The 11 Principles of Effective Character Education
OVERVIEW

What is character education?

Character education is the intentional effort to develop in young people core ethical and performance values that are widely affirmed across all cultures. To be effective, character education must include all stakeholders in a school community and must permeate school climate, culture, teaching, and learning.

The term character education encompasses a broad range of prosocial constructs, strategies, and programs including positive school culture, moral education, just communities, caring school communities, social-emotional learning, positive youth development, civic education, and service learning. All of these approaches promote the intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical development of young people and share a commitment to help young people become responsible, caring, and contributing citizens.

No single script for effective character education exists, but there are some important guiding principles. Based on the practices of effective schools, decades of research and the wisdom of leading thinkers and practitioners in the field, the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education form the cornerstone of Character.org’s philosophy on how best to develop and implement high-quality character education initiatives. As broad principles that define excellence in character education, the 11 Principles serve as guideposts that schools and others responsible for youth character development can use to plan, implement, evaluate, and sustain their programs.

Character.org refers to core values throughout the description of the 11 Principles for Effective Character Education. Core values are “traits or qualities that represent an individual’s or organization’s highest priorities, deeply held beliefs, and core, fundamental driving forces. They are the heart of what you stand for in the world,”¹ states human resources expert, Susan Heathfield. As amplified by Thomas Lickona, “Character is positive values in action.”²

For Character.org’s definitional purposes, core values should include a balance of the moral/ethical and performance values to help develop positive character. Character.org sees moral and ethical values in the same way. Moral values describe the values in support of our best social interactions such as integrity, justice, fairness, compassion, caring, empathy, humility, respect for others, trustworthiness, and generosity. Performance values define the qualities that lead to our best work such as diligence, perseverance, initiative, self-discipline, goal setting, determination, creativity, and curiosity.

The values associated with moral and performance character represent long standing pillars of comprehensive character development programs. For example, the daily application and manifestation of moral and performance values can sometimes appear in the development of intellectual character and civic character.

- Civic character refers to behaviors that serve the common good and is comprised of “the knowledge, skills, virtues, and commitments necessary for engaged and responsible citizenship” (e.g. civility, sociability, and service).
- Intellectual character is "the ability to apply intelligence to the complexities of life” (e.g. open-mindedness, curiosity, reflective thinking, truth-seeking, and growth mindset).

We often see a synergy between moral and performance values as they work in concert with each other to advance intellectual and civic character. For example, a student might become aware of a specific need in her community and develop a strong sense of empathy and compassion (moral values) toward those impacted by the situation. Upon reflection (intellectual), she may determine this to be an opportunity for action. Through determination and perseverance (performance values), she works with her school community to create a service learning project to help meet this need (civic).

Schools and organizations that intentionally cultivate and develop character comprehensively by focusing on both moral and performance values are likely to experience lower rates of student peer cruelty and indiscipline. Furthermore, they very often report a more caring community and substantially higher levels of student and faculty satisfaction.

The 11 Principles helps school communities identify, define, and function according to core values to advance their education mission. Quality character education creates a culture that supports and challenges students and adults to strive for excellence while demonstrating core values.

For those schools looking for certification as a School of Character, the core values described here are provided for descriptive purposes only and not meant to define the full universe of core values that can be identified by a school or district for inclusion in its educational mission. As the term core values is referenced throughout the 11 Principles, Character.org refers to a balance of moral and performance values. When this definition is applied to assessment for Schools of Character, Character.org evaluators will assess schools in their understanding and implementation of examples for both moral and performance values.

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11 Principles of Effective Character Education 2
Why “do” character education?

“Throughout history, and in cultures all over the world, education rightly conceived has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good.”

—Thomas Lickona & Matthew Davidson, *Smart & Good High Schools*[^5]

Character education is not new. It has been core to education since the time of the ancient Greeks and was included as an important objective for the first U.S. public schools. Public education was founded to advance an ethical citizenry to sustain the experiment of our democratic republic. Today, it is even legislatively mandated or encouraged in most states and many countries. The current movement is consistent with education’s long history of stressing core values such as respect, integrity, and hard work to help students become capable and caring people and good citizens.

