



The Maryland Center for
Character Education *at*
Stevenson University



MCCE@SU

Volume 5, Issue 8
December 2011



**Best Character Education Practices
For the School Year 2009-2010
found on our website at www.mdctrcharacter.org**

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- January -- Baltimore Co.— Kenwood High**
- February— Allegany Co.— West Side Elementary**
- March— Caroline Co.— North Caroline High**
- April— St. Mary's Co.— Leonardtown Elementary**
- May— Wicomico Co. — Westside Primary School**
- June— Frederick Co.— Oakdale Middle**
- July— Harford Co.— Joppatowne Elementary**
- August— Howard Co.— Laurel Woods Elementary**
- September— Talbot Co.— Easton High**
- October— Prince George's Co.— The Children's Guild,
Chillum Campus**

**Best Practices for the Month of December:
Congratulations: Fountain Green Elementary**

Best Practices for the Month of December:

Fountain Green Elementary
517 Fountain Green Road
Bel Air, MD 21015

Principal: Stacey Gerringer—stacey.gerringer@hcps.org

Click on the following link to review the selected "Best Practice"

<http://www.mdctrcharacter.org/best%20practices.shtml>



Best Practice for the Month of December Fountain Green Elementary, Harford, MD

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: Fountain Green Elementary



Award Recognition

Display Exhibit

Primary Principles

Emphasized: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8

Objective: Students will demonstrate acceptance and tolerance, which will promote a bully-free environment.

Our school slogan, “Together we will SOAR!” is an indicator that all students, faculty and staff work together everyday to carry out the character education initiative at Fountain Green Elementary school.

Mission Statement:

We will work together in a positive, flexible manner focusing on the whole child in a safe, engaging and inclusive environment.

Vision Statement:

Together, we will think, learn and achieve.

Slogan:

Together, we will SOAR!

For more information on Fountain Green Elementary, Best Character Education Practices go to December—Best Practices: <http://www.mdctrcharacter.org/best%20practices.shtml>

**Maryland Center for Character Education at Stevenson University
2010—2011 School System of the Year
St. Mary's County Public Schools
Leonardtown, Maryland**

System Representative: Rhonda L. Harris, Supervisor of School Counseling

Primary Principles Emphasized: 1-11

Mission: Know the learner and the learning, expecting excellence in both. Accept no excuses, educating all with rigor, relevance, respect, and positive relationships.

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) is made up of 25 schools with a population of 17,271 students. We are a diverse group with 70 % being of Caucasian ethnicity, 19% African American ethnicity, 4% Hispanic ethnicity, and 3% Asian ethnicity. Twenty nine percent of our student population participates in the Free and Reduced Meals program.

SMCPS has implemented a character education program since 2003 during which time several of our schools have received the Maryland Center for Character Education (MCCE) award with one school, Dynard Elementary, having received the Character Education Partnership (CEP) award at the National level.

It is the goal of SMCPS to educate and reinforce character traits that will help our students become productive, caring citizens who are able to interact easily and confidently with people on all economic and social levels in an increasingly diverse society. We promote a partnership between teachers, administrators, and parents that emphasizes character development at the individual, group, and school-wide level. This is accomplished by embedding character education into the daily educational routine of students. Character education is taught in the classroom, is visibly embedded in behavioral expectations and the Student Code of Conduct, and is experienced through projects that contribute to the community at large. Demonstrations of positive character traits are recognized and celebrated at the individual and classroom level. The core values of our Character Education Program are the corner stone of these efforts.

SMCPS believes that it is important to teach, model, and recognize positive character traits that enable our students to be productive citizens in a diverse world. We not only wish to prepare are student's academically for their future positions of responsibilities, we wish to prepare them with good character habits that will enable them to positively contribute to the culture at large.



St. Mary's County Public Schools Leonardtown, Maryland

Principle 1: Effective character education promotes core ethical values as well as supportive performance values as the foundation of good character.

