



Character Education
Best Practices

School Year
2006-2007

Enclosed is a collection of some of the “Best Practices” employed by nearly forty-two award winning Character Education Schools from throughout the State of Maryland.

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“BEST” CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES 2006-2007

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BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CENTER FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Address: 14211 McMullen Highway SW, Cresaptown, MD 21502
301-729-6486

Principal: Deborah M. Bittinger

Title of Best Practices: PAT's (Positive Action Team) PRIDE

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, Excellence, Trustworthiness, Appearance, Ethics and Caring

Objective(s): To connect, create, and channel character programs through ongoing faculty reinforcement of positive student behaviors.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

Materials Needed:

Work Ethic Program – curriculum adapted from Allegany County Board of Education “Character Counts” program and the “Work Ethics Program” from the Georgia Department of Technical Education and Adult Education.

Certificates of Achievement such as: Student of the Month, Perfect Attendance, and Honor Roll.

Local Business Donations such as: gift certificates, coupons, hats, t-shirts, movie theater tickets, mugs, water bottles, CD's and product samples.

School-Related Incentives such as: free yearbook, school theme stickers, prom tickets, field trip tickets, oil change, haircut, pedicure, manicure, student parking space and car wax.

Yearly School Attendance Prize such as: automobile for a senior with perfect attendance and a computer for a junior with perfect attendance (names are drawn at the end of the year).

Activities:

Student of the Month – The student is nominated and voted on by the faculty. The winner receives recognition on school marquee, in yearbook and an invitation to Student Recognition Banquet.

Principal's Award – All seniors are presented criteria for the Principal's award which include 95% attendance, active club membership, 3.8 grade point average, and 100% faculty approval. This award is given at the Certification Ceremony to the students meeting all criteria. Prizes include a monetary award, name displayed in school on a permanent plaque, as well as a wallet card to designate elite status of this award.

Life Saver Award – One faculty member receives this award at the end of the year. It is presented by the principal and the winner is determined by continual support and encouragement of one previously

designated high risk student. The faculty member is presented a monetary donation for supplies in his/her classroom.

Student Recognition Assemblies – Students are recognized for perfect attendance, honor roll, student of the month, special activities in clubs, volunteer activities, high class averages and competition awards.

PAT's PRIDE Caught Box – An award is presented each month to a student performing an unsolicited act of kindness. Recipient receives a certificate and a gift certificate.

Work Ethic Program – Work ethics lesson plan is distributed to all faculty members for use in first period class on the same day. On that day, traits are also discussed on the morning announcements.

Teacher-Student Mentoring – The principal generates a list of at-risk students, teachers volunteer to choose and mentor a student or students by encouraging their progress and bolstering their self-esteem. This is done privately without student knowledge.

Staff Member of the Month – Presented each month to a staff member exemplifying outstanding work ethics.

Can for Caring – Students are asked to donate canned foods for local shelters and needy families. This project coincides with the Work Ethic Trait of Caring. The homeroom with the most cans wins a pizza party.

Portfolios – During the junior and senior years, students complete a Career Connections course with the media specialist in order to create a professional portfolio to be taken to job interviews. Items to be included are resumes, references, awards, certificates, and photographs of their skill area work.

Leadership Class – The leadership class is a one credit course that teaches professional development skills. Due to the popularity of the course, a second section will be added during the 2007-08 school year.

Skills USA Picnic – Skills USA sponsors a picnic that teaches leadership skills, teamwork, and social interaction for students at the Career Center. Students must meet field trip requirements to attend the picnic.

Work Maturity Skills – Regular attendance, task preparation, use of time/task completion, human relations, accepting supervision, and safety are presented to students at the beginning of each school year. These work maturity skills are reinforced throughout the year by instructional staff and ties into the work ethics program currently in place.

Character Trait Road Signs – Metal road signs made by students depicting the character traits. These represent realistic signs and will be posted in hallways of the school as a reminder.

Extra Mile Award – Each month one faculty member is presented this award for going above and beyond the call of duty modeling work ethic traits.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CRESAPTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Address: 13202 6th Ave Cresaptown, MD 21502
301-729-0212

Principal: Roxanne Reuse

Title of Best Practices: The Goodfinder Program

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Kindness

Objective(s): To recognize and celebrate students for displaying good character throughout the school year.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

The Goodfinder Program at Cresaptown Elementary recognizes and celebrates students for demonstrating outstanding character throughout the school year. Every staff member is responsible for writing a Goodfinder award certificate to a child for displaying good character. A few Goodfinder awards are announced over the PA system during morning announcements each day. After announcements, the winners come down to the office and get their picture taken and receive a special certificate from the principal. Then each quarter the students who have been recognized during that quarter are also recognized at a Goodfinder assembly. Goodfinders are given the opportunity to tell the guests who they are and why they are being presented with the award. Next, Goodfinders are presented with a certificate and special pencil in front of their invited guest(s) and classmates. At the conclusion of the Goodfinder Assembly, the Goodfinders and their guests are invited to share refreshments. By highlighting these instances of good character we are hoping to share the importance of good character in our school and emphasize to students how important good character is in life.

Cresaptown is a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school and is continuing to implement this systematic school wide approach to teaching and reinforcing good character. Our PBIS program stresses four school wide rules that are based on quality character. Our school wide rules: be respectful, be responsible, be safe and be ready to learn, are directly taught and continually reinforced by all staff. Students receive bee tickets for demonstrating these qualities each day. They place their bee ticket in a drawing and each week a winner from each classroom is selected to choose a prize and be pictured on a bulletin board in the main hallway of our school. Cresaptown may be recognized for the fourth consecutive year as a PBIS Exemplar school in Maryland for the successful implementation and subsequent effect on the school climate. The school just received notice that a score of 100% was received on our School Evaluation Visit this year.

It is evident that Cresaptown has an outstanding climate when looking at our outstanding attendance, teacher retention (teachers rarely leave this school unless they are retiring), student test scores (even our special education students are scoring well on standardized tests), and low number of office referrals.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 130 Stepney Lane, Edgewater, MD 21037
410-222-1075

Principal: Rocco Ferretti

Title of Best Practices: “Sailing into the Future with Good Character”

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Our monthly values throughout the year for 2006-07:

- September-**Friendship** (sharing special times with someone you trust and enjoy)
- October-**Responsibility** (proving you can be trusted with what is expected of you)
- November-**Generosity** (sharing your goodness)
- December-**Peace and Joy** (a state of mutual harmony and happiness)
- January-**Dependability and Punctuality** (the state of being reliable and prompt)
- February-**Tolerance**(having a fair and accepting attitude towards those who differ from you)
- March-**Perseverance** (steady persistence in spite of difficult circumstances)
- April-**Kindness** (showing others they are valuable by how you treat them)
- May-June- **Self Control** (control or restraint over one’s actions and/or feelings)

Objective(s): To provide a comprehensive approach to teaching and reinforcing a “Character Trait of the Month” in every classroom and home.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

The Guidance and Counseling program at Central consists of classroom, group and individual counseling in the areas of personal and academic growth, interpersonal and social skills and career development and decision making.

Central’s Character Trait of the Month: (School Counselor responsible)

Ten months of character traits were identified which aligned with the academic calendar of school skills. For example, *Friendship* and *Responsibility* in the early months of the school year, *Perseverance* during test taking season and *Self Control* when Spring weather hits. (See attached list)

Each month the “Character Trait of the Month” was communicated with teachers, parents and students through school bulletin boards, newsletters, posters, and announcements. It was often reinforced as a motivation or morning work in Homeroom and Guidance lessons.

Students were rewarded by their teachers in a “catch them displaying the trait” manner, with a button highlighting the trait (three per class each month). Cultural Arts teachers also rewarded students they observed displaying the trait with *Treasure Island Coins*, consistent with our theme for the year “*Sailing into the Future*”. The coins can be traded in for a prize from the *Treasure Chest*.

Empathy Day: (Friendship/September month, School Counselor)

During the first month of school each classroom received an Empathy/Anti-Bullying lesson which was reinforced the last Friday of the month when we held a school spirit day called *Empathy Day* or *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes Day*. The students all received an Empathy Spirit Day flyer with a worksheet on the back which asked them to answer the following questions:

1. Whose shoes were they pretending to walk in today?
2. Why did you choose this person?
3. How is this person or their life different from your own?

The principal read his over the PA and if the children agreed to present theirs to their class they received a pencil as a prize

Kick off Assembly: (Responsibility/October month, Principal)

As part of a Milken Award presentation to one of our teachers, a school wide assembly was organized to emphasize the Character trait of *Responsibility*. Students were recognized for some of their academic, social and cultural arts skills as a prelude to the announcement of the surprise award. We overemphasized the trait of *Responsibility* in all introductions and presentations.

Character Trait Tuesday Announcements: (School Counselor responsible)

Each Tuesday the Character Trait of the Month was highlighted on the announcements through a scripted conversation defining and giving examples of the trait. Scripts were taken from real school events that illustrated the trait and were read by various students' conversation style and arranged by the school counselor.

Good Citizen of the Week: (Fridays, Principal responsible)

Teachers nominate a student each week that demonstrate the values of citizenship in the classroom. Each Friday morning the Good Citizens for the Week (Children, volunteers and staff) are announced over the P.A. and called to the multi-purpose room for a very lively presentation of a certificate, button, and pencil.

Writer of the Week: (Mondays, Reading Teacher responsible) Teacher nomination of a student who reads an exemplary writing sample over the morning announcements.

Artist of the Week: (Wednesdays, Art Teacher responsible) Teacher nomination of an outstanding piece of artwork that goes on display in the main lobby for the week.

Good Sport of the Week: (Thursdays, PE Teacher) Teacher nomination of a student who has displayed sportsmanship qualities throughout the week.

Bigs and Littles Program: (School Counselor responsible)

Volunteers from the Faculty and Staff are paired up with students in need of mentoring. Permission is obtained from the parents and the adult takes the student under their wing as their mentor. They might help them after school with homework, or check on them at report card time, or simply schedule a friendly lunch with them. We schedule breakfasts throughout the year to encourage the Bigs/Littles relationship.

Red Ribbon Week: (School Counselor responsible)

Every student "Planted the Promise to be Drug Free" by planting a red tulip along the flower beds in the front of the school. Tulips bloom during Alcohol Awareness Week.

Human Relations Committee: (Rotating staff member with School Counselor responsible)

A group of 3-5th graders are part of a committee with 8-10 staff members that meets before and after school, and who are instrumental in organizing and advertising school wide Community Service activities such as; Harvest for the Hungry, Coins for Kenya, Pennies for Patients, Relay for Life and Community Clean-up/Earth Day activities.

Tiger Pals: (School Counselor responsible)

Tiger Pals are a group of students (one boy and one girl) from each classroom who are Student Ambassadors to Central. These students are responsible for helping new students to the school by greeting them, making introductions, and basically helping them to feel comfortable at Central. They also serve as Student Hosts for special school events and often recognized as positive role models to their peers.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: BODKIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 8320 Ventnor Road Pasadena, MD 21122
410-437-0464

Principal: Charles Jansky

Title of Best Practices: Kindness in Action/Our Partnership with a nonprofit organization to promote service.

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Kindness/Compassion, Respect, Service

Objective(s): To enhance our comprehensive character education program with opportunities for student generated service activities.

Brief Description:

Bodkin Elementary has always worked to establish an environment where staff and students are placed at the center of the learning community. Each year a theme is selected and the entire school is entrenched in that theme. This past year our theme was “on the road to success”. Therefore, our building, instructional activities, and events transformed to depict a transportation theme. The previous year, we “Set Sail for Learning” and our school had a nautical flare with everything it did. As part of our efforts to instill strong values in our students, we participate in the Core Essentials program. Each month a character trait is the focus of class discussions, woven into daily assignments, as well as shared with parents and the community to enable them to continue the conversation at home. Additionally, we continue to participate in national research to evaluate the effectiveness of the Second Step Program of which we are in our third year of full implementation. We recognize positive character through value cards, weekly principal assemblies, and through a school wide compliments program. An outgrowth of on-going discussions about our formal program and teaching respect to students led us to the Kindness in Action organization led by Rachel Blair. Ms. Blair came to Bodkin to “plant the seed of kindness” in our students. She brought with her photographs of children in India and other third world nations. She talked about the challenges these children face every day while sharing an appreciation for the culture of India. Our students at Bodkin continued the discussion in their classrooms and chose a project to complete for the children Ms. Blair works with. Projects were student generated such as a Lisa Frank pencil drive, the making of homemade journals with an attached crayon, donated books, collection of money, letters and pictures to students to share our culture. More importantly, this partnership connected our children to other children their age living in a very different circumstance. Mrs. Blair returned to our school following her trip to India and shared pictures of the children receiving our gifts. Unlike other fundraisers we have done, students were able to see the impact of their small acts of kindness. Mrs. Blair provided 52 presentations to our students (2 per class, lasting 45 minutes in length). Her message inspired students and staff to think of service in a new way. For instance, a neighboring church asked us to host a lunch food drive to support homeless individuals they were hosting for 10 days. In the past, we would have hosted the drive and delivered the food. Because of our students interest in being involved, we made arrangements to involve our 600+ students (K-5) in a field trip to the church to see the shelter in action, make sandwiches, decorate bags, make cards and pictures for the recipients. Student and staff feedback was positive and heartfelt. Few had ever seen a shelter and learned that many of these homeless individuals worked during the day, but had circumstances that resulted in the loss of a home. It changed perspectives and once again, students saw firsthand how their small act of kindness made an impact. Our students refer to our partnership with Mrs. Blair as they begin to share ideas for new projects. While we have been proud about our efforts in character education, we are now reaping the benefits of kindness in action.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: EDGEWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 121 Washington Road, Edgewater, Maryland 21037
410-222-1660

Principal: Barry Fader

Title of Best Practices: “Kid’s with Character”

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Cooperation, Honesty, Fairness

Objective(s): Each month a new value is emphasized; Respect, Cooperation, Honesty, Fairness, etc. This monthly focus trait allows individual classrooms, the entire school and every family to emphasize the same aspect of the given value. By infusing consistent terminology and perspective into each classroom and each lesson, the cohesiveness is provided needed for a successful program.

Brief Description:

Value – “Kick-Off”: Each Monday a performance by the “Edgewater Elementary School Piglets” (teachers donning pig snouts!) on the closed circuit morning announcement broadcast, kicks off the weeks focus, with a follow-up performance on Wednesdays. Students of all ages look forward to and emulate the “Piglets” positive behaviors.

Classroom Teachers: Classroom teachers are provided weekly activities and lessons in addition to incorporating the monthly trait into their own daily lessons and activities, thus taking advantage of teachable moments.

Individual Lessons: The Behavior Tech teaches monthly lesson in individual classrooms each week.

Literature: A list of related books is provided to each classroom teacher. The Media Specialist makes additional books and video available.

Visuals: Exciting, interactive bulletin boards, informative newsletters and bookmarks are created monthly. Families are invited to participate in all activities. Articles, suggestions and additional information is placed in the monthly school newsletter for family use. Families are provided appropriate conversation starters, story ideas, and discussion questions to maximize mealtime and bed time discussions.

Service Learning: Service Learning is an important aspect of “Kid’s with Character”. We feel it is a daily lesson in life. Our students understand that it is our job to help others, extend a piece of ourselves to those around us. Each month a different grade group chooses and coordinates school and community wide projects. Some of the projects include: sponsoring a school/orphanage in India, the Cancer Society, Hat and Mitten Tree, Toys for Tots, the SPCA and many, many more!

Identification: Students (nominated by staff & peers) demonstrating our school and life values are identified and celebrated within the classrooms with their peers, on morning announcements, in our newsletters and during awards assemblies.

“Kid’s with Character” began as a reaction to concerns in society and within our school. It has quickly become a proactive program with the complete support of the administration, staff, families and most importantly, students.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: ANNAPOLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Address: 1399 Forest Dr., Annapolis, Maryland 21114
410- 267-8658
Principal: Carolyn Burton-Page

Title of Best Practices: Caring Communities

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Civility (fairness & honesty), Positive Relationships (citizenship)

Objective(s):

Goals/Outcomes of the Caring Community are:

- Mentoring Environment
Building Student-Teacher Rapport & Relationships
Teacher Modeled Appropriate Behavior
- Small Group Character Training
- Higher Academic Achievement
- Safe and Orderly Environment
- Positive Climate and Culture
- MSA Testing Groups -Test taking skills
- Service Learning – School-wide project

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

Approximately 65% of the population of Annapolis Middle School is classified FARMS. Historically we have written over 2400 student referrals each school year; the majority of which were for disrespect. It was the PBIS/Character Council's idea that by modeling and teaching positive character traits we could affect a change in our school. It was determined that more effective and efficient progress would be gleaned by utilizing all teachers, working with small learning communities (homerooms of less than 15), to start each day. The Caring Community teacher's mission was to create a positive climate that demonstrates to our students that we care about them.

Students report to their Caring Community upon arrival at school. They are provided with a school-wide free breakfast, attendance is taken and school announcements are made during this time. Teachers are expected to engage in conversations with their students, including discussions about homework, classes, grades and finally they make sure the students are equipped with needed supplies (pencils, paper, agendas etc.).

