

## MCCE@SU 2011 School of the Year Award

The Maryland Center for Character Education (MCCE) is again planning to highlight exemplar schools in the state of MD who have instituted, developed, and are continuing comprehensive character education initiatives in their school communities. Applications based on the Eleven Principles will be sent out the beginning of February and are due back June 3, 2011. Please check with your county Character Education Coordinator if you would like to submit an application.

Here is the link to find CEP's Quality Standards which is a great assessment tool schools can use to see how they are doing with regards to the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education. Go to [www.mdctrcharacter.org](http://www.mdctrcharacter.org) click on Quality Standards and Eleven Principles.

We encourage schools to look it over as they prepare for the MCCE@SU application process. Schools only need to address three of the standards in detail, though it would be great if they could show strength in many.

MCCE@SU's School of the Year Award application will be posted to our website in February. [www.mdctrcharacter.org](http://www.mdctrcharacter.org)

## Just a Reminder!

### Promising Practices Awards: Due March 15, 2011

CEP gives annual Promising Practices (PP) awards in character education for unique and specific exemplary practices. Selected schools and districts receive an award certificate at the Promising Practices awards ceremony at the CEP Forum. In addition, descriptions of the winning practices appear on CEP's website. PP applications must be submitted online by March 15, 2011.

(See separate Promising Practices award application online.)

<http://www.character.org/promisingpractices>

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## Best Practice for the Month of January Kenwood High School

### BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

**School:** Kenwood High School

**Address:** 501 Stemmers Run Road  
Baltimore, MD 21211

**Phone:** 410-887-0153

**Contact:** Paul Martin, Principal  
Email - [pmartin2@bcps.org](mailto:pmartin2@bcps.org)



**Title of Best Practice:** The Virtues Project

**Primary Character Trait(s) Emphasized:** Caring, Respect and Acceptance

**Objective(s)** Caring, Respect and Acceptance

#### Brief Description

The faculty and staff at Kenwood High School were looking for ways to bring joy and meaning back into their teaching and learning. Infusing the strategies of The Virtues Project into many aspects of Kenwood offered life-changing opportunities where we celebrated our strength virtues and identified our growth virtues. These strategies helped us to achieve the level of meaning, purpose and connection that everyone desired. Because of our commitment to improving our character, our building has become a kinder, more peaceful environment where our students, faculty and staff are able to acknowledge the virtues in each other. Although many resources are available through The Virtues Project, it is not necessary to purchase those supplies. What is needed is the willingness and commitment of individuals to make a change.

Virtues are the very meaning and purpose of our lives. They are universally valued by people of all cultures. The Virtues project gives students, staff and community a way to renew and deepen our connection with personal characteristics that give direction to our lives. As educators, we consistently strive to mentor our children and build safe and caring schools/classrooms. The Virtues Project helps us to live more purposeful lives, to raise children of integrity and compassion, develop a culture of character in our schools, as well as, inspire excellence and service in the workplace.

The way we speak and the words we use, have great power to discourage or inspire. The Virtues Project allows us to recognize teachable moments in the classroom, which helps to cultivate character from our daily challenges. It allows virtues based boundaries, which focus on respect and restorative justice, to create a climate of peace, integrity and safety.

## Kenwood High School—‘Virtues Project’ encourages students to find the good in themselves

Approach is one of several used in metro area schools to improve behavior

By Arin Gencer | [arin.gencer@baltsun.com](mailto:arin.gencer@baltsun.com)

*Baltimore Sun Paper - February 4, 2009*



**In a skit on the day's highlighted virtue, honesty, Shayna Falwell (second from right) plays a dishonest salesperson with other Kenwood High ninth-graders (from left) Alex Mehall, Walter Scott, Zuryna Smith and Stevie Slaughter. (Baltimore Sun photo by Amy Davis / November 26, 2008)**

Standing in a locker room at Baltimore County's Kenwood High School, the teenage girl kept her cool when one of her peers passed by and hit her with a book bag.

"Under normal circumstances, that would have been a major fight in our building," said teacher Nancy Hanlin, recounting the incident.

Instead, Hanlin said, the girl told her classmate that she would have hit back "if I wasn't working on my virtues."

The fight that wasn't illustrates the changes that school officials say they are seeing at Kenwood, where a new character education initiative called the Virtues Project has begun altering the way teachers, administrators and students communicate with one another. The "virtues" are 52 good character traits, such as truthfulness, patience, responsibility and self-discipline.

"Our kids are so used to all of us telling them what they did wrong," said Hanlin, who, along with physical education and sports science chair Tammy Jackson, suggested trying the project.

"Instead of looking at the behavior, we're actually looking at the kids."