As a proactive approach to school-wide discipline, SMCPS works to prevent and reduce discipline problems by pairing positive character traits with specific code violations. Character building is most effective when a school regularly utilizes the opportunity to strengthen awareness of positive choices. This improves a student's ability to foresee potential consequences, devise options, and implement principled choices. By teaching the six pillars of character, (caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness) schools can assist students in decision-making based on core values.

Character traits are published in the SMCPS Student Code of Conduct. When a disciplinary infraction occurs, school administrators review the character trait that the student could demonstrate in the future instead of the behavior chosen which resulted in the disciplinary infraction.

Schools incorporate and publish positive character mottos into their whole school behavioral expectations. For example, some schools use the motto: "SR3's - safety, responsibility, respect and ready to learn"; while other schools promote the motto: "3B's – be prepared, be respectful, be responsible".

Character education is strongly embedded in the bullying prevention curriculum taught in grades 3 through 7.

Character traits are taught and reinforced through bulletin boards, posters, morning announcements and whole school assemblies.

Students are recognized for demonstrating positive character traits through certificates, school activities, reward systems, and letters to parents.

Character education initiatives are communicated to our parent population through articles in school newsletters, the *Student Code of Conduct*, school assemblies, and media coverage of school initiated student acts of service to the local community.

Principle 2: Effective character education defines "character" comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.

Character traits are taught in each elementary school classroom with a focus on the traits being demonstrated in one's thinking, feelings, and actions.

Character education is embedded in the system-wide social skill curriculum, "Steps to Respect" and "Second Step," taught system-wide in grades 3 through 7. These social skill curriculums exemplify positive character traits as they promote positive decision making, feelings and actions.



St. Mary's County Public Schools Leonardtown, Maryland

Principle 2: Effective character education defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior. Continued:

Character traits are embedded in content curriculum at the elementary level on a monthly basis where literature communicating the importance of a specific character trait is used in classrooms to meet state curriculum objectives.

School staff are deliberate in helping students incorporate the core values into habitual patterns of behavior when they: discuss desired character traits with a student who commits a disciplinary infraction; conduct small social skills groups; deliver character classroom instruction and promote group discussion among students assigned to the In School Suspension Center

Principle 3: Effective character education uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to character development.

School staff participates as a whole group in reinforcing school climate motto's which communicate expectations supportive of character education. Many schools have mottos such as the 3 R's - Respect, Responsibility, and Readiness.

Character education is embedded in the SMCPS master plan through the implementation of *Steps to Respect* and *Second Step* curriculum in grades 3 through 7.

Teachers use literature in their content delivery that highlights specific core values at specific times of the year.

Classroom routines and expectations are reflective of whole school expectations for a consistent and seamless promotion of core character values.

Each year SMCPS chooses a relevant social issue to address through community centered educational opportunities. These educational opportunities are well publicized and supported by community governmental officials. Last fall SMCPS facilitated several community presentations by Jodi Blanco, nationally acclaimed speaker and author, on the importance of bullying prevention. Ms. Blanco also presented to students at every middle and high school. This year SMCPS is collaborating with the College of Southern Maryland to produce a play on the prevention of violence in teen dating relationships.



St. Mary's County Public Schools Leonardtown, Maryland

Principle 4: Effective character education creates a caring school community.

Schools promote and recognize the importance of creating a caring school community. Some elementary schools hold “Peace Days” where each classroom is responsible for monitoring and totaling the number of days in which a disrespectful word or aggressive contact did not occur in their classroom. When the students demonstrate peace behavior collectively the school celebrates as a community. When classrooms reach 100 days of peaceful behavior a school-wide parade occurs and staff members and parent volunteers sing songs and put on skits that recognize the core values.

Many of our schools have after school tutoring that is conducted by community and school staff volunteers.

All of our schools engage in community service projects where the core values are embedded in the discussion, planning, and implementing of projects that support the community. Our students participated in various food drives, disaster relief efforts, charity drives, and seasonal drives such as; Relay for Life, Toy for Tots, and Christmas in April.