Character education also provides effective solutions to ethical and academic issues that are of growing concern. Using the 11 Principles framework, educators have successfully transformed their schools by improving school culture, increasing achievement for all learners, developing ethical citizens, restoring civility, developing prosocial behaviors, and improving job satisfaction and retention among teachers. While experimental research studies of schools using the 11 Principles have not been conducted, Character.org has meaningful quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal accounts of school improvement using this model. All the 11 Principles are also individually grounded in school research demonstrating best practice.

Because students spend so much time at school, the 11 Principles offers a critically important opportunity to ensure that all students get the support and help they need to reach their full potential. Schools with high-quality character education are places where students, teachers, and parents want to be. They are places where young people do their best work because they feel safe, appreciated, supported, and appropriately challenged by their peers and the adults in their lives.

THE 11 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE CHARACTER EDUCATION,
A GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

This document explains each of the 11 Principles and includes a scoring guide to help measure both the current status of implementation and progress over time. It defines each principle more specifically in terms of two to four key indicators that describe what the principle should “look like” when implemented. Key indicators of exemplary practice follow each of these items. Developed in consultation with experienced Schools of Character site visitors and evaluators, these key indicators describe how schools most commonly implement the principles and offer benchmarks of successful practice.

In addition, for each principle an example from a School of Character shows the principle in practice.

Self-Assessment
Character.org strongly encourages practitioners to evaluate the extent to which their school or district is implementing each principle. This document and its scoring guide can help educators examine their current character education practices, identify short- and long-term objectives, and develop or strengthen a strategic plan for continuous improvement. Staff can review the key indicators for each principle and then use the scoring guide as part of your process for assessing existing strengths and areas for improvement. After developing baseline data, the 11 Principles Scoring Guide can be used over time to assess progress. This is also the same evaluation rubric used by Schools of Character evaluators.

Achieving a 4.0 score on the entire scoring guide is an aspirational goal. Rarely would a school or district be exemplary in every indicator at any one time. For example, schools and districts that achieve State and National Schools of Character status are usually between “Exemplary” and “Good” on the scoring rubric.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Rating</th>
<th>Rating Description</th>
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| 4                     | Exemplary         | • Multiple examples suggesting implementation of 11 Principles Key Indicators  
|                       |                   | • Practice is guided by an analysis of the data, 11 Principles Key Indicators, and/or relevant literature guides practice  
|                       |                   | • Evidence (qualitative and quantitative) reveals positive outcomes associated with principle implementation  
|                       |                   | • Super majority of stakeholders (admin, teachers, students, parents) are impacted by or engaged in implementation |
| 3                     | Good              | • Some examples of programs or processes addressing 11 Principles Key Indicators are provided  
|                       |                   | • Practice is guided by some or limited data analysis, 11 Principles Key Indicators, and/or relevant literature  
|                       |                   | • Some evidence (qualitative and quantitative) supporting positive outcomes is provided  
|                       |                   | • Majority of stakeholders are impacted by or engaged in implementation |
| 2                     | Developing        | • Few examples of programs or processes addressing 11 Principles Key Indicators are provided  
|                       |                   | • Unclear if practice is being guided by data analysis, 11 Principles Key Indicators, and/or relevant literature  
|                       |                   | • Evidence (quantitative and qualitative) is lacking, is limited, or is unclear with no association to positive outcomes  
|                       |                   | • A minority of stakeholders is impacted by or engaged in implementation |
| 1                     | Lacking Evidence  | • Inadequate examples of programs or process addressing 11 Principles Key Indicators  
|                       |                   | • Practice is not being guided by data analysis, 11 Principles Key Indicator, and/or relevant literature  
|                       |                   | • No evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to support positive outcomes  
|                       |                   | • Limited number of stakeholders are impacted by or engaged in implementation |

A self-assessment which automatically calculates your scores is available at www.exchange.character.org/introduction. Call Character.org at (202) 296-7743 with questions on the scoring procedure.
Core values are defined, implemented, and embedded into school culture.

Schools that effectively promote good character come to agreement on the core values (as defined in the overview above) they most wish to instill in their students. Some schools use other terms such as virtues, traits, pillars, or expectations to refer to the desirable character qualities they wish to foster. All of these approaches can be effective within the 11 Principles framework if they affirm human dignity, promote the development and welfare of the individual, serve the common good (i.e., lead us to do our best work), define our rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, and meet the classical tests of universality (i.e., Would you want all persons to act this way in a similar situation?), and reversibility (i.e., Would you want to be treated this way?).