Teachers use the virtues to acknowledge, guide and correct students, said Dara Feldman, director of education initiatives for the project and a former Montgomery County teacher who used its principles in her classroom.



## Kenwood High School—‘Virtues Project’ - Continued

Teachers might take a moment to thank someone for his honesty in returning a missing item or suggest a teen consider what traits she needs to call on to deal with a crisis, according to Jackson and Assistant Principal Allison Seymour.

The State Department of Education encourages, but does not mandate, character education. Such initiatives vary throughout the state, and even within districts.

"We want students to become good students, but we also want them to become good citizens," said Paula McCoach, an education specialist in the state agency's youth development branch. "Character education ... has influences on the climate of the building and the school itself."

Kenwood appears to be the first Baltimore County school to adopt the Virtues Project. Feldman has also trained educators in Anne Arundel, Howard and Montgomery counties and in Baltimore City, she said, but Kenwood has taken "a holistic, excellent approach."

The school draws students from the Essex and Middle River areas, which have many struggling families, said Paul D. Martin, the principal. Students come from "a tough environment," Hanlin said. "They just want to survive in their neighborhood. They bring that into our building."

Still, fighting at Kenwood has declined over the past several years, Martin said, and the project has helped even more.

"The virtues that are on that paper, all of us possess," Jackson said, referring to the list of character traits. "It just takes someone to verbalize that."

Among the educators' tools is a set of cards, each featuring a different virtue and providing a description of that trait. A virtue is spotlighted every month.

"Basically, what it's all about is teaching social skills," said Tom Zirpoli, an education professor at McDaniel College who has written books about behavior and classroom management and parenting.

Character education programs "teach kids, and they teach teachers, to focus on ethical behaviors - honesty, caring about other people ... judging right from wrong," Zirpoli said. Family involvement is key, he said, and such programs should be integrated throughout the curriculum.

Yet implementation can be difficult at the high-school level, with so many other demands, such as tests and graduation requirements, said Lisa Boarman, coordinator of school counseling and related services for Howard County schools. There, dozens of schools use a framework highlighting 40 traits that are integral to success, she said.

In Anne Arundel and Carroll counties, and other areas, many schools follow a model called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS. Its goal is to promote safe and supportive schools and change behavior, said Virginia L. Dolan, an Anne Arundel schools facilitator on the state PBIS leadership team.



## Kenwood High School—‘Virtues Project’ - Continued

While schools in Baltimore County can choose their programs, the district is trying to "bring a more consistent character development program in our buildings," to ensure that everyone is "speaking the same language," said Glenda Myrick, coordinator of the office of safe and drug-free schools.

The Virtues Project has become the approved training course to help county educators begin or enhance character education in their buildings, Myrick said. Hanlin and Jackson taught a fall session, and there are plans to hold another this spring, Myrick said.

At Kenwood, PBIS didn't seem to work well for students, said Hanlin, who said she has seen "a gamut" of character education initiatives in her nearly 35 years of teaching. She and Jackson learned of the Virtues Project about a year ago from Feldman and brought the idea back to Seymour and Martin.

Last year, they began with about eight students who weren't "the easy kids," as Martin described them. "If you can tackle some of the kids that are going to be something of a challenge ... then that automatically gives this program more oomph," he said.

The teachers regularly met with those students, having them select virtue cards and identify the traits they already possessed and the ones that needed work.

One student, for whom swearing and shouting were the norm, began attending class regularly and improving her grades. A student who screamed at Hanlin one day came back within the hour to apologize for disrespecting her.

Now the school has a Virtues Group of about 30 students who serve as ambassadors of sorts for the project. In November, a Virtue Day introduced it to the freshmen taking International Baccalaureate classes.

During one group meeting, students shared "virtues statements" they had recently made to people.

"I told my little sister that I appreciate her helpfulness," said Vanessa Lazo, a junior. "She looked at me funny at first. And she said, 'You're welcome.'"

Junior Jackie Kemmer, one of the students Jackson began working with last year, said she resisted learning about the "weird" Virtues Project. But she found herself driven to try developing the traits on the cards she picked, she said: "The challenge just makes you want to try more."

Lazo said the group is the first school activity she has participated in, even recruiting a friend to join. "You learn things you can use not only in school but outside of school," she said.

## Kenwood High School—‘Virtues Project’ - Continued

She is working on patience, she said, particularly with her little sisters. But she knows her strengths, including caring, consideration and thankfulness.

"I feel like it's going to spread in a positive way," said senior Annette Karanja, adding that she felt the student group would have a multiplier effect.

"We're planting seeds," Hanlin said. "You just hope that it goes and it grows."