Two to three days a week we add a thirty minute advisory period which is used to provide Character Education instruction. Each month we focused on a different character trait. We began the year by dissecting our school motto—"Dragons are you ready? Be responsible, show respect and have positive relationships." Other topics we have discussed include caring about others, being tolerant of diversity and the need to persevere in order to reach goals.

We have also integrated our Service Learning Project, a Habitat for Humanity House in Brooklyn Park, Maryland into our advisory period.

Although other changes have been initiated this school year, by far, the staff of Annapolis Middle school attributes the dramatic drop in referrals to our Caring Communities. Thus far this year we have only written 832 referrals a 62.5% reduction from last year this time (2220). There is a much more positive climate at our school, student/teacher relationships have improved and a more respectful attitude prevails. We hope this will translate in student achievement as measured by the 2007 Maryland State Assessments.

Additional support for our caring communities came from a survey of the faculty by the Character Council. In April, the Council sent a questionnaire to the staff. They overwhelmingly approved of the Caring Communities with 90% of the staff in favor of continuing the program next year. They also felt the overall climate of the school has improved dramatically than in the past.

We also have available a PowerPoint presentation outlining the principles discussed in this writing.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: THE STADIUM SCHOOL

Address: 1300 Gorsuch Avenue Baltimore, Maryland 21218
443-984-2682

Principal: Ronald N. Shelley

Title of Best Practices: Community Based Experiential Teacher - CBET

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Community

Objective(s):

1. Students must meet city wide/state test standards.
2. The school must impact the community in a tangible and visible way.
3. Curriculum planning will show connections between subject areas, project development, and grade levels.
4. Students should enjoy and feel good about what they are doing.

Brief Description:

Community Based Experiential Teaching (CBET) is not a pedagogy unique to The Stadium School (TSS). This approach to learning has been around since Jean Piaget began studying it in the early 20th century. The work of The Stadium School is based, in-part, on his constructivist model of instruction. Many organizations, like the 4-H, the National Algebra Project, and Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound implement this school of thought to facilitate learning and development. At TSS, the essential elements of experiential learning are at work and embedded in its curriculum: experience, improvement, evaluation, and re-design.

What is unique to TSS are two key factors: sustainability and the ability of the school to connect to the community. At TSS, project classes are designed to be implemented over a one-year period. The classes are one-day a week for approximately 6 hours. Each student has between 35 to 38 project classes a year. A student who enters as a sixth grader and remains in the same project until she is a rising eighth grader will be exposed to more than 100 classes on the same subject and will gain 600 hours of specific training. Moreover, at TSS, while the project class may stay the same, the experience will always change and so too would the need for improvement, evaluation, and re-design.

The second factor is how we use the outside community as an impetus for learning. Here the student learns, not only how to identify one's social ills, but how to heal them. The community produces the child, who becomes the student and life long-learner. It is the home, the neighborhood and the community that become the first stimulus for learning and education. Here the child develops the particulars of his environment, like a native would his country. The child is aware of all the nuances: the bus lines and directions, the traffic signals, the residences, the houses, strangers, the short-cuts, etc. Embedded in each child is knowledge and learning. The only thing absent is the facilitator - the teacher with a passion - who will guide that knowledge and perpetuate that learning into a coherent career path that is aligned to the student's interest and ability. It is part of the instructional frame work of the school that merges the two.

TSS has thirteen specifically designed project classes (Appendix A). All expound upon community based experiential learning or the assessment of the students' physical environment, using one environment to

address the community's educational, social, environmental and emotional needs through curriculum and skill-based learning.

Two examples are The Stadium School's Community Garden and the Youth Dreamers:

Since 1995, TSS has owned and operated a community garden in a residential area of Homestead, where students have contributed thousands of hours to sustain what was a former garbage dump by planting and harvesting flowers and vegetables. They have also written grant applications to acquire soil and mulch, and to secure funds to fence the plot. The community garden has become a laboratory for investigation by testing soil, writing journals, and designing beds. The community has expressed gratitude to The Stadium School for tending a plot that is no longer an abandoned lot. It has also served as a lesson to students from other schools, who have visited the garden over the years.

In fact, the garden has been the impetus for our community service program as well as the progenitor of other project classes, such as the Community Rejuvenation Project Class, which created the *Dawson Memorial Garden* in memory of the Dawson family, lost tragically in a 2002 fire. The community garden class also inspired the school's Landscaping Project Class, which is responsible for the design and maintenance of the campus grounds and includes attractive raised beds, constructed by the students who planted the flowers they grew from seeds.

The Youth Dreamers have been working for five years to create a youth center – to be run by their peers - in the Homestead Community. Students have written grants to raise more than \$300,000, made television and radio appearances, created their own non-profit organization, purchased a house, won a zoning appeal, and are currently working with Struever Bros. Eccles and Rouse and looking for sub-contractors to help with construction. They plan and run after-school programs at the Stadium School while they await the opening of the center. On Project Days, students write letters and grants, run fundraisers, continue planning after-school programming, read and review grant proposals for the Baltimore Community Foundation, conduct research about the perception of youth in Baltimore, and attend community meetings.

(Appendix A)

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE KITCHEN

Mr. Marcus Amapadu - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

“From the Garden to the Kitchen” will explore the connections between our lives, the natural world and the foods we eat. Through this awareness and the skills learned in this course, students will be empowered to make healthy, nourishing choices today and in the future. Guided by Mr. Marcus and Mr. Luke, students will learn the art and science of both gardening and cooking in order to develop a powerful link between the garden, the kitchen, and community health. A goal of this course is to crystallize these connections in the form of a community project that ensures the availability of these lessons for future generations of TSS students. This course offers a unique educational springboard for students interested in careers in science, agriculture, culinary arts, nutrition and/or medicine. As we learn to respect ourselves, we naturally learn to respect the Earth and vice versa. This respect will align us with the infinite powers of nature, improving our students' chances of creating the lives of their dreams. Only students willing to work hard, willing to get dirty and willing to be team players should consider this course.

THE JASON HORICH ART PROJECT CLASS

Asmahani Munirah - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

This project class provides students with the opportunity to explore their creative potential, develop problem solving skills, and experience hands-on visual learning. By continuing its partnership with Maryland Institute College of Art and creating new ones with renowned Baltimore City artist, Matthew “BayBay” Williams,

students will be able to receive specific training in different forms of art, such as: mosaics, canvassing, clay works, sculpture, narrative photography, etc.

NATIONAL ACADEMIC LEAGUE

Mr. George Roycroft - (Grades 5, 6, 7, 8)

Since 1993, Baltimore City has been involved in this scholastic competition amongst middle schools. The program is based upon knowledge in Math, Social Studies, Science, and English, Humanities, and Reading. NAL includes 13 school districts nationwide that compete nationally if you win in your region (Baltimore City).

THE STADIUM SCHOOL'S VISIONARIES

Ms. Shalonda Wallace - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

Do you want to start your own business? This is the project class for you. With the collaboration of National Foundation For Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) you will develop all the skills you need. You will learn to write a business plan, become familiar with business terminology; and you will have the opportunity to compete with other students for start-up money to create your own new business.

THE GREEN LANDSCAPE DESIGN TEAM

Ms. Katie Constable - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

Students from the GLDT have planned, designed, and installed the plant material for all the gardens which are currently around The Stadium School campus. Continued improvement and beautification of the school and maintenance of the planting beds are the main focuses of this project class. These students make connections with community members and parents to take responsibility for the natural aestheticism of the Stadium School landscape. The children will be learning about the environment and the importance of urban habitat. This year we plan to involve the students in making presentations to other schools planning renovations in order to show how their campuses can be made more beautiful while helping the environment at the same time.

THESPIAN THEATER DRAMA CLUB

Ms. Bev Joseph - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

Students in this project class are taught a wide variety of skills including backstage skills of set building, special effects, make-up, theater management, costume construction, scene painting, prop construction, and movement. Acting techniques and vocal instruction are offered to students during the rehearsal process. All cast members must be involved in one or more areas of every show. Students are taught that they have a responsibility to attend rehearsals, be on time for work meetings during and after school, behave during the rehearsal process, and commit a minimum of 15 hours per show.

TOMORROW'S PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Justin Gaines - (Grades 7, 8)

The purpose of this project class is to expose students to a range of occupations and professions, while preparing them to meet the vast demands of today's work force. During this project class, students will create a functional resume, understand proper interviewing etiquette, and have an opportunity to work with different businesses within the Baltimore area. We will be working in conjunction with Morgan State University's students and staff. Stadium School students will be paired with Morgan students in attempts to help them enhance their understanding of what it actually takes to reach their career goals.

MEDIA PROJECT CLASS

Mr. Scott "Ebon" Miller - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

This project class focuses on recording and producing audio projects in a variety of different formats for the purpose of publishing on radio and the Internet. Students will focus on developing programming and utilizing Industry Standard equipment and programs with an emphasis on computer.

THE SCHOOL STORE

Ms. Lachele Fisher - (Grades 4, 5, 6)

This project class gives students an opportunity to explore all aspects of beginning, running, and maintaining a store. Goals for this project class include: visits from business owners, trips to stores to see the “behind-the-scenes” way that they are run, surveying a target sales group and creating an inventory that meets the needs of the population, keeping track of finances, and evaluating the business. The students will take turns “working” in the school store selling items to other TSS students.

THE ZOO EXCHANGE

Ms. Denise Garcia, Jana Wright - (Grades 6, 7, 8)

In cooperation with the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, students will learn about wild animals and the issues surrounding them through personal experience and research. The students will then be responsible for disseminating their new-found expertise to the public through presentations.

EMERGING ENGINEERS

Ms. Tanisha Elliott - (Grade 6, 7, 8)

Have you ever taken something apart just to see how it works? If you have then you’re well on your way to becoming an engineer. Emerging engineers is a project class that explores aspects of creation and discovery relative to water filtration (civil engineering), robotics (industrial engineering), flight simulation (aeronautics), and visual technology (compute & electrical engineering). The class will provide hands-on opportunities to build robots, make computer games, create web pages, and operate flight systems and much, much more!

YOUTH DREAMERS

Ms. Kristina Berdan - (Grade 6,7,8)

The Youth Dreamers have been working for five years to create a youth center – to be run by their peers - in the Homestead Community. Students have written grants to raise more than \$300,000, made television and radio appearances, created their own non-profit organization, purchased a house, won a zoning appeal, and are currently working with Struever Bros. Eccles and Rouse and looking for sub-contractors to help with construction. They plan and run after-school programs at the Stadium School while they await the opening of the center. On Project Days, students write letters and grants, run fundraisers, continue planning after-school programming, read and review grant proposals for the Baltimore Community Foundation, conduct research about the perception of youth in Baltimore, and attend community meetings.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: MARITIME INDUSTRIES ACADEMY #431
Address: 790 W. North Avenue, Baltimore Maryland 21217
410-396-0242
Principal: Dr. Marco Clark

Title of Best Practices: Living the Principles of Character

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Conscience, Destiny, Trust, Truth, Humility, and Being My Brother's and Sister's Keeper (Responsibility)

Objective(s): To provide the opportunity for students to observe, model and incorporate the principles of character that respect and improve the lives of all.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

Throughout the course of 2006-2007 academic school year, the Maritime Industries Academy has infused the six "Character Principles" as an intricate part of the school's educational practices by establishing and maintaining a vast array of educational, social, cultural and inspirational programs. Following are several of the activities and programs that illustrate *Living the Principles of Character*.

- *Sister to Sister Workshops:* This program featured a month long series of activities during Women's History month that examined issues centering on health, mental wellness, sexuality, sisterhood, leadership, self-defense, and educational and career planning. Included were the following:
 - Sister to Sister Induction Ceremony
 - Self-Defense Workshop
 - Students Guided Discussion Series
 - Women's Luncheon
- *Follow Your Destiny:* This activity featured professional and world renowned dancer Onika Davis. Students had an opportunity to dialogue with Ms. Davis regarding her travels, studies, career path and inspirations.
- *HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention Program:* The members of the *Positive Voices: Positive Choices HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Program* provided a real live face to the problem of HIV and AIDS.
- *HRS Rally:* This program raised student awareness of the importance of the High School Assessments and was featured on TV Channel 11 News with Education Reporter Tim Tooten and special guest host Mark Clark, radio personality from 92Q FM.
- *Inspire to Teach:* This program featured a presentation from Baltimore City Police Detective and Public Information Officer Danny Moses and 911 Dispatcher Mabutu Ali.
- *Student Exchange Program:* Ten students from the Maritime Industries Institute (MIA) visited Christian Fenger High School in Chicago, IL where they were paired with Fenger High students. MIA students had an opportunity to experience the life of Chicago inner city students and the exchange was completed when Fenger High students visited MIA in early May 2007.
- *Saturday Principal's Breakfast:* One Saturday per month the doors of MIA were opened to students, staff, parents, families and community members to come together in an informal

setting and have dialogue with the principal to express concerns and receive pertinent information regarding MIA's programs.

- *Baltimore Media Art Exhibit*: Several MIA students were featured during this exhibit for their individualistic and contemporary art work.
- *Student Appreciation and Awards Ceremony*: Students were recognized for their academic and leadership throughout the school year.
- *Amazing Youth Program*: This weekly radio program sponsored by 92Q FM featured MIA's own Sierra Bowman who through the leadership and inspiration of the MIA art program and Teacher, Ms. Santos, had an opportunity to read an original poem live on the radio.
- *Wide Angle Youth Media Festival*: Fifteen MIA students were featured during the art festival in a variety of mediums including visual arts, performing arts and creative writing.
- *Black Gala*: This event focused on bringing together staff, parents and community in order to establish connections and support for MIA students and the educational goals and mission of the school.
- *HAS Math and English Camp*: Spearheaded by the MIA Math and English Instructional Support Teachers, an after school program for 9th and 10th grade students was provided for students to gain extra help and instruction in preparation for the HAS. Students used a peer to peer tutoring model to assist one another in solving math problems and completing English tasks.
- *College Exploration*: The guidance department sponsored several local college visits as a four-day college tour in Greensboro, North Carolina, where students visited North Carolina A&T, Bennett College and the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

It is important to note that the events, activities and workshops all required student participation in the planning and implementation process. This allowed for students to develop important leadership skills, understand task management, gain experience in program planning, building rapport and trust, and work along side of teachers and administrators in a professional manner. The administration and staff of MIA have work hard all year long to ensure that students, parents, and staff have made *Living the Character Principles* a part of the school culture, and that all activities and events planned for the empowerment and betterment of our students have been centered and focused on the six character principles.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: NEW TOWN ELEMENTARY

Address: 4924 New Town Boulevard, Owings Mills, MD. 21117
410-887-1541 or 1547

Principal: Beth Straus

Title of Best Practices: “Terrific Kids Program” (Character Education)

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Integrity, Determination, Teamwork, Diligence, Responsibility, Leadership

Objective(s): To Identify and reward those students in grades 1-5 who exemplify and practice the values selected each year for the Terrific Kids Program.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

Terrific Kids Program

Values Clarification and Character Building Education

School Counselor’s Role:

At the commencement of each academic school year, 10 values are identified for the Terrific Kids program and a list of dates for the assemblies is scheduled for the year. Teachers and administrators are given a packet of information with an explanation of each value and the dates for the assemblies. Parents are given this information in the initial newsletter sent home to the families.

Monthly responsibilities of the school counselor:

Prior to the assembly:

- The value of the month is announced via the morning announcements.
- Teachers receive explanation of value, ballots for peer voting, and deadline date for the assembly.
- Names of all winners are secured, compiled for grade 1-5 on a master list, announced to the school, and published in the monthly parent newsletter.
- Invitations are printed, labeled and placed in teachers’ mailboxes for students.
- Certificates are calligraphed, proofread, and sorted by grade.
- The custodian receives a note of the assembly date and setting-up arrangements.
- Refreshments are purchased and ready for the assembly.
- Invitations for specific classes and guest speakers are extended.
- Program is written, poetry selections are made, copies of the program are given to speakers.

During the program:

- One hour prior to program, refreshments, music, decorations, certificates and bumper stickers are arranged in the auditorium.
- Following announcements, attendance is taken as Terrific Kids are placed on stage. Students are given instructions for receiving certificates.
- Parents are greeted and welcomed; classes are seated in the audience.
- The program commences with introduction of administrators, colleagues, and guest speakers. Program continues, hosted by the counselor, until the end when honorees have received certificates, bumper stickers, and refreshments.
- Parents are congratulated, classes are dismissed, clean-up commences.

In addition, this year, the counselor has added monthly school-wide guidance lessons which teach the value of the month. In this way, on a daily basis, students are able to learn about the values highlighted monthly.

Another new feature is the way our values are selected. We select these based on the values highlighted in our feeder middle and high schools which provides a consistent and unified celebration of character education.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: RIDGELY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 121 E. Ridgely Road Lutherville, MD 21093
410-887-7776

Principal: Susan Evans

Title of Best Practices: The Ridgely Stags: Respectful, Responsible and Ready!

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility and Readiness

Objective(s): To provide a quality education that develops the content knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable all students to reach their maximum potential as responsible, life-long learners and productive citizens.