Schools sponsor student ambassador programs in which students who demonstrate positive character traits are assigned to welcome new students to the school by sitting with them during lunch, and helping them form new friendships.

Open houses and night events are scheduled routinely throughout the year to welcome parents and community members into our schools.

School system sponsored mentoring programs such as, Future Leaders of The World (FLOW), work with community members in providing after school programs with high risk students.

SMCPS publishes positive character traits as a part of the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Principle 5: Effective character education provides students with opportunities for moral action.

SMCPS encourages and sets clear guidelines and expectations for community service and service learning opportunities. All of our schools engage in community service projects where the core values are embedded in the discussion, planning, and implementing of projects that support the community. Our students participated in various food drives, disaster relief efforts, charity drives, and seasonal drives such as; Relay for Life, Toy for Tots, and Christmas in April.



St. Mary's County Public Schools Leonardtown, Maryland

Principle 5: Effective character education provides students with opportunities for moral action.
Continued:

Students are recognized for demonstrating positive character traits through certificates, Student of the Month recognitions, participation in special school activities, tangible reward systems, and letters to parents.

Many schools have student ambassadors programs where students already established in the school help new students integrate into the school community.

Students are given opportunity to become a part of the Safety Patrol, Peer Helpers, and Recycling Club.

Principle 6: Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them succeed.

SMCPS implements the Maryland State Curriculum - an engaging and interactive curriculum.

Instructional staff members are provided ongoing training on cultural differences, individual learning styles and effective instructional strategies. As a school system we have had professional development on cultural proficiencies, establishing a common ground for learning, and educating the disengaged student.

We emphasize student initiated learning by encouraging students to take college credit courses, as appropriate. Students are encouraged to pursue individual academic interests by enrolling in courses at the local community college and earning both high school and college credit.

SMCPS has a variety of educational pathways at the secondary level whereby students are encouraged to explore their individual skills and interests in greater depth. For example, we offer the Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics Academy for those students who desire a rigorous and unique program of study emphasizing the core areas of mathematics and science with an infusion of technology and engineering. The Global and International Studies pathway provides students with knowledge of world regions, cultures, and global/international issues. Students interested in the world of finance may choose to enroll in the Finance Academy which prepares students for successful careers and/or a post-secondary experience in finance and accounting. Struggling students entering their freshman year are offered the opportunity to attend Fairlead Academy. The Academy infuses interpersonal components that develop students' confidence and self-esteem by offering off-site educational trips and leadership building activities.

The 21st Century Summer Program is offered at the elementary school level where 70 high need students receive three hours of academic instruction each day, followed by enrichment opportunities including chess, video production, gardening, precision jump rope, and much more.



St. Mary's County Public Schools Leonardtown, Maryland

Principle 7: Effective character education strives to develop student's self-motivation.

SMCPS' recognition of the core values is inclusive of staff and community members. Staff members, who demonstrate the core values are recognized during morning announcements, may have a write-up submitted in the school newsletter, and are afforded special parking privileges at some schools. Community members are recognized through volunteer teas and luncheons as well as certificate of appreciation.

The Superintendent of Schools publishes a *Work Hard Be Nice* award on a monthly basis which recognizes those school employees which have been nominated for demonstrating positive character traits.

The school system discipline code is based on a collaborative effort of members who make up the "J-Section Committee". This committee is composed of parents, teachers, administrators, school counselors and central office administration. The committee meets annually to discuss relevant disciplinary issues and make changes to the *Student Code of Conduct*. This process entails much discussion and explanation with involved stakeholders regarding the potential of consequences when changes are made to the system-wide disciplinary code.

Principle 8: Effective character education engages the school staff as a learning and moral community that shares responsibility for character education and attempts to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.

The district encourages school principals to implement a character education program at their school site and incorporate character education into their work. Character education programs are implemented at every elementary and middle school. Evidence of the vitality of these programs can be seen through the examples provided for each of the application principles provide in this application.

Principle 9: Effective character education fosters shared leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative.