(Baltimore Sun photo by Amy Davis / November 26, 2008)

Annette Karanja (far left) raises a point as other Kenwood High School students (left to right) Jeremy Brown, Michael Flaxcomb and Kelsie Zoran, all selected for the Virtues Student Committee, discuss the group's goals.

### Related links

#### Virtues project

- Started in 1991 with the goal of doing something about violence among young people and in families
- Founded by Linda Kavelin-Popov, a psychotherapist; her husband, Dr. Dan Popov, a pediatric psychologist; and her brother, John Kavelin, an art director with Disney
- The virtues were developed by searching texts throughout the world and identifying universally shared principles
- The project has been used in various businesses, organizations and schools throughout the nation and in more than 90 countries

Sources: Dara Feldman, [www.virtuesproject.com](http://www.virtuesproject.com), [www.heartofeducation.net](http://www.heartofeducation.net)

## Rising Star Education

### Auto-B-Good

Auto-B-Good is a five-time Emmy award-winning animated series produced by Rising Star Studios. The series covers 63 character traits in 21 DVDs. Designed for grades K-6, each DVD has three 12-minute lessons and includes a teacher's guide. Over 5,500 schools nationwide now use Auto-B-Good to help drive home the message of good character. Here in Maryland, Prince George County Schools and Montgomery County Schools feature several Auto-B-Good episodes through their educational TV networks. Rising Star Education is offering discount pricing to members of the Maryland Center for Character Education at Stevenson University. MCCE@SU members can purchase individual Auto-B-Good titles for \$37.95 each (regularly \$49.95) or the 21-DVD set for \$749.95 (regularly \$829.95). For more information on Auto-B-Good or other outstanding character building materials visit [www.risingstareducation.com](http://www.risingstareducation.com).

To place an order or if you have questions, contact Jack Currier by phone at 888-900-4090 or by email at [jack@risingstareducation.com](mailto:jack@risingstareducation.com).

To view a clip of Auto-B-Good click here.

URL for Auto-B-Good clip: <http://www.risingstareducation.com/samples/abg/trailer.html>



## 6 Maryland Schools Awarded Blue Ribbon Status: Congratulations!



December 17, 2010 BALTIMORE (WJZ Website)—. Six Maryland schools were awarded Blue Ribbon status. They're considered the best of the best.

The winning schools were based on highest state and national requirements and most dramatic improvements. Each school will receive more than \$7,000 in equipment and cash from the state and corporate sponsors.

Winners include Severna Park High School, Towson High School, Oklahoma Road Middle, Lime Kiln Middle, Bel Air Elementary and Mt. Washington Elementary.

The Blue Ribbon awarded schools will now go on to compete for the national awards, which will be announced next September

## Words of Wisdom : From the ages Pertaining to Character

*"What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary."*

Talmud, Shabbat 31 a

*"Good actions give strength to ourselves and inspire good actions in others."*

Plato

*"None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."*

Islam: Number 13 of Imam  
Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths

*"I would like to work as a mediator and share my poetry, essays, and philosophy with others so that they may be inspired to work with other people, too."*

We each have one heart.  
We each have one life  
We are growing up, together,  
So we must live as one family.

Mattie Stepanek

"

**Don't forget these links:**

**Sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education  
"Character Education by Design"  
A Blueprint for Successful District and School Initiatives**

**From Maryland educators committed to shaping academically capable and ethically responsible graduates.**

**Resource Websites:**

Anti Defamation League—[www.adl.org/education](http://www.adl.org/education)

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs—[www.cortland.edu/character](http://www.cortland.edu/character)

Character Counts! - [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org)

Character Education Partnership—[www.character.org](http://www.character.org)

Daniels Fund—[www.danielsfund.org](http://www.danielsfund.org)

Josephson Institute of Ethics—[www.josephsoninstitute.org](http://www.josephsoninstitute.org)

Knowledge is Power Program—[www.kipp.org](http://www.kipp.org)

Maryland State Department of Education—[www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)

Maryland's PBIS Initiative on the Web—[www.pbismaryland.org](http://www.pbismaryland.org)

U.S. Department of Education, Department of Safe & Drug Free Schools

— [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html)

What Works Clearing House—<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>



29 West Susquehanna Ave.,  
Suite 300  
Baltimore, MD 21204

Phone: 410-822-6427  
Fax: 410-763-6789  
E-mail: [MCCEcharacter@aol.com](mailto:MCCEcharacter@aol.com)

The Maryland Center for  
Character Education at  
Stevenson University



Martin Luther King Day— January 17,

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

**'You see things and say 'Why'? But I see things and say 'Why not?'**

**G.B Shaw**