Brief Description:

Ridgely Middle School is a public middle school of 1,100 students in grades 6-8 located in Lutherville, MD. Ridgely received the honor of being designated a National Blue Ribbon School in 2006. Our educational program is based on a shared philosophy, vision and mission to infuse character education into a rigorous academic program. We work collaboratively to address the academic, social and emotional needs of our students. Our school motto is Respect, Responsibility and Ready. With this systematic approach, students receive consistent support from teachers, staff, parents and the community to uphold and demonstrate positive decision making in all realms of their career at Ridgely and beyond.

PROGRAMS:

School-Wide Discipline Plan: Stakeholders are committed to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment for our students. Procedures and responsible behaviors are clearly defined and shared with all stakeholders through the Student Handbook. Students are consistently commended for outstanding behavior with quarterly certificates/awards, “Ridgely Compliments” Postcards, and recognition in the Ridgely Reporter, the quarterly parent/community newsletter.

School Counseling Program: Three counselors provide individual, classroom and group counseling to address personal, academic and career development. Counselors work with teams of teachers and administrators to address the developmental needs of the students. Our Peer Mediation program empowers students to resolve conflicts in a positive manner. Our Salvaging Sisterhood Program is an initiative to educate faculty and students about relational aggression. This program is pivotal in developing an understanding of the roles created within a social hierarchy. This is done through professional development with staff, classroom guidance presentations, and small group counseling throughout the school year.

Positive Behavior Intervention System: This active committee of teachers create and promote the character traits we encourage our students to emulate. Students at Ridgely have the opportunity to earn “Ridgely Bucks” from their teachers throughout the school year when they are caught demonstrating positive character traits such as trustworthiness, initiative and perseverance. Each buck is worth \$.25 that they may save and apply to items in the school store or healthy snacks in the cafeteria.

Value of the Month: Throughout the school year, each month is designated as a “Value Month” by the PBIS Committee. Each Friday, morning announcements by students to their peers provide words of wisdom or examples/strategies of positive character traits that exemplify the value for the month. Students enjoy making these announcements to their peers each week.

Daily Homework E-mail: Parents receive daily notification each afternoon of student homework and responsibilities. This effective strategy provides on-going communication and support from parents regarding assignments, responsibilities, School-wide initiatives, and student accomplishments.

Capturing Kids Hearts: 50% of the Ridgely faculty has attended three-day training sessions for the Capturing Kids Hearts program, sponsored by the Flippin group. This philosophy of interacting with students focuses on creating classroom environments which encourage sharing, trust and teamwork. Teacher testimonials give voice to our success. In one instance, after learning that a classmate's father was being deployed to Iraq, students joined to send packages to the father weekly. In another, an art teacher spilled a container of paint in her rush to get to her next class. Before she could move, students took it upon themselves, scrubbing the paint from the floor/walls.

Service Learning: Service Learning is an integral part of the middle school experience. Students and teachers continually integrate service learning into all classroom and extra-curricular activities across grade levels. A popular group is the "Helping Hands Club" where students give of themselves for others. Yearly projects include Trick or Treat for Unicef (student raised \$1,800), Jump Rope for the Heart (\$1,100), Hoops for Heart (\$852), Salvation Army Stocking Drive (250 stockings), Easter Baskets for Homeless Students (30 large Easter baskets). Character traits of compassion, loyalty and contemplation are emphasized throughout all phases of activities.

Beautification: Our seventh grade students worked in teams to create designs for 12 large bulletin boards throughout the school. These designs incorporated the 12 Daggett character-education traits, their definitions, and imagery to reinforce the traits. Students used their knowledge of the principles of art to create visually appealing designs which would make the building more attractive during the renovation.

Student Leadership: We encourage all of our students to be role-models and embrace leadership opportunities. Our Student Government Association and the National Honor Society provides tutorial services to peers twice a week, Fall and Spring School Beautification Days, COIN Wars to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, a school-wide recycling program, teacher appreciation gifts, holiday door decorating contests, and service as American Education Week Ambassadors.

Be the Change: The Administration and Counseling Staff worked together to produce a school-wide Anti-Bullying Campaign entitled, "Be the Change" Students were treated to a three screen multi-media production promoting friendship and citizenship. The outgrowth of this included a classroom lesson ensuring that students were able to demonstrate strategies recognizing negative interaction and countering with positive peer interaction such as helping those in need, complimenting classmates, and offering positive reinforcement. The results were then sent home to parents for family discussion and signatures.

Multi-cultural Infusion: Demonstrating appreciation of Cultural differences is an important aspect of respecting diversity. Ridgely Art teachers created Pinwheels for Peace with their students. Lessons involved heartfelt discussions of how we can make our world a more peaceful place. Students wrote pledges, and developed symbols to illustrate their commitment to "whirled peace."

Professional Development School: Ridgely works collaboratively with Towson University to provide teaching and mentoring experiences for 12 teaching interns yearly. Interns are encouraged to become a part of our learning community by observing highly qualified teachers, teaching small lesson components, and participating in various extra-curricular activities that promote character education. We open our classrooms to these aspiring teachers with the hope that they develop the skills and experience to be effective teachers and outstanding role models.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: PERRY HALL HIGH SCHOOL

Address: 4601 Ebenezer Road, Baltimore, MD 21236
410-887-5108

Principal: Brian Gonzalez

Title of Best Practices: Code of Conduct and Bracelet Campaign

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, & Civility

Objective(s): To allow opportunity for the students and staff of Perry Hall High to demonstrate their commitment to our four Cornerstones of Character: Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, & Civility.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

Four years ago, after a consensus of parents, students, faculty, and school community, our four cornerstones were identified as being important attributes necessary to be successful in life. Our struggle has been to thread the meaning of our cornerstones into daily practices without losing instructional time. Toward the end of the last school year, we had extended homerooms that allowed students to explore the meanings of each cornerstone and provide feed back. From this feedback, we found that most students valued the cornerstones, but were fearful that they were alone with their values. To help students see that others felt as they did, we developed a “Code of Conduct” for students to sign. Upon signing the code, which was a promise to strive to uphold our cornerstones, students received a silicon bracelet in school colors with each of our cornerstones embossed along with our school’s initials. On the first day, over 50% of our student body signed the code. In the end, 72% of our school population wears a bracelet. Changes we have seen include (1) employers who write “cornerstone supporter preferred” when posting job listings, cheers about good character at sporting events, (2) clubs that plan activities involving supporting community endeavors because of integrity, (3) regular newspaper articles that reflect on our cornerstones, and (4) teachers and students who use their bracelets to non-verbally address inappropriate behaviors without any loss of class time. We have also had three new groups start in part to our character education initiatives: The Black Student Union, The Environmentalist Group, and the Gay-Bi-Straight Student Alliance.

For this year, we needed funding for the two-ply Code of Conduct, which gave students a copy of their signed code, the silicon bracelets, and a guest speaker. Since promoting better character was an identified need with our students, staff, and surrounding community, we went to our school clubs, organizations, athletics, and PTSA for funding. Many groups gave us money to purchase bracelets and the contracts, and we proudly put their names as sponsors on the contract. The PTSA also gave us money to send postcards to parents of identified students who went an extra mile in supporting cornerstones. Also, we had many who donated time and resources. For example, we invited Dr. Barry Black, Chaplain for the U.S. Senate, who came to speak to our students on the importance of good character and he did not charge our school for his time. A local hotel donated a room for the Chaplain to spend the night in exchange for an advertisement in our school paper.

Our Character Education Committee is currently comprised of faculty, students, parents, and, hopefully starting next year, will include members from our feeder middle schools.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: MUTUAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 1455 Ball Road, Port Republic, MD 20676
410-535-7700

Principal: Paul Rhodes

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, responsibility, caring, justice and fairness, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, self-discipline, cooperation.

Objective(s): To teach students the definition of a specific character trait, or concept, and how it looks so that they may demonstrate the trait to develop and strengthen their own character.

Brief Description:

In an attempt to offer a comprehensive approach to teaching character education, we provide several opportunities for students to learn about and practice various positive character traits. Students take part in monthly classroom lessons and grade-level assemblies provided by the school counselor. These lessons and assemblies focus on various concepts (bullying, conflict resolution, school success, etc.) tied in with the character trait being emphasized for the month. The majority of the lessons presented are done so by sharing trade books that spotlight the concepts being taught, with a discussion taking place afterwards.

The books used during the lessons come from the school library and the “Mustang Library.” The Mustang Library is a collection of books housed in the guidance office that focus mainly on positive character. The books are available for students and teachers to borrow and are cataloged by topic for easy accessibility. Each month the guidance counselor also puts several books on display. On the bulletin board outside her office, concepts (usually a character trait and some other guidance related topic) are identified with related books that can be used to reinforce the concept.

The message about positive character is also shared during a morning announcements, which are broadcast throughout the school on closed-circuit television. As part of the morning announcements, students share a way to demonstrate the trait of the month (from our character calendar). They also share a daily message, which promotes positive character, from the Project Wisdom series.

Students are also recognized for demonstrating positive character. Each week, a student is selected from each class for consistently showing good character. These are our Mighty Mustangs. The Mighty Mustangs receive a button, which identifies them as Mighty Mustangs, and a certificate. All of the Mighty Mustangs then take a group photograph, which is displayed in the main hallway. Each week, the resource teachers (music, library, art, and p.e.) also select a class that has demonstrated good character. These classes, along with the Mighty Mustangs, are recognized on our morning news broadcast. The class also receives the “Resource Horse” from the resource teacher to keep for the week, until a new class is selected the next week. At the end of each month, each class (students and teachers) chooses a student to represent their class as Mustang of the Month. These students are recognized during our PTA meetings where they also receive a certificate and armband. During the PTA meeting comments submitted by the teacher and students of the Mustang of the Month are shared detailing why the student deserved this recognition.

So, students are not only taught what good character is, but they are expected to show it. To help encourage the positive character, we also understand the importance of recognizing it!

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CAROLINE CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Address: 10855 Central Avenue, Ridgely, MD 21600
410-479-0100

Principal: Dr. Theresa Stafford

Title of Best Practices: “Character Counts” at CCTC

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: The Six Pillars of Character

Objective(s): Students will be able to demonstrate through writings, discussions, and actions that they are able to identify the six pillars of character, the attributes of character education, and apply the six pillars of character to everyday life.

Brief Description:

At CCTC we have concentrated on the six pillars of character as a springboard for our complete Character Education initiative this year. We have taken proactive steps to ensure that every student in our school has had continuous and concentrated exposure to character education. Through our extended character education program, we have incorporated traits and skills that students will need not only in the future careers, but also in their daily lives as they interact with family, friends, and others.

Each month, we celebrate one of the six pillars of character. Signs about the character trait of the month are posted in the hallways, office, and are continuously displayed in the teachers’ rooms. The daily bulletin, as well as the newsletter, always recognizes the “pillar” and there is a constant sense in the school that “Character” matters. All students were encouraged to participate in the “Laws of Life” essay contest. The winner was from the cosmetology program and represented CCTC at a multi-county recognition reception. Also, the guidance counselor made a concerted effort to incorporate lessons of character in the school-wide assemblies and in the guidance lessons that were delivered in each classroom. A few of the activities that took place in the school were:

- a. Each month a “pillar” was presented to the students in the form of a “Character” lesson. The counselor supplied each teacher with complete “Character” lesson package, which included various objectives and a variety of activities. Consequently, each student in the school received the same lesson and message. The lessons always allowed for open discussions and student interactions. Activities have ranged from school-wide scavenger hunts, essay and cartoon contests, to collecting and shipping items to Iraq under the umbrella of “Iraqi Operation Outreach.”
- b. Numerous visuals depicting the “pillar” are posted around the hallways, main office, and in the classrooms.
- c. As extensions, Character Counts videos are available for viewing and further discussion.
- d. Warm-up activities, readings, writings, and discussions about “Character” are continuously promoted within the classrooms.
- e. Character Counts representatives visited classrooms for activities and discussions.
- f. Assemblies were planned with underlying “Character” themes.
- g. Lessons presented in each classroom by the guidance counselor were developed from a “Character” perspective.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CARROLLTOWNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 6542 Ridge Road, Sykesville, MD 21784
410 751-3530

Principal: Martin Tierney

Title of Best Practices: Cardinal Coupon Store

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect

Objective(s): To reward students for showing the R.E.D. code of conduct: Respect for Self, Everyone Counts, and Do Your Best.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

Every day students earn coupons for demonstrating the R.E.D. code of conduct. Once a month, each classroom comes to the Cardinal Coupon Store to exchange their coupons for prizes. These prizes include pencil grips, pencils, stickers, key chains, magnets, glue sticks, book bags, pencil pouches, and the list continues. The student council representatives price these items so that their prices are divisible by five. The morning of the coupon store, the students staple their coupons into fives to expedite the payment process in the coupon store. Trained parent volunteers and the teachers whose classes are at the coupon store help to staple the coupons and help to run the store.

For the last nine weeks of school, the fifth grade students have an opportunity to buy raffle tickets to enter to win an i-pod nano. The fifth grade teachers have reported that their students' behavior has made a turn-around for the better. Students come in to school and unpack without reminders; they start their warm-ups, and walk quietly in the halls. When talking to some of the fifth grade students, they report that they are on their best behavior to earn enough coupons to buy a raffle ticket.

In general, the concept of Cardinal Coupon Store has given students control over the prizes they can buy, by demonstrating respect and earning coupons. Students have made a connection between their behavior and coupons, and therefore feel proud when they have a lot of coupons to spend. Some students have learned how to save coupons for something they really want. Additionally, purchasing items at the coupon store allows for practice in counting by fives and figuring out what they can buy with the amount of coupons they have. Overall, the Cardinal Coupon Store has been a rewarding experience for the students.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: WESTMINSTER EAST MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: Longwell Avenue, Westminster, MD 21157
410-751-3656

Principal: Jeffrey Alisauckas

Title of Best Practices: Bulldogs Rule with Respect, Responsibility and Relationships

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility and Relationships

Objective(s): To promote a safe and orderly school campus where students strive to achieve their personal and academic best through a proactive, comprehensive program of core values.

Brief Description:

At East Middle School, we have worked to develop a proactive, comprehensive program that encourages students to strive for personal and academic success thereby helping them become responsible citizens. We support our students throughout the day in developing internalized behaviors and values that demonstrate our school systems' community values. Our Climate Committee consists of teachers, an administrator, support staff, students and parents. This umbrella committee has evolved to include components in the school which affect the overall school climate including Character Education, discipline and SHOUT and has developed a framework for the Character Education Program at our school. The core values identified by our school system are encompassed under an umbrella of **Bulldogs Rule with Respect, Responsibility and Relationships**, our school motto.

► **MONTHLY ACTIVITIES:** The Climate Committee has identified a color to be associated with each of the months and traits (i.e. September is Green for Respect). Staff members receive beads or a hand-made button to wear for the color. All members of the school community are encouraged to wear the color of the month on Thursdays. The committee also developed activities and lessons related to the trait of the month that support instruction in the building. This packet of materials is distributed to the staff at a monthly kick-off celebration where various characters visit the classrooms to reinforce the trait of the month. Each month, the school community signs pledges to uphold the trait of the month (i.e. in September, green links were signed by all members of the school community to create a chain of respect). These pledges are displayed in the cafeteria creating a rainbow of colors by the end of the school year.

► **RAINBOW CELEBRATION:** Our annual Rainbow Celebration, a culminating activity, allows us to celebrate the successes of our students. We have enlisted the support of the Multicultural Club to develop activities and games from cultures around the world. This day in June is a family-oriented celebration/picnic where students are recognized for their positive accomplishments

► **STUDENT RECOGNITION:** Students are recognized by receiving "Caught Being Good" coins. These coins are turned in by the students (allowing us data on our positive accomplishments) and they receive a certificate recognizing them. Random drawings are held for recognition activities such as our weekly Ice Cream Table where students are invited to sit at a special table decorated in the month's colors and have the opportunity to make ice cream sundaes. Teams select students for a Student of the Month Award based on the specific character trait. These students are recognized in the building as well as in our school newsletter. When a student meets the state's service learning requirement, the school's Victory Flag is raised in his/her honor.

► **BEHAVIOR MATRIX:** The staff defined respect, responsibility and relationships and then developed a matrix of expected behaviors. Teachers have developed lessons to teach and reinforce the expected behaviors. The matrix is displayed throughout the building, included in our school newsletter, and is on the school’s website.

► **INFUSED LESSONS:** Teachers have infused the traits into their lessons so that they are continually reinforcing our expectations. For example, students are asked to “walk in the footsteps” of historical figures and discuss why they made specific decisions. Teachers discuss core values when discussing novels and stories which they have read. Science teachers discuss the environment and develop service learning activities. Students organize an annual Shakespeare Festival for the 5th grade elementary school students at our feeder schools and act as teachers as well as performers which introducing students to both Shakespeare and the expectations of our building. Teachers have made character education an important integrated component.

► **PROJECT WISDOM:** Each day begins with a quote of the day from Project Wisdom. These quotes are read over the morning announcements and are followed by a moment of silence to reflect on their message. Teachers frequently use the quote as a journal starter or discussion questions.