The importance of character education in teaching students and providing an environment conducive to learning are articulated goals of SMCPS. Our mission statement is to, "Know the learner and the learning, expecting excellence in both. Accept no excuses, educating all with rigor, relevance, respect, and positive relationships." Our Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education members support the belief that learning is most effective when a positive relationship exists between school staff members, students, and parents.



St. Mary's County Public Schools Leonardtown, Maryland

Principal 9: Effective character education fosters shared leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative. Continued:

The Superintendent of Schools provides some funding, oversight, office accommodations and administrative support for the Future Leaders of the World student mentoring program. This program epitomizes the implementation of character education initiatives among our most high risk student population.

Principal 10: Effective character education engages families and community members as partners in the character education initiative.

SMCPS provide families with many opportunities to become involved in the character education initiative. Community members are regularly sought to participate in the Future Leaders of the World (Flow) mentoring program that supports the leadership growth of students.

Parent volunteers are critical in the coordination and implementation of many community outreach programs such as annual food drives, Toy for Tots, disaster relief efforts, Relay for Life, and recycling programs.

Each year SMCPS chooses a relevant social issue to address through community centered educational opportunities. These educational opportunities are well publicized and supported by the community.

Principle 11: Effective character education assesses the character of the school; the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which student's manifest good character.

Each school administrative team reviews their school's discipline data and attendance data monthly to evaluate their successes with students and consider alternative methods for improvement.

School faculty members and administration meet monthly in their teams to review student academic performance and determine how to improve upon current instructional practices to best meet student needs.

Classroom teachers meet biweekly with other content area teachers or by grade level to review student data and develop strategies to improve individual student performance.

Climate surveys are conducted annually at the secondary level to receive student feedback on student to teacher relations, student to student relations, and student overall sense of safety while at school. This feedback is provided to school administrative teams for review and ongoing improvement to the learning climate.

CHECK THIS OUT!

Our 2011 MCCE@SU Awards Program held on October 6 at Stevenson University, Owings Mills Campus was a great success. We had several breakout sessions to choose from. One of the sessions was held by Kathy Beland from School-Connect.

Kathy Beland, M.Ed., Executive Director

Kathy is lead author of *School-Connect, Optimizing the High School Experience*, a curriculum designed to boost social, emotional and academic skills, and the original author of *Second Step, A Violence-Prevention Curriculum* (grades K-9). She is lead author of CEP's *Eleven Principles Sourcebook* (2003) and the writer/producer of 12 award-winning educational videos. At CEP she has served as program director, chair of the NSOC Blue Ribbon Panel, and member of the Education Advisory Council.

Oct. 6th Breakout Session by Kathy Beland:

Breakout Session Title was: Creating a Supportive Learning Community

Target Audience: Middle School & High School Educators and Students

Description of Session:

How can middle school and high school teachers, in concert with students, create supportive learning communities within classrooms and schools as a whole? This session will focus on three research-based pathways: (1) developing student autonomy, sense of belonging, and contribution and competence, (2) increasing social and emotional skills among students and staff, and (3) moving from tolerance to appreciation of diversity. Participants will take part in an exercise they can take back to their schools. Special attention will be paid to the transition from middle school to high school.

Unfortunately, not everyone was able to attend Kathy's breakout session, which got great reviews. Check out the School-Connect Website at <http://www.school-connect.net/> and Kathy's contact information below.

Contact Info:

Kathy Beland

School-Connect

6202 Wilmet Rd

Bethesda, MD 20817

Work: 301-493-2597, 800-597-6209

Fax: 866-439-0581

E-mail: kbeland@school-connect.net

Stevenson University
School of Education
1525 Greenspring Valley Road
Stevenson, MD 21153

Phone: 352-728-8771
Linda Muska
E-mail: MCCEcharacter@aol.com



The Maryland Center for
Character Education at
Stevenson University



Hanukkah— Begins at Sundown on
December 20



Christmas—December 25

Happy Holiday's
From the
MCCE@SU
Board



Kwanzaa — Begins December 26

“Character Education is not a program — it’s a way of life.”