The school makes clear that these basic human values transcend religious and cultural differences and express our common humanity. Examples of core ethical values are caring, honesty, fairness, generosity, and respect for self and others. Examples of performance values include diligence, best effort, perseverance, critical thinking, and positive attitude. The school community selects and commits to its core values as the foundation for how people interact and do their best work in the school. A school committed to its students’ character development treats its core values as essential to its mission and often refers to them explicitly in the mission and/or vision statement and in its code of conduct or “touchstone” (a statement or creed that encapsulates core values and helps the community live them).

1.1 Stakeholders in the school community select or agree to core values.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- A highly inclusive, representative group of stakeholders (professional and other staff, parents, students, and community members) have had input into, and/or have had discussions and agreed to, the school’s core values. If the district selected the values or if the values have been in place for a long time, current stakeholders have been involved in ongoing reflection on the values in order to ensure their continuing relevance to the present school community.

- Staff members understand how and why the school selected its core values and affirm the importance of core values in guiding the behavior of all those in the school community.
1.2 Core values guide every aspect of school life.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students, staff, and parents frequently use common language reflecting the school’s core values (e.g., students, teachers, or parents might use the word “perseverance” when discussing homework or the word “respect” when discussing relationships).

- Teachers and administrators use the moral principles established in their core ethical values, in addition to conventional rules, to establish a caring, fair, and safe learning environment.

- There is staff ownership for teaching, modeling, and integrating the core values into all aspects of school life (e.g., discussions in grade-level, subject-area, and full staff meetings).

- Core values are embedded in school policies and procedures.

- Core values guide hiring practices and the orientation of new teaching and non-teaching staff.

1.3 Reminders and statements of core values are visible throughout the school community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Core values appear in the school building, in the school vision and mission statements, goals, on the school website, in the faculty and student handbooks, in the discipline code (schoolwide and classroom), in newsletters sent home, and at school events to promote a community of adults and students based around a commitment to ethics and excellence.

- The school has defined what the core values “look like” and “sound like” in terms of observable behaviors (e.g., individual goal setting for students or staff performance evaluations).

- Staff, students, and parents can identify the core values and recognize their importance as a distinctive feature of the school.

(For districts):
- The district incorporates core values in its community and public relations efforts.
1.3 Reminders and statements of core values are visible throughout the school community (continued).

- The district establishes core values as part of its vision, mission, goals, objectives, regulations, and policies, and seeks to promote a community of adults and students based on a commitment to excellence and ethics.

**EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 1 IN ACTION**

Upon entering the building at **Como Park Elementary School in Lancaster, New York**, one is greeted with a banner which heralds the school’s core virtues of Respect, Responsibility, and Perseverance. Character education ‘street signs’ which reflect Como Park’s core values direct students, staff, and visitors to their destination and remind all who walk the hallways to be respectful, responsible, and to persevere. Inspirational, thought-provoking quotes adorn the walls (“Life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of how you react to it.” — Charles R. Swindoll), and colorful growth-mindset posters remind students and staff of the importance of hard work and perseverance.
The school defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and doing.

Good character involves understanding, caring about, and acting upon core values. A holistic approach to character development seeks to develop the cognitive, emotional, social competencies and behaviors required to do the right thing and do one’s best work. Students grow to understand core values by studying and discussing them, observing behavioral models, and resolving problems involving the values. Students learn to care about core values by developing empathy skills, forming caring relationships with role models, developing good work habits, taking on meaningful responsibilities, helping to create community, hearing inspirational stories, and reflecting on life experiences. By being directly taught core values, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and other competencies, they learn to act by striving to do their best and be their best in all areas of school life. As children grow in character, they develop an increasingly refined understanding of the core values, a deeper commitment to living according to those values, and a stronger capacity and tendency to behave in accordance with them. Look for this principle and others as they manifest within the entirety of the 11 Principles.

2.1 Staff teach and provide opportunities for students to understand core values, ethical decision-making, and applications to life situations.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Staff consistently explain to students how living guided by the core values can help them make choices that demonstrate good character.

- Staff can explain how they help students understand the core values (e.g., teachers can point to evidence of pedagogy, lessons, or activities which incorporate core values).