► **MENTORING:** Our student/teacher mentoring programs allow students and staff to form positive relationships while building on academic and behavioral goals for success through our Student Mappings. Mentors encourage students to achieve their best and help students document their progress academically.

► **SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES:** Our students routinely demonstrate kindness and caring by assisting peers in need, providing peer tutoring, adopting families from the school community during the holidays and in times of crisis, and showing a caring and accepting attitude towards students with disabilities.

- Students organize food and clothing drives at various times during the school year to benefit shelters in the local area.
- The school makes cards and placemats during the holiday seasons for those who are home/hospital bound.
- Students visit the Senior Center and form relationships with senior citizens while sharing cultural and social curriculum.
- Our 7th grade has charged their students with developing and implementing service-learning activities throughout the school year.
- Students are given opportunities to affect positive changes based on their own ideas. For example, students were concerned about graffiti in the restrooms and developed a plan to paint murals in the stalls. Our restrooms are now bright, cheerful and graffiti-free.
- Students work with community leaders to clean up the school grounds. They collect trash, clean/mulch beds, and plant trees and flowers. The Mayor of Westminster issued a proclamation

► **FAMILY SUPPORT:** Our Character Education Program is supported by our families as well. The PTA provides volunteer support as well as financial support for activities. Parent members of the Climate Committee enlist additional support from families and the community. We communicate our initiatives with parents through school newsletters, e-school newsletter, PTA meetings and our school website. Frequent activities such as the Read-a-Thon, Celebration of Service and musical performances encourage parents and community leaders to become involved in the school.

► **DATA:** In Reading and Math, our students have demonstrated growth on state and local assessments. Quarterly assessments provide students and their mentors with feedback for their individual Student Maps. Discipline referrals have continued to decline over the past 4 years. As of May 9, 2007, 89% of our 750 students have received 0 to 2 referrals this school year. Our Pyramid of Interventions allows staff to take a proactive approach to both academics and discipline by providing students with support before they stumble. Student, staff and parent surveys show positive attitudes about the school and its initiatives. Informal evaluations come in many forms. Positive feedback and comments from community members and families have provided us with a less statistical measure of our successes. For example, after a field trip to the Air and Space Museum, the director of the museum called our principal to state that our students had been the most respectful group that he had seen. Following another trip, the Fire Chief called to remark on the respect and responsibility demonstrated by our students on a trip to the Fire Hall. Visitors to our building frequently comment on the respectful attitudes of our students as they open doors, carry materials and provide assistance. We feel that these commendations truly reflect a positive change in our school environment proclaiming these events as special days in the city.

Activities such as these are frequent in our school community and demonstrate the climate of caring which has been established.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: HOLLY HALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 233 White Hall Road, Elkton, MD 21921
410-996-5050

Principal: Cynthia Ward

Title of Best Practices: Bringing It All Together

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Justice and Fairness, Honesty, Self-Discipline, Integrity, and Cooperation

Objective(s): When good character is observed and displayed by everyone, everyone feels the benefit as it is manifested in the form of safety, well-being , and high academic achievement.

Brief Description:

The Character Education Program at Holly Hall ES is based on the scientifically researched premise that when students are socially and emotionally healthy, academic achievement increases. Furthermore, schools that emphasize character and citizenship in all facets of their programming are characterized by strong relationships amongst staff, students, parents, and the community at large that leads to a peaceful learning environment.

We believe this is taking place at Holly Hall. Our Character Education Program is truly a comprehensive and collaborative effort of all stakeholders in and out of the school. The activities and processes-used to promote-and build good character are-based-on the-eight "Traits -of the Month" that are observed in CCPS. The following "ingredients" will give the reader an idea of the breadth and scope of our Character Education Program:

1. **Character Education Committee** that meets regularly to discuss needs, initiatives, and support,
2. **Character Education Awards Breakfast:** students who are nominated by their teachers as students who have shown outstanding character related to the trait of the month are recognized with families and teachers as their audience,
3. **Character Education Marquee** in the main hallway,
4. **Daily Morning/Afternoon Announcements:** highlights the trait of the month with a quote of the day related to the trait; announces recipients of Fish Grams,
5. **Fish Grams:** Any person (staff, student) can recognize the deeds of good character of others by completing a Fish Gram; recipients receive their Fish Gram and have their picture displayed in the main hallway,
6. **Parent Fish Grams:** parents are given blank Fish Grams and are encouraged to send in a completed Fish Gram to recognize deeds of good character at home,
7. **Monthly Newsletter:** informs parents/families of the trait being observed and any school activities that support the trait of the month that is being observed,
8. **Character Building Day by Day:** Teachers utilize this book that contains short stories with discussion questions to highlight character in their classrooms,
9. **Teachers and Counselor activities** that infuse character in general or a specific trait into class lessons and activities. For example, Kindergarteners planted trees to show respect and responsibility for the environment. Also, in an art lesson, our Art Teacher led kids through the process of making holiday cards for nursing home residents to show caring,

10. **School-wide Activities:** "Caring Cans" food drive; Coat Drive,
11. **Quarterly Awards Assemblies:** Principal's Character Education Award is given to students who are nominated by their teachers,
12. **Character Education Pep Rally** prior to Fun and Fitness Day

The efforts made by all have a unifying force in our school and community. The importance of good character and how it relates to healthy living is emphasized in every classroom and in every part of the building. We have added a stronger parent component this year via the parent newsletter, Fish Grams from home, and the Character Education Awards Breakfast. We believe that this strengthens the impact of Holly Hall's Character Education Program because the significant adults in the lives of students communicate the message that good character is important.

"It takes a community to care for the community" would be an appropriate theme for the Character Education Program at Holly Hall. When good character is observed and displayed by everyone, everyone feels the benefit as it is manifested in the form of safety, well-being, and high academic achievement.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: J. P. RYON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 12140 Vivian Adams Drive
301-645-3090

Principal: Virginia McGraw

(1). **Title of Best Practice:** The FISH Philosophy

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Responsibility

Objective(s): The FISH philosophy focuses on responsibility to self, other and their community.

Brief Description:

Definition of “FISH”

F: Feelings Identify your feelings at the time of the choice and now.

I: Issues Describe the issue and the choices you could have made.

S: Solution Describe a solution to correct the mistake.

H: Heart Work Make it happen from the heart. Put your solution plan into action with sincerity and effort.

The FISH philosophy focuses on Be There; Choose your Attitude; Make Their Day; and Play.

Student and Staff are involved daily with this philosophy. Lessons are taught throughout the year to provide students with the skills needed to follow this program. Our monthly character traits are integrated into this program as they practice all elements of responsibility. These integrated are the character traits of the month described in the Character Trait of the Month. Infusing these traits with the FISH philosophy provided a well-rounded character education program.

(2). **Title of Best Practice:** Quarterly Recognition Assembly /Story Hour

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: All Exemplary Behaviors

Objective(s): The school implemented a character program in conjunction with parents and guardians to achieve teaching and reinforcement of character in both home and school.

Each quarter we invite our parents to attend an awards assembly. Students are recognized for their academic achievements and their exemplary behavior. All of our awards are directly linked to our character traits and those traits are always discussed at these assemblies. Each classroom selects a student of the quarter, who is a role model for his/her classmates in a variety of areas. Good Citizenship, all green days, no office referrals, and attendance are all recognized, along with academic achievement. Our monthly newsletter, which is sent to each family, all of the names of the children receiving awards are printed. The character trait of the month is highlighted and parents understand that their role is to provide reinforcement at home of that month's character trait. Thus, the character trait is reviewed and reinforced at school and home.

In addition to the quarterly assemblies and the monthly newsletters, each year we offer parent workshops throughout the school year. Our school counselor presents information on a wide variety of topics such as bullying, social skills, self-discipline, and making good choices. We regularly request the parents input in order to tailor our program to the needs of the community.

A monthly Story Hour is also available to the parents and younger siblings of our students. Selected stories are based on the character trait of that month. All parents, students and younger siblings listen to the stories and do follow-up activities in conjunction with the monthly character trait.

(3). Title of Best Practice: Character Trait of the Month

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, cooperation

Objective(s): The school implemented a systematic, school-wide approach to teaching and reinforcing elements of character such as caring, honesty, responsibility, and cooperation.

This year Ryon Elementary has implemented another component to our Character Education Program. This component is the school wide focus on one character trait each month. The character traits addressed each year include: responsibility, respect, cooperation, caring, citizenship, perseverance, self-discipline, compassion, trustworthiness, and friendship. Teachers are provided with a resource book, which contains lessons, book titles, games, and hands-on activities, which they teach to the students in order to instill good character. As a follow-up the school counselor also visits classes throughout the month with lessons of her own targeting the monthly trait.

The monthly trait is cited each morning during announcements for the children to hear. The children are then encouraged to practice this trait throughout the school environment for the month. When a child has been recognized, by any staff member for demonstrating the trait of the month, there is a Wall of Fame in the main office which the children sign. They are then rewarded by the Principal with certificates and pencils at a school wide assembly and an invitation to a special luncheon with the principal at the end of the school year.

(4). Title of Best Practice: Club Days

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: All Exemplary Behaviors

Objective(s): The school implemented a noteworthy program of student service learning to the school and/or the community.

This year we implemented a school wide Club Program. On early dismissal days all students participate in a club of their choice. Club choices are varied according to grade levels and interests. We offer such clubs as: Science Experiments, Computers, Cooking, Book Clubs and Gardening with staff members responsible for lesson plans and the incorporation of school pride and character in the planning of activities. This has given our students an opportunity to expand their interests into worthwhile projects. Students efforts have benefited our school in many ways. Our Gardening Club has planted bulbs and weeded our courtyard gardens to beautify our school grounds. Our Computer Club created a power point presentation which documents the club programs and has been presented at staff meetings and PTA meetings. The Photography Club took pictures for the school yearbook, while the cooking club created a cookbook for their families.

Clubs have provided the students with a means to take pride in their efforts, as well as teaching them responsible work ethics. Participation in clubs is always contingent on good behavior throughout the month. Social skills training is provided by the school counselor for any student who has had an office referral during the month. Her lessons target the behaviors noted on the referrals (ie. anger management, disrespect) which allows the students to accept responsibility for their own actions.

The program has been a success with both students and staff. Everyone is involved and the building has a distinct feeling of pride and accomplishment on these days. The students look forward to club days and interestingly enough, there has never been an office referral on club days. It appears that clubs are a tremendous reinforcement of our character education program.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: MILTON M. SOMERS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 300 Willow Lane, LaPlata, Md. 20646
301 934-4663

Principal: Stephanie Wesolowski

(1) **Title of Best Practices:** RISE To The Challenge/ Way To Go-Stop And Think Tickets
Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect

Objective(s): To promote Respect for individuals, self and the school environment.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc.) You may also include a one-page attachment to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit this best practice.

There is one basic rule at MSMS and that is RESPECT!!!

Respect for Individuals Being aware of your actions toward others and how they may be offensive. Strive to be honest, cooperative, positive, and pro-active toward school and bus safety.

Respect for Self The image you project through adherence to the dress code, use of appropriate language, positive interactions, and meeting your potential by doing your very best!!!

Respect for Environment Taking good care of school property. This includes text books, school equipment, lockers, the cafeteria, bathrooms, locker rooms, and the campus. The environment also includes the promotion of school spirit and efforts to maintain a safe learning atmosphere.

Way to Go and Stop & Think Program

“Way to Go” Tickets

Students can earn Way to Go tickets for exhibiting positive behaviors and their name is submitted to a drawing for each additional ticket earned. Teachers are designated supervision duties throughout the day and will issue Way to Go tickets to any student who is demonstrating above and beyond characteristics of positive behaviors. Every two weeks, drawings take place during grade level lunches and students who are eligible once their name is drawn may pick a prize from our treasure chest. The more tickets you earn, the better chance you have of winning.

“Stop & Think” Tickets

Students who violate school rules while transitioning in the halls, eating lunch or at the bus will be issued a Stop & Think. Teachers have designated supervision duties throughout the day and will issue Stop & Think tickets to any and all students found to be in violation of our school rules. Stop & Think logs are monitored for the purpose of tracking the necessity for disciplinary action. Disciplinary action is taken at 3 or more infractions (3 – verbal warning/parent notification; 4 – ISR, 5 – Suspension). These actions range from parent conferences to ISR and suspensions.

Rise to the Challenge

Students can earn the privilege of attending the RISE Assembly each quarter if they are “referral free” from the day it begins until the day it concludes (i.e., 1st quarter – Step Team/Spirit Squad; 2nd quarter – Indoor Soccer Tournament; 3rd quarter – Somers Idol; 4th quarter – Faculty and Student Volleyball Tournament)

- (2) **Title of Best Practices:** Student Service Learning
Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Community Service

Objective(s): To study the community, implement the solutions in the form of a service project, and reflecting on the impact of the service

Student Service Learning

Student Service Learning is an unpaid activity within the curriculum, school or community and approved by the school coordinator that provides a service to a non-profit organization or group to address a school or community need. Service Learning refers to a method of learning by performing service projects. It involves studying the community, implementing the solutions in the form of a service project, and reflecting on the impact of the service. **Student Service Learning is a Maryland State graduation requirement.**

There are essential components for all service learning projects.

1. Meet a recognized need in the community.
2. Achieve curricular objectives through service learning.
3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience.
4. Develop student responsibility.
5. Establish community partnerships.
6. Plan ahead for service learning.
7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service.

Preparation for student learning experience begins in middle school. Preparation and Reflection Units are embedded in Personal Responsibility and Language Arts classes in the sixth grade. These units are also embedded within the seventh grade science classes and eighth grade health classes, and will continue into their ninth grade government classes.

6th Grade- Language Arts (Monthly reflections through journal writing on personal experiences as they relate to the attributes of each character trait.

7th Grade- Life Science (Environmental Project)

8th Grade- Health (Public Service Pamphlet or Power Point- Drug Awareness)

(3) Title of Best Practices: Character Education

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Personal Responsibility, Respect, cooperation, compassion, fairness, honesty, perseverance, Pride

Objective(s): To promote and recognize students who exhibit good character.

Character Education

Charles County Public Schools is committed to the development of responsible citizenship skills in all students. Character Education is one avenue in which personal and civic virtues are examined, modeled, taught, practiced, and self-reflected. Charles County has adopted a monthly character trait that is highlighted each month through school activities. The character traits have been designed to foster positive student attitudes of responsibility, respect, honesty, fairness, compassion, cooperation, perseverance, self-discipline, and pride. These character traits define a common theme and focus for instructional activities.

Each month five students from each grade are selected by their grade level team as representing outstanding attributes of the character trait promoted that month

* [September](#) - Personal Responsibility

* [October](#) - Respect

* [November](#) - Self Discipline

* [December](#) - Compassion

* [January](#) - Cooperation

They are featured on our website Somers@ccboe.com

* [February](#) - Fairness

* [March](#) - Honesty

* [April](#) - Perseverance

* May - Pride

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: SOUTH DORCHESTER SCHOOL

Address: 3485 Golden Hill Rd. Church Creek, MD 21622
410-397-3434

Principal: Dwayne Abt

Title of Best Practices: Character Counts at South Dorchester School

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: All 6 Character Pillars

Objective(s): South Dorchester School promotes positive character education to ensure that our students are kids of good character.

Brief Description:

The students at South Dorchester School are involved in character counts on a daily basis. The teachers promote positive character and refer to the six character pillars daily. Our morning begins everyday with morning announcements. We have a specific character pillar designated for each month that we are in school. Every morning on the announcements, the character pillar is stated and quotes are read based on the character pillar.

Mrs. King, the school counselor goes in to every classroom, at least twice a month and teaches a lesson on the character pillar of the month. The students look forward to their CC day at South Dorchester School.

In addition, the administration and school counselor refers to the character pillars any time a student is referred to the guidance office or the Principal's office. The entire staff promotes positive behavior by using the character counts lessons.

A bi-monthly newsletter is sent home and the character pillars are defined in the newsletter. Parents are encouraged to discuss the definition of the character pillar and help their youngsters be more character conscious.

South Dorchester School is extremely proud that we have the fewest office referrals of any school in the county. We attribute this fact to the awesome character of the students in the building. We reward our students with great assemblies focusing on positive character and good choices. The staff and students acknowledge that they are a school of great kids, and great staff, always showing a high regard for the character pillars.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: ROCK CREEK SCHOOL
Address: 191 Waverley Dr. Frederick, MD 21702
240-236-8700
Principal: Gayle Brown

Title of Best Practices: Character Counts
Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Caring, Responsibility, Respect, Trustworthiness
Objective(s): Students care for the feelings and emotions of peers and staff.

Brief Description:

Our school is a special education day program designed to accommodate the unique needs of our students. The students' range of ability is from moderate to profound with orthopedic, speech, reading, writing, emotional and autistic needs. (1) We stress respecting each other by always smiling and greeting people in the hallway, knocking on closed doors before entering, asking politely for needs, and helping each other when possible. Our more able students help the staff by escorting less capable students to their classrooms or nurses' office. This has been a very emotional year for all of us. Six of our present students and one that just graduated, a student's father and many special people in the lives of our staff have passed away this year. The students have made bulletin boards and made cards in recognition of these students and staff. One of the most endearing projects was the Memorial Garden that the staff and students made. A plot was cleared, plants and trees were planted and everything was mulched and watered. We had a beautiful ceremony to celebrate the lives of all the students that have passed away at Rock Creek over the years. The students have also comforted each other, listened to each other, and offered support; not only to their peers, but to the staff too. We have worked very hard to help students understand death and how a person can help those who are in grieving by using our Character Counts bulletin boards.

