young people flourish in countless positive ways. To make the point, let’s look at three schools that followed the *11 Principles of Effective Character Education* and took a broad and strategic approach to creating healthy cultures. Each one drastically reduced violence and other problems. Beyond that, they also showed remarkable improvement in a host of other important areas.

Seckman High School in Imperial, MO, stresses team work, empathy and service. The assistant principal said the emphasis goes far deeper than “banners hanging from the cafeteria ceiling.” Over a 5-year period of time, **out-of-school suspensions decreased 98%; in-school suspensions decreased 30%; fights decreased 65%; and drug-related incidents decreased 74%**. Seckman was also named a Top 10 Performing School for Science; their graduation rate rose to 94%; and their ACT scores hit an all-time high. (<http://www.character.org/Page.cfm?PageID=419&wpid=102>)

Waterloo Middle School in NY was once riddled with disciplinary and academic problems. A veteran staff member said it was “the black sheep of the district.” That is not true today. One teacher said the school “created a strong sense of family and built a culture of caring.” They emphasize respect and acceptance. Students pledge each day not to use their hands or words to hurt themselves or others. Over two years, **serious offenses decreased 71% and other reportable offenses decreased 50%**. Also, passing scores on the NY Math Assessment increased 49% and attendance climbed to 97%. (<http://www.character.org/Page.cfm?PageID=419&wpid=11>)



Bullying in Schools: A strategic Solution

Julian Elementary School is located near San Diego, CA. Their motto is “We can change the world with our own two hands.” Their culture includes service and respect. In a survey, 100% of parents said the school created a positive climate for learning. Last year, they achieved the highest Academic Performance Index rating in school history. Of special note, it went up 45 points for socioeconomically disadvantaged students and 74 points for those with learning disabilities. As for problems, disciplinary actions for violence and bullying decreased by 71%. (<http://www.character.org/Page.cfm?PageID=419&wpid=91>)

The three schools showcased above are all different, yet they have several things in common. First, each one follows the *11 Principles of Effective Character Education*. Second, they all created healthy, supportive, respectful cultures. Third, each school significantly mitigated major problems. And fourth, they all showed improvements in academics and other key areas. The CEP database includes many other real-world case studies that show similarly striking results.

But let’s look at a final school that is not in our database. Dunbar Senior High is in Washington, DC. It was founded in 1870 and has a long and rich history. However, like many other urban schools, Dunbar faces major challenges. Three years ago, the principal was fired and a private consulting firm took over. Even after the radical change in leadership, things failed to improve.

In December of 2010, the Washington Post reported on a Dunbar teacher who resigned because she was disgusted by the response to a cyberbullying incident. It was one of many cases of harassment and violence she claimed were tolerated or overlooked. The teacher said the consultants created “a culture of neglect, insecurity, zero accountability and poor communication.” She added “the culture, one of tolerance for sexual violence, was one she could no longer be part of.”

Arne Duncan talked about culture at the Summit. He said bullying goes to the heart of school performance and culture. The Secretary views safety as a moral issue and said schools “should be cultivating a culture of trust and accountability.” CEP agrees with the Secretary. We view culture as a two-way street. A good one solves problems and makes things better; a bad one exacerbates problems and makes things worse.

In conclusion, bullying is a daunting and frightening problem. If you want to take the issue on at your school and truly make a difference, you will have to take a strategic approach—one that focuses on the disease (unhealthy culture), not just the symptom. CEP’s vision is for all schools to have healthy cultures that foster respect, acceptance and compassion. We are pleased to share an excellent framework others have used to achieve great success—*The 11 Principles of Effective Character Education*.



Character Education Partnership 1025 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 1011,
Washington, DC 20036 www.character.org

Leading a National Call to Character

Conference:



Bully prevention and other best practices in Character Education

Join other educators and national experts in St. Louis at the 17th Annual CHARACTERplus [Character Education Conference](#); *Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies, Healthy Schools*.

Who should attend the conference?

Any educator Pre-K-12, coaches, health and PE teachers, librarians, counselors, support staff, transportation directors, administrators, superintendents, school board members, and interested parents and community members.

Tina Meier is one of our keynote speakers. Listen to her [podcast](#)

http://www.csd.org/Podcasts/Resources/tina_meier_podcast.mp3

as she talks about "Compassion in a Cyber world". She is the mother of Megan Meier, a Missouri high school student who took her life in 2006 after devastating cyber-harassment. She now travels the country talking with students, adults and government officials advocating for cyber-compassion. Her deep understanding of the pressures of youth inspire us to act to prevent this from happening to others.



How will I benefit from going to the conference?

- Reduce bullying behavior
- Improve academics
- Enhance character fitness and healthy bodies
- Create a culture of autonomy, belonging and competence
- Promote service learning
- Teach ethical decision making
- Use strategies that are research-proven
- Gain critical class management and leadership strategies
- Networking with many experienced professionals and experts
- College credit and Continuing Education Units

SAVE MONEY and be a presenter!

Do you have best practices that could benefit others? Be a breakout presenter and attend the conference for only **\$260**.

For more information go to: <http://www.characterplus.org/page.asp?page=425>

Finally a conference is more fun with friends. Please share this with them.

Contact Suzy Ward for more information. sward@csd.org or call (314) 692-1241

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The Maryland Center for
Character Education at
Stevenson University



Happy St. Patrick's Day
March 17th



Daylight Saving Time Begins!
(Clocks Forward)
March 13th

"Character Education is not a program — it's a way of life."

'We should turn out people who love learning so much and learn so well that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned.'

— John Holt