- Students can explain why the core values are important, define them, use them correctly, and apply them to life situations (e.g., treating others as you wish to be treated, giving your best effort).
2.2 The school provides experiences and time for students to reflect on and internalize the core values.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Staff help students to develop an appreciation for and a commitment to the core values (e.g., by developing empathy and a sense of responsibility for others).

- Staff provide opportunities for students to reflect on the core values through discussions of real-life problems and situations relevant to moral, performance, intellectual and civic character (e.g., fairness and consistency of disciplinary policies; intellectual honesty and integrity).

- Staff meet students’ needs for safety, belonging, competence, and autonomy, since these form a foundation for developing a commitment to the core values.

2.3 The school provides opportunities for students to practice the core values so they become habitual patterns of behavior.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Staff encourage students to examine their own behavior in light of the core values and challenge them to make their behavior consistent with the core values (e.g., through journal writing, discussion of events in the classroom, one-on-one adult-student conversations about past or present behavior).

- Students receive practice in and feedback on academic and behavioral skills (e.g., setting goals, monitoring their progress, listening attentively, using “I” messages, apologizing) through the conduct of the classroom (e.g., the normal flow of teaching and learning, procedures, role plays, class meetings, cooperative learning groups).

- Students have the opportunity to practice the core values in the context of relationships (e.g., through cross-age tutoring, mediating conflicts, and helping others) and in the context of classroom work (e.g., students demonstrate that they care about the quality of their work and incorporate feedback in order to improve their performance).
EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 2 IN ACTION

“When I don’t know what to do, I go over our strategies.”
“I take a deep breath first. Then, I go over our problem-solving steps.”
“My favorite step is to brainstorm. It always helps me find a solution.”

Although the dialogue may sound like an exchange in a management training seminar, the speakers—Brian, Ayomi, and Declan—are actually kindergartners who are gleefully describing what they do many times every day at Moss School in Metuchen, New Jersey when faced with a challenge in either an academic or a social situation. Moss does much to teach the core values as well as mindfulness, reflection, and problem-solving, so the children can readily use them. Laura Fischer, kindergarten teacher, explains how one specific step or core value is taught in a six-week sequence, so “the kids get plenty of practice in understanding and practicing them.”
The school uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to develop character.

Schools committed to character development look at themselves through a character lens to assess how virtually everything that goes on in school affects the character of students. A comprehensive approach uses all aspects of the school as opportunities for character development. It is about weaving character into every aspect of the school culture. This includes the formal academic curriculum and extracurricular activities, as well as what is sometimes called the hidden or informal curriculum (e.g., how adults model good character, how the instructional process respects students, how student diversity is addressed, the unofficial and unwritten norms of the school, the adult culture of the school).

“Stand-alone” character education programs can be useful first steps or helpful elements of a comprehensive effort but are not an adequate substitute for a holistic approach that integrates character development into every aspect of school life. With an intentional and proactive approach, school staff do more than react to “teachable moments” to integrate character lessons that include the three domains of thinking, feeling, and behavior cited in Principle 2. They take deliberate steps to create opportunities for character development.

This principle includes teaching students the social, emotional, and character development skills they need to be ethical citizens. The development of social skills helps students establish and maintain positive relationships and enables communication with others in various settings and situations. Recognizing the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others leads to effective cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution.

Personal and emotional development skills help students identify, understand, and effectively manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Personal and academic successes are built upon the ability to consider thoughts, understand feelings, and manage one’s responses. Personal thoughts and feelings impact the management of experiences and behavior outcomes.

Character development skills help students identify, define, and live in accordance with core values that aid in effective problem solving and responsible decision making. Success in school and life is built upon the ability to make ethical decisions, solve problems effectively, and to identify and apply core values in all subject areas and life (Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards).
3.1 The school is intentional and proactive in addressing social, emotional, and character development.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school uses researched-based standards, core competencies, and/or key developmental indicators to assure appropriate skills are taught, including self-regulation and self-control (e.g. Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Standards, CASEL’s Core SEL Competencies).

- Using research based principles, social, emotional, and character development skills are taught and integrated throughout the school day, and at all grade levels. Core values are operationalized throughout the teaching of these skills.

(For districts):
- The district has identified and adopted social, emotional, and character development (SECD) skills in its instructional program or curriculum.