(2) Our students are working on a school wide integrated program to show good citizenship, responsibility and trustworthiness. The different grades have picked a theme to correspond with this program. The middle school team is doing the wash, picking up, folding and delivering towels, bibs and washcloths to the correct classroom. The vocational team delivers the daily newspaper to the classrooms, helps to clean the cafeteria, and prepare paper and plastic for the recycling project. The elementary team is learning to take care of the school and community by recycling hundreds of pounds of paper and plastic bottles. Students are also learning to run errands for the office and staff. They are learning to hold important papers correctly and to be trusted to deliver them to the appropriate person. Each month a different team will decorate and prepare the goodies for a dance. They help serve the food and drinks and make sure each student gets a chance to dance and/or have treats. Our students work very hard in their classes and they have learned not to be quitters. They are learning how to ask for help, but most importantly they are learning to do things for themselves. We also read age appropriate books (thanks to a grant) and talk about real life situations and what responses would be correct in different situations. The students who are in high school have been attending weekly meetings with our social worker to practice social and table etiquette, greetings, anger management skills, and relaxation techniques for stressful situations. They are practicing the basics for Character Counts.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CRESTWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 7100 Foxcroft Drive, Frederick, MD 21703
240-566-9000

Principal: Kathleen Hartsock

Title of Best Practices: Character Counts Week Celebrations

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Trustworthiness, Respect, Fairness, Citizenship, and Caring

Objective(s): To celebrate and highlight the implementation of *Character Education* at Crestwood Middle School.

Brief Description:

Crestwood Middle School implements a systematic, school-wide approach to teaching and reinforcing elements of character. During our annual *Character Counts!* Week, many of our best practices can be highlighted. Many activities were planned for both the students and the staff. To prepare for celebrations, home base teachers encouraged students to decorate their doors with artwork displaying the different “Pillars of Character.” Students worked on this project each morning during the two weeks leading up to *Character Counts!* Week. These beautiful and bright doors helped to remind students and staff to always show good character. At the start of the week, students were given a “Cavalier of Character” bingo card. Each square on the bingo card demonstrated a behavior that exhibited a “Pillar of Character.” When any adult in the building witnessed an act of good character, he or she signed the bingo square for that specific action. After completing “BINGO,” students won a Cavalier prize!

At Crestwood Middle, each day of *Character Counts!* Week stood for a different “Pillar of Character.” Students and staff dressed to represent each pillar. During home base activities, students discussed ways that they could demonstrate good character in school. Each home base teacher was also provided with “Shooting Star Character Coupons” to distribute to students. Students could then enter their coupons into a raffle at the end of the week.

Teachers also incorporated character education into their daily lessons. In Language Arts, students completed acrostic poems using the “Pillar of Respect.” Word Study activities were focused on the pillars, with crossword puzzles being used to help reinforce learning. Students also wrote essays dealing with responsibility. Specifically, they wrote about how acting responsibly in school would help them in their chosen profession.

In Theater Arts, students wrote original rap songs about respect and caring. Our talented students then performed these raps on our morning announcement broadcast. To celebrate the “Pillar of Caring,” Art classes participated in a holiday card drive to support our local troops serving in the Middle East.

Crestwood staff participated in the *Character Counts!* celebration, as well. They filled out cards that complimented different members of the staff. Compliments were then gathered, and each teacher received a “Crestwood Loves You” card filled with lovely things that people had to say.

Character Counts! celebrations don’t just last for one week at Crestwood. Besides the examples listed above, teachers continue to integrate elements of character education into curricula. Students continue to earn “Cavaliers”, small coupons that are given out to students who display good character, so that good character is reinforced on a regular basis.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: NORTHERN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 371 Pride Parkway, Accident, MD. 21520
301-746-8165

Principal: William Carlson

Title of Best Practices: Character Education Blending

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect

Objective(s): To effectively address school-wide character development by the blending of existing school programs.

Brief Description:

Northern Middle school blends nine components to create a unique immersion of character education throughout our school environment. Our aim is to take the best elements of all programs available to us and apply the concepts that match our statistically demonstrated needs and our school's mission statement. By doing this we have synergized what works for us and eliminated potentially competitive, non-data driven, stand-alone programs. The nine components include anti-bullying, conflict mediation, Second Step program, use of a behavior matrix, PBIS, the Winners Program, Words of Wisdom, County Character Education, and Service Learning. Being a small school, all NMS staff wear multiple hats and serve on multiple committees. Our intent is to capitalize on this overlap and make the best use of our limited resources, while still providing an outstanding character education program. Funding for nearly all of our program implementation activities is done by the students and staff. For example, we host faculty-student games, dances and seek grant funding. This process is revised each year based on the available data and resources.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: JOPPATOWNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 410 Barksdale Road, Joppa, Maryland 21085
410-612-1546

Principal: Chris Cook

Title of Best Practices: BEST STARS PROGRAM – Monthly Character Trait and Awards Assembly

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Character Trait Each Month during School Year 2006-2007

Objective(s): To encourage in each child the development of character traits that will ensure an awareness of the appropriate way to treat and to be treated by others. To provide guidelines for a daily manner of behavior that creates a positive and nurturing learning environment for all.

Brief Description:

Character Education Program: **BEST STARS**

Monthly character trait beginning with school rules: **BE SAFE, BE RESPECTFUL, and BE RESPONSIBLE** (September); followed by a new trait each month totaling eight traits for the year. Additional traits are: **Kindness, Leadership, Goal-Setting, Perseverance, Trustworthiness, Loyalty, and Cooperation**. Each classroom as well as all public areas have a bright yellow piece of laminated paper that displays the theme for each month so that it is always visually present and part of the daily vocabulary of the school. Anyone entering the building will immediately see the theme being practiced that month. The school rules hang from banners exhibited in all hallways as well as the cafeteria and outside the main office of the school.

There is a monthly assembly designated to celebrate the completion of the practice of a trait. At this celebration, each classroom teacher designates a student as “BEST STAR for.....” The teacher writes a statement describing the reasons for the student choice. This statement is reproduced on the back of a STAR STUDENT certificate and read out loud by the principal at the assembly. The student receives the certificate, a ribbon, a star student pencil, computer mouse eraser with the school rules, and a certificate from Chick fil-A. There is also a “Class Award” for that month’s trait and the special area teachers determine the recipient of that award. There is a trophy for primary level and a trophy for intermediate. The class gets to display the trophy the entire month and when they pass the trophy on the next month, they receive a green banner with a star to display for the rest of the year. Pictures are taken of the individual students and placed on a star on the STAR WALL in the main hallway under a larger star designating the character trait. The student’s nomination statement is reduced and attached to their displayed star for everyone to see and read.

There is a primary assembly and an intermediate level assembly. A grade level is invited each month to present their thoughts on the trait that will be introduced for the next month. They can use song, skit, or thoughtful readings to present their ideas. By the end of the year, even the Pre-kindergarteners have presented a theme. The songs or quotes are then used on the daily

announcements that month. Parents of the BEST STAR student recipients are invited to attend the assembly to see their child recognized.

Star tickets can be earned on a daily basis, throughout the school, by a student “caught” practicing any month’s theme. All adult staff members, including the bus drivers, have rolls of tickets and can award a student at any time. Each classroom has a star box and their tickets are stored there all week. On Friday, the tickets are tallied and one student’s ticket is drawn. That student is the Joppatowne Star Student for that week and gets to bring their tickets, the tally, and his name to the counselor’s office to dump the box into a container with all other earned tickets and choose a prize. There is a chain of stars around the school with the name of each weekly winner written on the star. The counselor keeps a tally of the total and displays all the tickets earned as well as the total on a clear container in the school lobby.

Materials needed: Yellow display papers for character themes, character themes for display in each room and all public areas, rolls of star tickets, star ticket boxes, large star pads for each classroom for weekly winner, copies of trait presentations or songs provided to each classroom for display use or to adapt to a lesson, Star Student certificates for entire year (31 per celebration), star student pencils, ribbons, plain star pads for wall display, two disposable cameras for each month, two trophies, 16-20 green banners with stars on wooden dowels, prizes, and clear ticket display bin. The teachers have accessed various songs from the Peacemaker Program.

Responsible individuals: School Climate Committee for Character Trait selection and ongoing evaluation of process, School Counselor, Individual Grade level teams and individual classroom teachers, Special Area Teachers, Parents, Community members for special prizes at monthly assemblies, Principal/Assistant Principal, and all staff for ticket distribution.

Community Support: There has been tremendous community support for our program. A parent who owns a local beauty salon offered free children’s haircuts for the monthly winners. McDonald’s and Chick fil-A have provided certificates and free ice cream coupons. A grandparent guardian who works for Raymond Geddes Co. had special computer mouse erasers made with our school rules printed on them.

Additional Components: There is an attendance piece to our program also. Our motto is “Here all day! I’m never late and I never leave early!” At the monthly assembly, each teacher reads the names of the students who have practiced this motto and they receive a Perfect Attendance Pencil. The staff members receiving this recognition are also mentioned, including cafeteria and custodial workers! It is important the students know we “walk the walk, and talk the talk”. The names of the students recognized are then posted on poster size paper and displayed in the main hallway of the school. Children in our school are really eager for this recognition and parents are always talking about how important it is for them to be recognized. It has become a school community effort.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: ABERDEEN HIGH SCHOOL

Address: 251 Paradise Road, Aberdeen, MD 21001
410-273-5500

Principal: Tom Szerensits

Title of Best Practices: Talented Tenth and Language Mentors

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Leadership, Citizenship, Community Service

Objective(s): To foster academic and social growth through a variety of programs.

Brief Description:

The Talented Tenth is a systematic approach to develop and foster the leadership opportunities, academic growth, and social involvement of the top 10% of minority students at each grade level. The Language Mentor program is the school community outreach program whereby honors students at AHS develop a mentoring relationship with elementary students from our feeder schools. Social skills, leadership skills, and attention to achievement are also emphasized. The Language Mentor program was recognized as the recipient of the “Good Neighbor Educational Group of the Year” by Harford County Office of Human Resources and the County Executive. Those two initiatives provide the impetus for accelerating and recognizing the achievement of our minority students and preparing for high school readiness on the part of our elementary feeder students.

Thirty-six students from Aberdeen High gave up their time to mentor **fifty-seven** students from area elementary schools. The focus was on distinguishing between casual and formal language. Oral and written language and reading were included. The high school students encouraged acceptable uses of the English language in a formal setting and fostered an awareness of when formal and casual language is appropriate.

Twenty high school students participated at **Halls Cross Roads** and 16 students participated at **George D. Lisby Elementary**. Students received training in the registers of language and the use of formal vs. casual language. The training was provided by Mrs. Vicki Stephens, Teacher Specialist for the Office of Equity and Cultural Diversity in Harford County Public Schools. The students were paired with a young protégé from the elementary schools. The students reflect a rich diversity in ethnicity, socioeconomic background, age and gender. The high school-aged language mentors modeled the use of formal language and provided their protégés with the opportunity to practice their language skills. Mentors and protégés formed relationships.

The first eleven sessions took place at the protégés’ school under the supervision of Mrs. Susan Sampson, Home Visitor and Mrs. Sara Morton, Making Progress Program Technician at George Lisby Elementary. Mrs. Stephens and Mrs. Sue Butler, Making Progress Technician at Halls Cross Roads, supervised the program at Halls Cross Roads.

The last session took place at the high school. **Fifty-seven students visited, toured, practiced language skills and were treated to ice cream in the high school cafeteria and given gifts from AHS.** Mrs. Diann, Stormer, Foreign Language Teacher at Aberdeen high School, coordinated the program along with Mrs. Vicki Stephens, Teacher Specialist, OECD at Halls Cross Roads and George D. Lisby Elementary Schools. The high school students received certificates of appreciation from Mr. Tom Szerentsits, Principal.

Strengthened neighbors, neighborhood and/or the community:

The volunteers were positive role models for the younger students. They demonstrated respect for education and a love for learning.

Supported under served individuals or groups in the community:

The Language Mentor High School students went weekly for 12 weeks to help Elementary Students from Halls Cross Roads and Lisby-Hillsdale with language skills. The students reflect a rich diversity in ethnicity, socioeconomic background, age and gender.

Improved community infrastructure:

The students built community partnerships in education and/or community planning. The bond established between mentor and protégés was priceless. The high school students looked forward to Thursdays as much as the elementary schools.

Community Bridge building:

The mentors created a better understanding and working relationships in the community. Age is often a category which can divide a community. Through the weekly interaction, all benefited in understanding a different generation.

Demonstrated unity and cooperation among diverse segments of the community:

The students created awareness and respect among diverse groups in the community.

The Aberdeen area schools are rich in diversity. Bringing three schools together and creating an opportunity to work with someone of a different heritage, social or economic background provided a valuable life experience for all.

Identification process: Elementary students were nominated by their teachers to participate in the program. Students targeted were those who needed help in distinguishing between casual and formal register and understanding when each is appropriate.

A checklist was completed by the teacher before the program started and again after the program ended. The checklists included a rating scale of 0-3:

0-never, 1-sometimes, 2-often, 3-always

Items rated and then addressed during the sessions included:

1. Using formal register orally
2. Using grade appropriate vocabulary
3. Writing grammatically correct sentences
4. Writing descriptive sentences
5. Making personal connections
6. Writing a five-sentence paragraph
7. Retelling a story sequentially

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CRADLEROCK SCHOOL

Address: 6700 Cradlerock Way Columbia, MD 21045
410-313-7601

Principal: Jason McCoy

Title of Best Practices: Character Counts At Cradlerock – The Alignment of Character Education, PBIS, and Developmental Assets

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Prepared, Respectful, Responsible, Safe

Objective(s): To align the Character Education program with the PBIS Initiative and the Developmental Assets by focusing on four school wide traits.

Brief Description:

As a Student Services Team, we decided that we needed to align our Character Education Program, our PBIS Program and the Developmental Assets. We felt that our students had too many words that they were learning. So, we decided to focus all of our programs around the idea that “At Cradlerock School We Will Be... Prepared, Respectful, Responsible, and Safe.” Our staff were given binders that had an overview of the program and lessons to choose from for each month/word. Every Friday, we have Character Counts at Cradlerock time, where the whole school stops and does the activity outlined for the week. On the last Friday of the month, grades have an assembly where the Character student of the month is recognized and activities for the month are shared in the form of plays, poems, posters, etc. With the alignment of all of our programs, we have been able to focus on the four school wide traits in order to make our students Prepared, Respectful, Responsible and Safe.

*“Character isn’t inherited. One builds it daily by the way one thinks and acts,
Thought by thought, action by action.”
Helen Gahagan Douglas*

Monthly Character Traits

September	Overview of all words through PBIS Lesson Plans
October	Prepared
November	Respectful
December	Responsible
January	Safe
February	Prepared
March	Respectful
April	Responsible
May	Safe

Schedule of Introducing & Reinforcing Traits

- Every Friday, we will have Character Counts at Cradlerock Time, below is a list of the weekly activities to do with your class. (Lower Grades will do Character Counts time immediately after announcements for 15 minutes; Upper Grades will do Character Counts time the first 15 minutes of Core or another designated class period)
 - Week 1:** Introduce Word; go over Character Poster, Discuss Sentence Starters, Review Word on Matrix, Choose the Homeroom or Class that will be in charge of the monthly assembly
 - Week 2:** Lesson or Activity related to word (choose one from the resource guide or create your own)
 - Week 3:** Student Letter Writing or Class Vote for Character Student(s) of the Month; prepare for the following week's Character Counts Assembly
(Nominations for Character Education Student of the Month for the Lower Grades will be 1 student per homeroom, for the Upper Grades will be 6 students per grade – Upper Grade nominations can be done during Homeroom, Core or any designated class period)
 - Week 4:** Character Counts at Cradlerock Assembly – the Homeroom or Class chosen during wee 1 will lead the assembly and then the Character Students of the Month will be announced and receive recognition.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: RESERVOIR HIGH SCHOOL

Address: 11550 Scaggsville Road, Fulton, MD 20759
410-888-8850

Principal: Dr. Adrienne Kaufman

Title of Best Practices: Advisory, Project CommUNITY, and Green School Status

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: The 40 Developmental Assets

Objective(s): Students and staff will develop assets, which help them become successful in all future endeavors.

Brief Description:

Advisory: A weekly 25-minute period during which adults develop assets in students.

Funding: Reservoir High School

Materials: Lesson Plans developed by a team of staff members (administrator, counselor and teacher)

Person Responsible: Assistant Principal

Evaluation: School Climate Survey Data

Our advisory program consists of a weekly 25-minute advisory class during which students engage in activities and discussion which lead to the development of assets. The advisory lesson plans are written by a team (assistant principal, counselor, and teacher/advisor) and distributed to all staff members prior to each advisory. Almost every staff member in the building has an advisory of approximately 15 students. The advisor remains with the students from 9th – 12th grade and facilitates the development of healthy relationships between and among students and advisor. Lessons revolve around the 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute) with a monthly concentration on one of the 8 internal/external asset categories. The categories include: 4 external assets-Support, Empowerment, Boundaries & Expectations, Constructive Use of Time and 4 internal assets-Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies, and Positive Identity. Within each category are specific assets such as caring school climate, youth as resources, service to others, positive peer influence, reading for pleasure, equality and social justice, honesty, responsibility, peaceful conflict resolution, sense of purpose, etc. Attached you will find some lesson plans written by the “advisory team”.

Project CommUNITY: A 1 to 3 day retreat (on and off campus)

Funding: Raytheon-Solypsis Corporation & Citizen’s National Bank, Reservoir H.S.

Materials: Funds to support the retreat, Facilitators, easel paper, markers, masking tape, music, team building activities, agenda, music, and other materials necessary to implement a variety of activities.

People Responsible: Teacher & Principal

Evaluation: Commitment Cards & School Climate Survey Data

Project CommUNITY began 5 years ago as a result of a negative redistricting process. As a principal, I raised funds to take 50 students and staff members on a retreat during which we worked with facilitators from the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Organization of Maryland (MACRO). MACRO supported the retreat with a \$15,000 grant as well. Students from different races, ethnicities, religions, cliques, and cultures were invited to attend. We engaged in frank and open dialogue about stereotyping, expectations, communication, and much more. The retreat was a huge success; therefore, we have continued to fund retreats for the last 5 years. Each year, we conduct an overnight in-school retreat in the fall and a three-day off campus retreat in the spring. This year, we added a 9th grade retreat in August. This was an extremely successful retreat where leadership skills and transitioning skills were developed among a select group of positive and negative 9th grade student leaders. Last weekend, I participated in our three-day Project CommUNITY retreat during which 57 students and teachers learned about the developmental assets and school culture. We hired facilitators from the Search Institute to conduct “Change of Heart” training with students who were selected, through an assets survey, by their peers. Representatives from different grade levels, genders, races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and cliques communicated on a variety of topics and at a deeper level than usual. The retreat was extremely successful. Attached you will find examples of some commitment cards written by students at the end of the retreat. This retreat was funded through Citizen’s National Bank who donated \$1500 and Raytheon-Solypsis Corporation who gave Reservoir \$13,500.

“Capturing Kids’ Hearts”: A three-day workshop for staff members

Materials: Worksheets & Books

Funding: Balfour, HCPSS, & RHS

Person Responsible: Principal

Evaluation: Seminar Evaluation & School Climate Survey Data

Over the last three years, approximately 15 staff members, including the principal, have been through the Flip Flippen’s workshop “Capturing Kids’ Hearts”. Since 2002, the staff has participated in “Developmental Assets” training as well. This year, all staff members participated in Flip Flippen’s “Building Champions” training on the first day of school and this summer 27 staff members will attend the “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” workshop. Through this workshop, staff members learn how to build productive student-teacher relationships, communicate effectively with students, and create a safe and nurturing learning environment in which all students feel safe and respected as individuals. In August, the staff will participate in another one day workshop entitled “Behave In/Behave Out.”

PBIS: A program which encourages positive social and responsible behaviors in students.

Materials: Funding for training, tangible rewards & incentives, visual displays, School incident report form and SWIS computer program

Funding: HCPSS & Reservoir High School

Person Responsible: Ninth Grade Team Leader

Evaluation: SWIS data collection & School Climate Survey Data

Over the last year, our ninth grade team members have been attending training sessions and workshop on PBIS. At the beginning of the year, the administrator and teachers had

to agree to support and participate in PBIS activities. Subsequently, the team identified the ninth grade team leader as the support coach and created the school's incident report form for the SWIS program. As a team, the staff defined behavioral expectations: Relationships + Habits + Support = Success. A letter went out to the community which explained the team's behavioral expectations and PBIS. The letter included the importance of teaching appropriate behavior by rewarding positive examples of behavior. A general rule is presented to the students, the rationale for the rule is discussed, positive examples are described and rehearsed, students are given the opportunity to practice the "right way" until they demonstrate fluent performance. After teaching students about the importance of demonstrating positive behaviors, the students need to be acknowledged on a regular basis. Reservoir designed a formal system for rewarding positive behaviors. After polling all ninth grade students, the team selected their top choices for rewards. Each student received a cut-out gator which fits into the students' agenda books. When teachers recognize positive behaviors, students will receive gator teeth for their cut-out gator. The students who receive a full set of gator teeth will have their names entered into a monthly drawing for various prizes, which the students voted on. The reward system was implemented during 4th quarter. The first drawing will be on June 14th.

Special First Day of School

Materials: First Day bell schedule & activities surrounding theme (see attached)

Funding: PTSA & Reservoir High School

People Responsible: Administrators, Counselors, & Staff

Evaluation: Written Evaluation & School Climate Survey Data

After attending a national conference through the Search Institute of Minneapolis, the Reservoir High School staff decided to implement a special first day of school. Students walk on a red carpet to enter school and they are greeted by applause and "welcome back" cheers from the faculty/staff. They go straight to advisory where the students engage in team-building activities. Each year, the school has an opening day theme, and the theme is discussed in each class period. This year, the theme was entitled "The 7 Reservoir R's: Be ready, be respectful, be responsible, be reachable, be resourceful, be reliable, and be resilient." During each of the 7 class periods, teachers conducted/facilitated activities around one particular "R." In the middle of the day, students attended an assembly with a motivational speaker, where they heard about the 7 R's. Finally, at the end of the day, students completed an evaluation form on which they wrote comments about the day and what they learned. By starting the school year with team-building activities, as well as a character education theme, the students transition back to school in a positive manner.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: ROCK HALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 5608 Boundary Avenue, Rock Hall, MD 21661
410-639-2265

Principal: Brenda J. Rose

Title of Best Practices: Winners Walk Tall, Character Counts! Kent County

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: CARING

Objective(s): To provide service-learning activities.

Brief Description:

The students learned about Iraq and the Iraq war. The students identified Iraq on a world map and learned about the geography. Then the students wrote letters, valentines and made handkerchiefs with prints of the Chesapeake Bay and the state of Maryland on them and mailed the packages to soldiers in Iraq. We also had one of the local soldiers we wrote to come to our school and meet the students. He shared some of his gear and uniform with us, and discussed what Iraq was like, and what it was like to be a soldier/helicopter pilot in Iraq.

In a separate Character Counts! activity, the students drew or wrote cards to the wounded soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Hospital.

We have a local 6th grade student, in Rock Hall suffering from leukemia. The students and staff wanted to help him and his family. We decided to conduct a "coins for Craig" program for two weeks. We discussed "Caring" and leukemia with the students. A few 4th graders organized milk cartons and plastic bags and sent one home to each of the 210 students in our school. The 4th graders collected the coins each day from the classrooms and a local volunteer wrapped all of the coins. We collected over \$1,000.00 in change, in two weeks.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: MARK TWAIN SCHOOL

Address: 14501 Avery Road Rockville, MD 20853
301-279-4900

Principal: Frances J. Irvin

Title of Best Practices: Voices To Empower (V2E) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Responsibility for Self, Respect for Self, Respect for Others and Others' Property

Objective(s): To establish and reinforce a school culture in which students learn and demonstrate self empowerment through recognition of self worth.

Students acquire social, communication, and problem-solving skills and strategies. Through mutual respect, students and staff address behaviors through proactive and non-threatening strategies. Students learn to monitor their behaviors in the school setting through personal documentation and self reflection. Students' positive behaviors are appropriately reinforced to increase the likelihood that pro-social behaviors are increased.

Brief Description:

Mark Twain is a separate special education day school serving secondary students throughout the Montgomery County Public Schools. Montgomery County borders Washington D.C. and is comprised of a population that is quite diverse in ethnic, socioeconomic, and ability levels.

Although Mark Twain students are diagnosed as having emotional disabilities and ninety-five percent of all students are or have been involved with the law, they achieve resiliency through developing character to achieve success and become productive members of society.

Two of Mark Twain School's "Best Practices" addressing teaching and reinforcing elements of character are addressed through Voices2Empowerment (V2E) and Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies (PBIS).

Through the Voices to Empower (V2E) program, students are introduced to life skills and a variety of activities which extend the scope of their personal experiences such as cooking, dancing, music recording, career exploration, travel, martial arts, and community service. Embedded in these activities are social skills and character education instruction along with consistent problem-solving skills.

The program is in partnership with the Mental Health Association through the direction of Jennifer Gauthier and Mark Twain staff, Maria Douglas and Ruth Sugars, includes the following programs and activities:

Through the Kitchen Door Culinary Arts Vocational Training:

A twelve-week program provides students culinary arts skills through experience and experimentation. Professional chefs, food preparation workers, and restaurant owners teach the class, model appropriate work-related behaviors, and award certificates at the end of the program.

Martial Arts:

Through Martial Arts students learn self-discipline, respect for self and others, and are taught to use strategies in a proactive way. The class is taught by a master martial arts expert who volunteers his time to assist students in mastering this art.

Soul Food Cooking:

Ethnic cooking focuses on respect for various menus and cooking techniques to help students acquire necessary survival skills. Students learn to enjoy healthful options within this cultural cooking method.

Hip-Hop Dance:

This program is taught by a professional dance instructor who focuses on the students' acquisition of skills through disciplined practice

HopLab Music Production:

This program is offered both on and off campus for students to explore the music industry and to understand the multiple layers of music production prior to release. The students create a music CD and video.

Core values, such as appropriate social behaviors in groups, problem-solving skills, relationship and communication skills are addressed through this V2E programs and activities.

Students are encouraged to "give back" through demonstrations of their new skills in community service projects within the school and at home.

The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at Mark Twain School is a whole-school philosophy in which students and staff proactively work to teach, shape, and help reinforce pro-social behaviors representing respect for self, others, and property.

Students' challenging behaviors are met with problem solving, brainstorming, and mediation in order to maximize students' time in class as opposed to detentions or suspensions. This program is operated under the direction of the Collaborative Action Research Teams and in collaboration with all staff and student members. PBIS is under the direction of staff members, Tracy Boddy, Kim Emswiler, and Rachel Turner.

This philosophy, embraced by the staff and students as well as the state of Maryland, provides opportunities for the development and recognition of students' respect for self, others, and property. The approach is based on positive strategies and recognition of "being caught doing something good." Additionally, the program includes the instruction of replacement behaviors for challenging times.

The Gotcha program permits students to earn and collect points for behaviors exhibiting good character. They may shop at the school store and become eligible to win additional rewards, as Starbucks, McDonalds, games, and gift certificates.

Students can also earn reinforcement opportunities including pancake breakfasts prepared and served by the staff. Physical activities such as basketball, swimming, table tennis, and games are offered. The school store provides opportunities to “spend” points on sports equipment, CDs, cosmetics, healthy snacks, toiletries, and gift items.

Staff and students are eternally optimistic that the PBIS program continues to achieve its goals to motivate and entice students toward more pro-social behavioral attributes of good character and academic achievement.

Additionally, through these two “Best Practices,” Mark Twain School students exhibit more pro-social behaviors and reduced serious incidents, reduced suspensions, and increased attendance.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: JOHN POOLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 17014 Tom Fox Rd
301-972-7980

Principal: Richard Bishop

Title of Best Practices: Blue Ribbon Week “Don’t Dis Our Differences”

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: RESPECT

Objective(s): Students will be able to display respectful actions by participating in a week of student initiated activities that are focused on bully prevention strategies.

The student pledge reads: “We agree to show respect to our friends, classmates, teachers and adults. To be more considerate of the feelings of those around us. To contribute to the positive environment of John Poole Middle School.” **RESPECT: Respect, Equally, So, People, Exercise, Caring & Trust.**

Brief Description:

Our school wide character program has several components including: monthly student awards, student character recognition "timberwolf treats", classroom lessons, bulletin boards and our Best practices: Blue Ribbon week .

Blue Ribbon Week was conceived by the JPMS Counseling Department Chair and was modeled after a similar idea for substance abuse prevention, Red Ribbon Week. Blue Ribbon Week (BRW) consists of a mixture of education, communication and creative fun activities. BRW was designed by the students in the Student Government Association (SGA), Guidance Advisory Committee (GAC) and Peer Allies. They created the theme, “Don’t Dis our Differences”, focus **RESPECT: Respect, Equally, So, People, Exercise, Caring & Trust**, and planned the activities for the week. In addition, several classes and student groups created videos to model ally strategies. Two of the videos won first and third place in a county media competition. The feedback from the students was to continue and expand this program. BRW was supported by the PTA, Staff and Community.

Activities included:

- Wearing of blue wristbands, as a sign of support for considerate behavior by everyone.
- Three Student videos produced by the TV production and the Creative Writing classes, modeling ally strategies
- Decoration of doors with pledge posters and bully prevention statements.
- Pledge posters (students signed a no teasing or harassment pledge for the week)
- Dress themes for each day (examples: “Hero Day” to focus on those personalities present and past who showed courage and stood up for their principles, “Wacky Hair Day” to demonstrate humorous differences yet portray tolerance for these differences.). Students were awarded prizes for participation.
- An all-school assembly presentation focusing on bully identification, effects and prevention.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: KENILWORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 12520 Kembridge Drive, Bowie, MD 20715
301-805-6600

Principal: Chris A. Mills

Title of Best Practices: “The Passport System”

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, and Peacefulness

Objective(s): Students must demonstrate the aforementioned traits in each of the following areas: classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, playground, special areas, and school bus/dismissal.

Brief Description:

At the start of the school year, each teacher is given a classroom set of Passports and a customized Kenilworth stamp. Students are given a few days to become familiar with the rules/procedures through writing, drawing, role-play, etc. The students are then encouraged to demonstrate good character, on a consistent basis, in each of the areas indicated on the Passport. Through observation, as well as feedback from other staff members (cafeteria staff, bus driver, administrators, P. E./Music teacher, etc.), teachers recognize students for being role models by stamping specific areas on the Passport. When students have all six areas stamped, they are sent to an administrator (Mr. Chris Mills, Principal and/or Ms. Cheryl Archer, Assistant Principal) to receive an official seal, as well as, a “certified letter” of recognition to take home to their parents. In addition, students who have earned their passports get to participate in special activities, and/or receive rewards throughout the school year. The names of Passport holders will also be displayed on a Peace Tree banner created by a high school student along with several Kenilworth students. Parents and teachers are also encouraged to communicate about Passport goals and consistently provide students with positive reinforcement? support in order to facilitate them earning their Passports.

We have also implemented a Peace Program. The students have a goal of 150 days of peace at Kenilworth. A “Peace Days” poster is displayed in the front lobby and a count of peaceful days is updated on a daily basis through afternoon announcements. Students have participated in milestone school wide celebrations at 50 and 100 days of peace. We are currently at 114 days of peace. Note: A peaceful day at Kenilworth is considered to be a day when there are no physical and/or verbal altercations.

Several other programs are in place at Kenilworth to support character education. Ms. Archer, the Assistant Principal, heads “Operation Respect”. This program is intended to nurture children’s emotional, social, and ethical development. The hope is that through this program, children will become sensitized to the hurtful effects of ridicule, name-calling, bullying, intolerance, and other forms of disrespect they encounter on a daily basis. Through their collaborative efforts) students come up with creative ways of banning together to rid their school environment of “unacceptable” behaviors and evolve the culture of their classroom/school so that it becomes more respectful, peaceful, and safe. A group of fifth grade students, referred to as

SWAT (Students Working As a Team) assists Ms. Archer with implementing school wide lessons. In addition, the SWAT and the “Gold Team” headed by Mrs. Ronyl Williams, our guidance counselor, plays an integral role in setting the tone of the school day by announcing our monthly themes and expectations for good character and by spearheading activities that promote peace. These two groups also keep track of number of Peace Days earned by the student population.

Mrs. Williams also established the “Dream Team”. She meets with this group of students on an ongoing basis and involves them in activities to support their social and emotional growth (ax. managing a canned food drive, etc.). The hope is that by supporting the social/emotional needs of these students, they will be more available to learn.

Additionally, she implements the Peer Mediation program to help students resolve their differences, and the Student of the Month program to celebrate success. Although we attempt to focus on the positive, we do understand that students are human, and will occasionally make mistakes. Therefore, a school wide discipline policy was also developed. The discipline policy is unique in that it requires teachers/staff to use a variety of Effective Management Strategies, such as, positive feedback and warnings to assist the students in maintaining appropriate behavior prior to giving a consequence. It also encourages communication with the parents prior to sending students to the office. At this time, we do not have hard date to support our efforts, however, the effects of these programs are extremely evident, There has been a significant drop in the number of students been sent to the office; staff and parents often comment on the improved atmosphere; and most importantly, students report that they are very happy here at Kenilworth.

The Kenilworth staff and students demonstrate that through teamwork communication, consistent expectations, and pos dive reinforcement, quality education can be provided in a calm, orderly environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: BUCK LODGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 2611 Buck Lodge RD. Adelphi, Md. 20783
301-431-6290

Principal: Dr. Constance Gibb

Title of Best Practices: Morning Program

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, Trust, Caring, Family

Objective(s): Students will listen to words of wisdom on the character virtue of the week everyday on the Morning Program and then complete a warm-up concerning that virtue in their journals.

Brief Description:

Every summer the character committee writes a warm-up for every day of the school year, based on the virtue of the week. During the morning program the virtue is discussed by Ms. Klein, and other teachers and students. The students have a journal to write their responses to the character warm-up of the day. The warm-up is then discussed by the class. The character virtue then becomes a part of the students vocabulary which is used throughout the day in other classes.

Below is a sample of two weeks worth of warm-up for the school year.

Virtue of the Week: Respect

Quote: "Treat other people the way you want to be treated."

Monday - No School Labor Day

Tuesday - 9/05/06

Define Self respect. Name three things that you do to show that you respect yourself and others.

Wednesday - 9/06/06

Using your knowledge of self-respect, explain how our self-respect influences your decision making. How does this relate to peer pressure?

Thursday - 9/07/06

Make a chart showing ways you respect your hygiene needs (such as showering using deodorant). Your physical health (such as nutrition and exercise), and emotional health,(such as fun and relaxation). Illustrate your chart.

Friday - 9/08/06

On a scale of 1-10, ten is the best, how would you rate your self respect? Select one area that you need to work on from the pervious days chart. Write a plan to make positive changes.

Virtue of the Week: Responsibility

Quote: "If you don't take responsibility for your life, others will."

Monday - 9/01/06

Identify three things that you are responsible for doing at home and three things you are responsible for at school.

Tuesday - 9/12/06

NO School

Wednesday - 9/13/06

Pretend you are the parent of a teenager. Prepare a list of responsibilities for your son or daughter.

Thursday - 9/14/06

Invent a machine that reminds teens to complete their responsibilities. Sketch and label your machine.

Friday - 9/15/06

What would it take to get to motivate you to be organized? How would you begin? Discuss with classmates and share ideas.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: THOMAS JOHNSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 5401 Barker Place, Lanham, MD 20706
301-918-8680

Principal: Ronald Curtis

Title of Best Practices: Community of Caring

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Five (5) core values, Caring, Trust, Family, Respect, and Responsibility

Objective(s): Students will be able to exhibit social and life skills necessary to become productive citizens in order to be successful in everyday life.

Brief Description:

- School wide Character Education Lesson (1/2 day activity) with PowerPoint lesson plan provided.
- Gender Assembly to introduce and discuss Community of Caring Core Values.
- PTA presentation of core values at Spring Concert.
- Staff development during faculty meetings to orient staff members of the core values.
- Student assembly to recognize the accomplishments and efforts of those students who have exhibited our core values. Examples are students turning lost items (money, books, etc.)
- Core Value of the Month over the morning announcements.
- “Character Hall” with the core values visible.
- Community of Caring core value lessons implemented in the Creative Arts classes, particularly in both 7th and 8th grade health classes.
- Thomas Johnson Middle School received Learning for Life 2006- 2007 Accreditation on May 22, 2007.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: SUDLERSVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 300 South Church Street, Sudlersville, MD 21668
(410) 438-3165

Principal: Dr. Lloyd W. Taylor

Title of Best Practices: Character Counts! Weekly Lesson

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Six Pillars of Character Counts!

Objective(s): To establish a strong foundation for students based on the six pillars found in Character Counts!

Brief Description:

Character Counts! coaches are assigned to specific grades and classes. They choose one of the pillars (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, or citizenship) and develop a fifteen minute lesson based on that character trait. Students are encouraged to thoughtfully review the pillar and discuss its implication in their daily school and home lives. In a subsequent lesson pupils are asked to review the relevant pillar and share how that character trait is applicable to them. Teachers are asked to follow-up with a discussion of the pillar and attendant examples of its application are embedded in their curriculum.

Sudlersville Elementary School's Character Education Program

- 1. The school implemented a systematic, school-wide approach to teaching and reinforcing elements of character such as caring, honesty, responsibility, citizenship etc.**

Evidence:

The parent/school coordinator, guidance counselor, Character Counts! coaches and classroom teachers all include character education as an embedded component in their daily instruction.

The school works in partnership with the county Character Counts! initiative and encourages and recruits Character Counts! coaches to work with classes and grades within the school. Training, materials and other assistance is provided by this county organization.

A number of individuals assist in the school as volunteers. In 2006 – 2007 over thirty people helped in classrooms promoting character education both explicitly and by example. All who volunteer at the school are required to attend training and must sign in at the front office upon entering the school. (1), (2)

Sudlersville Elementary school utilizes Character Coaches in grades 2 – 5. Coaches lead once a week. Their fifteen minute lessons in character development are based on the Character Counts! six pillars of character: Trustworthiness, Citizenship, Caring, Fairness,

Respect, and Responsibility. Times for the lessons are arranged with classroom teachers. In addition, a “Pillar of the Month” is highlighted and character banners are hung at the school’s main entrance. (3)

The counselor, classroom teachers and parent/school coordinator all maintain communication with the coaches and act as resources and support for the program which is integrated within the every day school curriculum.

Teachers and administrators support and encourage character education. In addition to the Character Counts! program, staff members spend considerable time encouraging students to be of good character and demonstrate those traits on a daily basis.

After each of the four marking periods, teachers nominate students within the class to receive character awards (based on the six pillars). In grades 3 – 5 students vote to recognize their colleagues who exhibit solid character. These students are then recognized by the principal and guidance counselor for their work and receive certificates and stickers for their efforts.(4), (5).

During daily announcements carried over the school intercom, references are made to students who demonstrate good character in general and as well as those who are specifically “caught” showing good character.

3. The school implemented a character program in conjunction with parents and guardians to achieve teaching and reinforcement of character in both home and school.

Evidence:

- A. Students are recognized each quarter at grade-wide recognition assemblies in which the pillars of character are highlighted. Those students who exemplify the pillars are presented with certificates. (5) Parents are invited to attend. (6) The PTA provides the certificates.
- B. Students whose actions demonstrate good character are recognized during the morning announcements. In addition within the context of their classrooms, teachers are quick to praise students for showing good character.
- C. Character Counts! coaches meet with classes and share with students the importance of demonstrating good character. Students in several classes have put together “Character Counts! ladders” to help remind them of the six pillars and their importance.
- D. The guidance counselor works with classes in a bi-weekly basis with a specific emphasis on character education. He also counsels with individual students and stresses the importance demonstrating good character. (7)

4. The school implemented a noteworthy program of student service learning to the school and/or community.

- A. Each year the Sudlersville Elementary School conducts two food drives linked to the “Caring Pillar.” These drives are coordinated with a local church and Lions’ Club whose members distribute holiday food baskets to needy residents in the Sudlersville area. (8), (9)
- B. A “penny drive” was undertaken by Sudlersville Elementary School students in all grades for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. This drive was sponsored by teachers in the school and the PTA and raised over \$800. Donations were forwarded to the American Red Cross for distribution to hurricane victims in Mississippi and Louisiana. (10) A similar drive was undertaken for victims of Asian Tsunami.
- C. Unclaimed Lost and Found items were cleaned by local families and sent to an Indian reservation in the Southwest.
- D. As part of a character education initiative, classes in both the second and fourth grade collected items for soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. These “care baskets” were sent to the Mid-East war zone via the U.S. Military Mail. (11, 12)
- E. Several classes, as part of their character education lessons were schooled in using proper table manners. They (and in some cases their parents) then visited restaurants and put their new found manners to work. In addition, classes are recognized for using proper manners by being treated to lunch in the school cafeteria. They were served at a table with flatware, tablecloths and china.
- F. A fifth grade class wrote and had published a hardback book, *The Stranger Who Taught a Lesson; Experiencing Character Education*. (13) This book was used as a learning tool both in the fifth grade and also via fifth grade students reading and discussing it with younger students.

5. The school has demonstrated significant gains in student achievement and/or school climate that can be attributed to the implementation of character education programming.

Sudlersville Elementary School has implemented character education (specifically Character Counts!) since 2001 – 2002. While it cannot be specifically tied to character education per se, since that time to the present assessment scores as a school, for each grade, and for each subgroup have risen significantly. From 2001 when SES scores were the lowest in the county in each grade and for most subgroups, scores have, for most grades and subgroups, risen to the mid-range when compared to other county elementary schools. The school met AYP as did each subgroup in 2006. The third grade reading scores were among the highest in the system that year. There can be no doubt that character education has contributed to student achievement as it serves to create not only a positive framework and school climate but also a “common language” that serves to promote high expectations the encourages student learning.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CARTER G. WOODSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 281-A Woodson School Road Crisfield, MD 21817
410-968-1295

Principal: Deborah Dean

Title of Best Practices: Core Essential Virtues of the Month

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Honesty, Leadership, Self-discipline, Courtesy, etc.

Objective(s): To identify and demonstrate how the virtues will make each student a better citizen and our school a better place.

Brief Description:

Each month a different virtue is studied in Character Education class. Students learn the definition of the word and examine through literature, discussions, and activities what the virtue looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The Chick-Fil-A company provides the monthly words we use as well as the corresponding color sheets, quotations to be discussed, a list of stories to be shared, and appropriate activities to be completed by the students. The numerous ideas are broken down by grade level so that the students can get a better understanding of how they can recognize and demonstrate each of the core essential virtues. For example, when we were working on the virtue of courtesy the primary students had little “tea parties” in class so that they could practice good table manners while the older students discussed the use of manners and designed billboard posters to place around the building as a way of advertising the use of good manners and showing courtesy to each other.

The needed materials for the activities are listed in the program’s curriculum guide and usually do not require a great deal of expense or extended preparation time for the teacher.

As a way of including all staff members in this effort, posters with the monthly virtue word are distributed and posted throughout the school. At least twice a week students make presentations on the morning announcements explaining the virtue word and how it connects to being a person of character. Students are then rewarded with our school-wide token “sand dollar” when they are caught demonstrating the virtue. Tokens are spent toward books, school supplies, games, toys, lunch with the principal, etc.

Woodson Elementary School has implemented a systemic, school-wide approach to teaching and reinforcing the elements and virtues of character. These elements are evident in the morning announcements, the posters displayed throughout the school, and the character education specials class known as Pride. Students have the character virtues on a daily basis as well as a weekly basis for the character class.

During morning announcements there is a special presentation given by “Dr. WOW.” The WOW stands for Words of Wisdom and these daily announcements give students something to think about as they make their choices throughout the day as well as their life. Each announcement closes with these familiar words, “Make it a great day . . . or not. The choice is yours.”

Each month there is a theme that is focused on in Pride class as well as one or two virtue words such as responsibility, caring, honesty, generosity, etc. Respect is always referred to as we pride ourselves on being a Golden Rule School – we strive to treat others the way we want to be treated. Copies of the words of the month are displayed in every classroom as well as on the walls in the halls. Students are encouraged by staff to consider these words in their daily living.

To encourage leadership as a virtue, several of our 5th graders were chosen as Safety Patrols. They help monitor the halls before and after school as well as helping in the primary classrooms as needed. We have 5th graders who help our Pre-Kindergarten students get to the buses safely and earlier in the year we had 5th graders helping out in the first grade classrooms with the breakfast program. This spring our 5th graders planted flowers and painted the flower boxes to help beautify the city of Crisfield. Their efforts were applauded by the Chamber of Commerce and pictured in the weekly newspaper.

Woodson has qualified as an exemplar PBIS School (Positive Behavior Intervention & Support) and is waiting for an on-site visit to receive its final score. Respect, responsibility, and being ready to learn is encouraged and rewarded with a small certificate called a “Sand Dollar.” Students save the sand dollars and have an opportunity to use these rewards to shop at a “store” for items such as: pencils, books, school supplies, chance to eat lunch with the principal, an opportunity to eat lunch or visit at recess with staff members, as well as other fun trinkets.

Over ten thousand sand dollars have been spent so far this year by the students.

Woodson Elementary School has made great strides in bringing two different staffs together as one family. As a staff we model the virtues of character as we come together as grade level teams, cross-grade families, and as an entire staff being there for each other in time of need. When two of our students and one of our staff members suffered devastating fires, we were quick to organize clothing drives and collect monies to help get them through the tough time.

We have social gatherings so we can get to know each other better and strive to be the positive adults in the building for the students.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: DYNARD ELEMENTARY

Address: 23510 Bushwood Road, Chaptico, Md. 20621
301-769-4804

Principal: Kim Summers

Title of Best Practices: Academic, Character and Attendance House Program

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Respect, Caring, Responsibility, Fairness, Trustworthiness, & Citizenship

Objective(s): To help students build “Pride Inside” while improving student achievement, character and attendance.

Brief Description: As a school, we want to increase student achievement and to build “Pride Inside” for the community of learners at Dynard Elementary. We believe the three areas of focus should be academics, character/behavior and attendance. Although we have a strong curriculum, character education, interventions and support programs in place for students to succeed, we wanted to add motivation for students to want to succeed. Our goal was to make this program fun, build cohesion and improve school climate. Therefore, last school year we developed a school wide House Points Program in which all students in K-5 participate (approx 420 students).

Academically we set goals for classes to achieve through individual achievements and assessments. Additionally, teachers felt homework completion needed improvement in order to help students to become more successful.

Behaviorally we integrated the existing Character Education program into the House Points Program. We continued with the focus and education on Respect, Caring, Responsibility, Trustworthiness and Fairness and set high behavioral goals for all of our students to become great citizens.

Daily **attendance** at Dynard was becoming an issue as we were just falling short of meeting our AYP goal. We know students need to be here and on time in order to learn; therefore we see this as an important component to our program.

Program Description:

Classes are placed in one of four house teams throughout the school year (Falcons, Knights, Lions, or Vikings). Each team has 5 different grades working together. Additionally, students have the ability to individually, as a class and as a team to earn points towards weekly and quarterly rewards.

Earning Points:

Academics:

- Homework Completion
- Math assessments (class average of 80%)
- Writing assessments (70% of the class has the highest rubric score)
- Other assessments (class average of 80%)

Character/Behavior:

- No referrals to the Behavior Management Center
- No Bus referrals
- Good class cafeteria behavior
- Good Bus Citizen
- Star Class of the week for Specialists (art, music, PE, media)

Attendance:

- 100% class attendance for the week
- 95% class attendance for the week
- No tardiness (per class) for the week
- Students with perfect monthly attendance.

Houses earn rewards weekly & quarterly:

- The house with the highest points **weekly** earns an extra recess of 15 minutes the following week. Time to be determined by classroom teacher.
- The house with the highest points each Quarter earns a House Celebration.

Data:

- Data is recorded weekly by the classroom teacher and school counselor on the class point sheets. House point sheets are collected by Monday morning of each week. Ms. Coyne will tally the results and make an announcement on Monday's with the results.
- Weekly attendance & homework data is graphed and displayed on a bulletin board for students to review.
- Total house pointed are graphed and displayed for students to review.

Measurable Goals:

Academics:

- To meet/exceed AYP on MSA in all areas and groups.
- Homework completion of 94% or better.

Character/Behavior:

- To reduce referrals to the Behavior Management Center by 25% or more. (2006 – 63)
- To Reduce Bus Referrals by 25% (2006 -- 101)

Attendance:

- To meet/exceed AYP goal of 95 %

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: TILGHMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 21374 Foster Avenue, Tilghman MD 21671
410-886-2391

Principal: Joyce Crow

Title of Best Practices: Practicing the Six Pillars of Character

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Six Pillars of Character – Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, Citizenship

Objective(s): Infusing good character practices in all aspects of the school day and into the community.

Brief Description:

Tilghman Elementary School believes that character education is a vital ingredient for the success of young people in today's society. Staff and students use the common language of the Six Pillars of Character.

Every morning a character message is delivered over the school announcements by a student. All classrooms have a trained volunteer known as a Character Coach that brings a positive character lesson, story or activity that reflects on the Pillar of the Month. Grades K and 1 receives a visit every other week and Grades 2 to 6 receives weekly visits. There are four 6th grade students serving as Character Coaches for Kindergarten and First Grades. This not only provides character based service learning for the students but it also places them in the role of "positive example to follow". By teaching the Six Pillars to younger students, this opportunity brings the responsibility of living these values to a greater extent.

Sixth grade students participate in the Laws of Life Essay Contest which is an annual event sponsored by Character Counts Mid Shore, Inc. Students write essays based on their personal knowledge of one or more of the Six Pillars of Character, how they learned this lesson and how they apply it into their daily lives.

This school clearly demonstrates the Six Pillars of Character by printing character messages in the school newsletter that goes home with every student. Character Counts agenda books are used for recording daily homework assignments, upcoming projects and activities and also doubles as a communication tool for teachers and parents.

Six Pillar awareness posters are present in every classroom for continuous support for the teacher and the Character Coach.

In April 2007, the entire school participated in the National Anthem Project where 5th and 6th grade students shared their poems honoring our flag. The ceremony included parents and representatives from the local fire department.

Character Counts T-shirt day will be celebrated in June 2007. All students and staff will wear their Character Counts shirts to visibly show support for practicing good character.

Grades 2 to 6 will be performing at the Character Counts Annual Appreciation Celebration in late May to showcase their character beliefs through songs.

Tilghman Elementary is very active in school and community based projects such as “Just for Girls” which is an after school program based on abstinence and ways to develop good character; canned food drive for Harvest for the Hungry; Daffodil Days for the American Cancer Society; Math-a-thon for St. Jude’s; Pennies for Leukemia; collecting money for Habit for Humanity; planting flowers and trees to spruce up Back Creek Park; “Hoops for Heart” (American Heart Association); physical education book reading project; created Christmas cards for the local fire department volunteers and a military battalion overseas; older students helping young ones after school with homework; and collecting cleaning supplies for Hospice. In addition, the students created posters and provided snacks for voters on Election Day and participates in many community events such as Bingo, talent shows and potluck dinners.

The school’s Media Center, which also serves as the community library, displays a “Character Corner” which highlights character based books for students to read.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: OLD FORGE ELEMENTARY

Address: 21615 Old Forge Road, Hagerstown, MD 21742
301-766-8273

Principal: John Festerman

Title of Best Practices: Character Counts at OFE!

Objective(s): “Being an Usually Good Student (BUGS)” is to promote a positive environment where students are able to Believe, Achieve, and Succeed.

Activities:

- * The students at Old Forge Elementary use the Character Counts School Agenda as their homework planner.
- * On the morning announcements, a character counts tip of the day is announced which students demonstrate or practice a different character trait.
For example: “The character counts tip of the day is, give someone a compliment.”
- * In addition to the character tip of the day, a PRIDE note is also announced.
For example: “If you see paper or paper towels in the hallway or bathroom, please pick it up it is your school, help keep it clean.”
- * “Being Unusually Good Student (BUG)” is one way we acknowledge students who are displaying a character trait. Teachers, encore teachers, support staff, and administrators can write “BUG.” The “BUGS” are announced on the morning announcements. All of the “BUGS” are displayed on the bulletin board in the front hallway. The principal calls the parents/guardians to let them know that their son/daughter has received a BUG! (see samples)
- * Each month the “BUGS” and Golden Table winners are listed in the school newsletter.
- * Each month there is a Golden Table for students who are acknowledge for showing one of the character traits from the pillar. Students get to sit up on the stage in the cafeteria. There is a golden table cloth where students eat lunch and play educational games. Parent volunteers and the guidance counselor help out with this activity. Students are given a certificate, an Old Forge bumper sticker, and can pick out of the principal’s treasure box. The students have their picture taken and it is displayed on the bulletin board in the front hallway called Character Counts at OFE. Also, they are announced on the morning announcements.

- * Students participate in community service projects. A designated organization is picked for the students. (see attached list of activities)
- * The guidance counselor created friendship groups to work on building relationships with friends. The groups meet a weekly basis and practices the character trait pillars.

Schedule of Activities:

- On the first day of school, all students are given the Character Counts agenda to be used as a daily homework planner.
- During the week of October 23- October 27th, the students participate in **Red Ribbon** Spirit Week. For the 2006-2007 school year, the theme was “Let’s Rule Out Drugs.” Each classroom received a red poster paper that looked like a ruler. While students were signing the ruler, the teacher talked about the importance of being drug free. All of the rulers were hung in the cafeteria.
 - Monday: Give Drugs the Slip Day! (wear your slippers)
 - Tuesday: Shade Out Drugs! (wear your sunglasses)
 - Wednesday: Red Day! (wear your red)
 - Thursday: Living Drug Free is No Sweat! (wear your sweats)
 - Friday: Team Up Against Drugs! (wear your favorite team apparel)
- Community Service Projects:
 - -November—**Salvation Army Food Drive**
 - -November/December—**Coins for Caring (collected for victim of accidental fire, three students who were in a car accident, and two students who lost their father)**
Caring-Sharing Tree for Children In Need
 - -February—**Jump Rope for Heart**
 - -April/May— **Recycling Soda/Juice Cans**
Student Council Bake Sale
Cheesecake Raffle (students who were in car accident and a student who has leukemia)
- At the end of the month a Golden Table is held for nominees who displayed the character traits of the Character Counts Pillar.
- Daily morning announcements of “Being an Usually Good Student (BUGS).”
- At the end of the month students who received BUGS get a certificate and a lollipop.

Outcomes:

- Students learn the six pillars of Character Counts. (Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trustworthy, Citizenship, and Fairness)
- Students are reminded of the traits daily through a pride note and a Character Counts tip of the day.
- By implementing a character education program, students are expected to use good manners, be kind to others, take pride in the school, and be a good citizen.
- Students who usually do not get positive recognition will be reached through the BUGS program. It will allow students to receive positive reinforcement, attention, and continue to improve behavior.
- During the 2006-2007 school year, one student was suspended.

Materials:

- Certificate
- Ribbon of Awards
- Bulletin Board Decorations
- Paw Print Erasers
- Principal Loves Me Stickers
- Principal Praise Stickers
- Stickers
- Squishy Balls/Spike Balls
- Power Bracelets
- Positive Sayings Bracelets
- Game Assortment
- Toy Assortment
- Bumper Stickers
- Paw Print Erasers
- All-Star Students

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CLEAR SPRING HIGH

Address: 12630 Broadfording Road, Clear Spring, MD 21722
301-766-8082

Principal: Michael Shockey

Title of Best Practices: “Pursuing Victory with Honor” - Sportsmanship

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Responsibility, Respect, Fairness

Objective(s): To promote excellent sportsmanship in our student athletes which will in turn influence and direct the attitudes/behavior of other students, teams and spectators at athletic events and carry through the climate of our entire school.

Brief Description:

Persons responsible: Athletic Director Lisa Shives, Principal Michael Shockey, All Coaches.

Materials: 2 student trophies, engraving on school plaque

“Pursuing Victory with Honor” award is one of the most prestigious school awards at Clear Spring High School. This honor is bestowed upon one female athlete and one male athlete. The students are honored at a banquet and are each presented with a trophy. Their names are added to the “Pursuing Victory with Honor” plaque that is always on display in the trophy cabinet in the front entrance of CSHS.

At the beginning of each sports season, the Athletic Director and principal meet with all coaches and teams to share the school’s expectations of student athletes and coaches emphasizing the components of “Pursuing Victory with Honor.”

During the school year coaches, the athletic director, and the principal are looking for those student athletes that are exemplary on the field or court and also during the school day. These students accept responsibility for their actions and realize that they are a role model for other students, both at CSHS and at opposing schools. They demonstrate respect for all individuals, both athletes and non-athletes, Blazers or opponents. They know what the rules are, and play by the rules, not taking advantage of other people. Not only do they win graciously, they also know how to maintain their dignity upon losing. They carry this attitude with them wherever they go. It’s a code of ethics that they live by.

Our plan is to expand this program in the 2007-2008 school year to the students and fans who support our athletes at events. Each month, September through May, nominations of students, athletes, or fans, which have been observed exhibiting great sportsmanship, will be given to our Athletic Director. One name will be drawn to receive the honor of Outstanding Character Student of the Month and will receive a \$25.00 gift certificate to Borders. Their picture and a description of why he/she was nominated will be displayed in the sports’ program booklets. An announcement of the student and his/her example of sportsmanship will be made over the school’s morning announcements. Pictures of each month’s selection and descriptions of the character shown will be printed and hung on a wall of character.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: DELMAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Address: 811 South Second Street, Delmar, Maryland 21875
(410) 677-5178

Principal: Chris Nunzio

Title of Best Practices: PAWS

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Prepared, Always Respectful, Willingly Responsible, Safe

Objective(s): Students will Demonstrate Knowledge of Character Traits through classroom character activities and observable daily behavior

Brief Description:

We are a PBIS exemplar school and are being recognized for the second year based on the implementation of the PAWS program. PBIS includes rewarding positive student behavior, attendance and academic skills. Through the use of PAWS cards, and pogs, students receive incentives from the VIB's, PAWS stubs, and Pogs. They are also recognized, with parents present, at a quarterly Honor Day Assembly, where they receive certificates and dog tags for positive growth in academics, attendance, and behavior.

Primary students learned values and rules to follow by stating and explaining the PAWS code. The school counselor visited each classroom on a weekly basis to present the values and character traits they should be following. The students viewed the film series "Know the Code at School" to learn and understand the steps needed to develop positive social behavior, as well as how it helps them in all academic areas. Topics include responsibility, friendship and social skills, helping others, and compromise.

Intermediate students continue with the values associated with PAWS with their School counselor, on a weekly basis by and using the specific county calendar of character traits. These were explained by viewing videos, participating in character activities, class discussion, and demonstrating positive values throughout the school. In addition, students began the school year visiting the Wicomico County ROPES course, where they grew in self esteem and team building skills, while learning the values needed to be successful in school.

Monthly character lessons were provided to each teacher by the PBIS committee to help all teachers provide the positive values needed to make Delmar Elementary truly a PBIS exemplary school.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: WILLARDS ELEMENTARY

Address: 36161 Richland Road, Willards, MD 21874
410-677-5819

Principal: Regina Rando

Title of Best Practices: Dolphin Good Character Club

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Responsibility, Courtesy, Self-Discipline, Responsible Citizenship, Fairness, Compassion, Honesty, Respect, Perseverance

Objective(s): To create a school wide environment based on a foundation of character education. Our total school population, including students, staff and faculty, will model and reinforce positive character traits daily. We will reduce behavior problems, improve student achievement, and support developing social skills.

Materials:

Monthly grade level classroom lesson plans, Character Education music, Puppets, Literature selections, Unitedstreaming videos, Daily morning announcements, Monthly school newsletter column, Monthly character awards, Camera, Character trait pencils, Random Character awards, Classroom Posters

Persons Responsible: Guidance Counselor, Administration, Staff and Faculty

Activities:

- **Class Instruction** – Character education is integrated throughout the day, including special area classes. The counselor schedules and teaches monthly classroom lessons for approximately 30 minutes. The counselor also provides classroom teachers with supplemental materials to support the character trait of the month. Unitedstreaming videos related to each character trait are available for teachers to access.
- **Guidance Program** – The counselor organizes a number of friendship groups at each grade level to support character development based on teacher referrals. These groups meet once a week and target different character traits.
- **Discipline Plan** – Our character education plan goes hand in hand with our discipline plan. As a result, our data shows a significant decrease in the number of office referrals.
- **Daily Character Announcements** – To reinforce the focused character trait, the counselor prepares announcements to be read each morning. These announcements provide students with examples of how to display the featured character trait.
- **School Newspaper** – The counselor submits a column for the Dolphin Press stating the character trait for the month, as well as information on how parents could reinforce the trait at home. Monthly character award winners are also listed in the column.

- **Monthly Character Awards** – Each teacher has the opportunity to nominate two or more students to receive the “Dolphin Good Character Club” award at the end of each month. Teachers nominate students who have exhibited great examples of the featured character trait. Winners are announced on the morning announcements. Students meet the counselor to receive their certificate and character pencil. They also have their picture taken to be displayed on our character bulletin board.
- **Random Character Awards** – All faculty and staff have the opportunity to recognize students and other staff for exhibiting the character trait of the month. Faculty and staff receive “Caught being.....” awards to be used anytime throughout the day. Names of students, as well as adults, caught being responsible, courteous, etc. are read on the morning announcements. These awards are displayed in the main hallway for all visitors to see.
- **Classroom Posters** – Each teacher received laminated character trait posters. The posters provide a definition and examples of the character trait. Posters are displayed throughout the year.
- **Cultural Study** – Each year, students have the opportunity to explore another culture through art integrated activities. Students develop an appreciation and respect for different cultures. Character education is incorporated into the cultural study through literature selections, drama, music, etc.
- **Have a Heart for Homeless** – School supplies are collected for homeless children in our community during our Have a Heart campaign. During the month of February, students have the opportunity to demonstrate the featured character trait, compassion, by participating in this campaign.
- **Giving Tree** – Students participate in collecting hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, etc. for our “Giving Tree”. These items are given to students and families in need at our school. This event takes place during the month of December in conjunction with our character trait, responsible citizenship.
- **Food Drive** – Nonperishable items are collected for the Food Bank of Maryland during our Canned Food Drive. Our students demonstrate compassion for families in need of food during the month of November.
- **Pennies for Pasta** – Students participate in the Pennies for Pasta program for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Each classroom competes to win a pasta party at The Olive Garden.
- **Humane Society** – Items were collected and donated to the Humane Society to help with basic animal needs. Students show compassion for animals just as they do for people in our community.

Outcomes:

- **Survey** – Teachers anonymously rate various components of the program and provide feedback on the Dolphin Good Character Club Program at the end of each year. Survey results identify areas needing improvement for the following year.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: CEDAR CHAPEL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Address: 510 Coulbourne Lane, Snow Hill, MD 21863
410-632-5230

Principal: Rae Record

Title of Best Practices: PAW Program

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible

Objective(s): CCSS students will maintain a safe and caring environment by following CCSS's school-wide rules: Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible.

Description:

Although CCSS has consistently addressed behavior and character development for all students through the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, CCSS began a school-wide, systematic approach to character development through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Program. After attending a PBIS conference during the summer of 2006, the team also visited another school much like CCSS (Forbush School, Towson, MD) in order to observe how the program could be implemented for students with moderate and severe disabilities. The team then modified the PBIS System to meet student needs, which included three school-wide rules, a corresponding Teaching Matrix, a primary Reward System (PAWS), a global Reward System (PAW Print Bulletin Board) and a PBIS Brochure. The newly designed PAW Program was presented to the Strategic Planning Team (SPT) and the School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) where it met initial approval. Then the plan was presented to the entire staff for final approval. During the opening of the 2006-2007 school year, staff agreed to implement the PAW Program as follows:

As students are "caught" following the school-wide rules:

- Students are reinforced for their positive behavior with a CCSS PAW Reward as well as a verbal recognition for their hard work. (Staff also uses a Teaching Matrix to explain and visually describe the positive behavior.)
- PAWS are collected and names are drawn weekly.
- The weekly PAW winner receives a prize and their photo posted on the "PAW PRINTS" bulletin board. The more students earn, the more opportunities they have to win.
- Staff will continually teach and model the behaviors on the Teaching Matrix in order to facilitate school-wide participation in PBIS.

Because CCSS prepares students with moderate and severe disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21 to be included in regular schools, gainfully employed and self-sufficient in the home and community it was imperative for staff to agree to a standardized Teaching Matrix. Creating a program that incorporated a *universal design* (using words and pictures, making the concepts visual and concrete) and would be accessible to ALL students was very important to the staff and remained consistent with the CCSS Mission.

As students began receiving PAWS for positive reinforcement, staff noticed an increase in positive behaviors. Nearly 100% of CCSS teachers immediately recognized the power of the PAW. Students were motivated to do their very best just to receive acknowledgement for following the rules and a simple piece of paper stating their success. As staff continues to positively praise and motivate students, the program continues to evolve. Students that struggle to understand the concepts of the Teaching Matrix are provided with individual systems that are customized with corresponding motivators.

Students following the school-wide rules are obviously demonstrating positive character traits. However, when staff begins to observe students truly internalizing the meaning of each rule, students are building character far beyond initial expectations. Teachers are reporting that students are now recognizing when others are following the rules and are making staff aware of the need for a PAW. One teacher has implemented a writing center where individual students may write their own PAWS for their classmates as well as friends and staff throughout the school. These students are not only recognizing the criteria for a reward but are also learning how to articulate their ideas in a meaningful format. Other teachers are reporting that students are going above and beyond to be good citizens whether they receive a PAW or not. Although students are elated to add a PAW to their pile, they are also finding reward in the simple deed of being respectful by being a good friend or helping a classmate.

Teachers and staff have created various social stories and activities to help students learn each aspect of the Teaching Matrix and therefore build character. The PBIS Team plans to meet during a summer work session to gather and organize the social stories and activities into a Resource Box corresponding to the Teaching Matrix. The team hopes to help staff by making numerous resources available as teaching tools and/or examples to modify. Although teachers are motivated by student success, making the implementation process for positive behavior lessons easier, will in the opinion of the PBIS Team, facilitate the momentum and longevity of the PAW Program.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: **KRIEGER SCHECHTER DAY SCHOOL**

Address: 8100 Stevenson Rd., Baltimore, MD 21208
410-486-8640

Principal: Dr. Paul Schneider

Title of Best Practices: Derech Eretz, Respectful Behavior Program

Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized: Self-Respect and Respect for Others

Objective(s): To teach the students that everyone is created in the Image of God and deserving of appropriate conduct and appropriate treatment

Description:

Our lower school Psychologist works with every class on character development. She has developed a formal education program for each grade level and works with grades K-3 twice a year and once a month in grade 4. The basic aim is to guide the students to develop a healthy sense of self-respect and respect for others, and the goal is accomplished through discussions, role playing, showing videos and reading stories. In addition, the lower school psychologist also leads a program called “lunch bunch”. This is a 7-week program for grade 3 students who act out “situations” and learn to work together as a social/community group.

Grade 4 has a unit on “middot” (standards of behavior) and the students present a three – act play highlighting three behavior values taken from the “Teachings of Our Fathers”: Giving Charity in Secret; Knowledge (of Torah) is the Best Merchandise; It is Not Incumbent Upon Each of Us to Finish the Task, But We Must Participate in Making the World a Better Place. The children teach these important lessons using their acting, singing and dancing skills.