3.2 Character is integrated into all aspects of teaching and learning.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Teachers embed core values through their academic subjects. Units of study are intentionally designed and implemented to integrate character principles. The school is able to point to examples of lessons from teachers in diverse subject areas that explicitly include the integration of character into academic content and the developmentally appropriate use of core values to analyze ethical cases in literature, history, science, art, etc.

- Teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their moral reasoning through discussions of ethical issues in their content areas (e.g., how lessons of history guide moral choices, how scientific discoveries have ethical implications).

- The school supports school-wide character lessons via advisory or a content area or class of their choosing as well as ongoing instruction that connect academic content to character development.

- Teachers focus on character content in the curriculum and use character building pedagogies/methods. This includes core values that are woven into the classroom and not separate lessons on character. Teachers use the curriculum as a vehicle for discussions about character in all subjects. For example, when science teachers are teaching a lab,
discuss the importance of responsibility for the equipment. When preparing to take a test for any class, discuss the importance of honesty and academic integrity prior to the test. In literature and history, discuss the core values of people being studied. In music, weave in the concept of harmony.

(For districts):
❑ The district includes character education in its academic curriculum frameworks and seeks to apply the vocabulary of character to develop higher level student thinking (e.g., evaluation of lessons in history, literature, or school life where core values provide a guide to behavior).

3.3 Character education is infused in all aspects of the school day including classes, procedures, meetings, and extra-curricular activities.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

❑ The school communicates clear and consistent expectations and fosters good character throughout the total school program (e.g., sports, clubs) and in all areas of the school (e.g., cafeteria, halls, playground, sports fields, library, buses).

❑ Both students and staff are able to point to artifacts reflecting the core values that guide class, team, or club goals and procedures (e.g., sportsmanship codes, publication codes of ethics, club bylaws, classroom routines, etc.).

(For districts):
❑ The district defines character education clearly and comprehensively, emphasizing that it is a process that demands integration into all aspects of school life. District leaders review and consider revising relevant policy that supports the 11 Principles.

11 Principles of Effective Character Education
The Birmingham Public School District (BPS) in Birmingham, Michigan has invested in character development for over 20 years and has become one of the leading school districts in the country for district-wide character development. This work is intentional and proactive as exhibited by the BPS steering committee and liaison structure. Three times a year, representatives from each school in the district meet for a half or full day to discuss character development in the district. This liaison program was implemented in 1999, and it has been the thread that holds the schools together in its desire for character development in all stakeholders. Action plans are discussed at the district steering committee meetings and district liaison meetings. The district’s strategic plan also includes character education goals and ongoing work among the district schools to improve character initiatives. There is a district expectation that character is regularly integrated into academic content, and it is included in curriculum frameworks.
The school creates a caring community.

A school committed to character strives to become a civil, caring, and just society. It does this by creating a community that helps all its members form respectful relationships that lead to caring attachments. By modeling and scaffolding excellence in academics and behavior, members of this caring community develop responsibility for one another. This involves developing caring relationships between students and staff, among students (within and across grade levels), among staff, and between staff and families. These caring relationships foster both the desire to learn and the desire to be a good person. All children and adolescents have needs for safety, belonging, and the experience of contributing. There is a complicated spectrum of behaviors that undermine students’ feelings of safety – from normative moments of mis-understanding to intentional verbal and cyber instances of disrespectful or cruel behavior. These “grey zone” behaviors can lead to even more extreme instances of cruelty, harassment, or violence. Students are more likely to internalize the values and expectations of groups that meet their safety needs. Likewise, if staff members and parents experience mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation in their relationships with each other, they are more likely to develop the capacity to promote those values in students.

In a caring school community, the daily life of classrooms and all other parts of the school environment (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, sports fields, buses, front office, and teachers’ lounge) are imbued with a climate of concern and respect for others.

4.1 The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments between students and staff.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students perceive staff as caring and report that they could go to adults in the school with a problem.

- Staff frequently attend school events; students and parents report that they do.

- The school encourages and makes structural provisions and time for students and teachers to meet (e.g., class meetings, looping, advisories).

- Staff provide extra help in academic work and counsel or mentor students when needed.

- Discipline is approached in a caring and respectful way and is reflective of the positive relationships between the adults and students involved.
4.2 The school makes it a high priority to help students form caring attachments to each other.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students perceive the student body as friendly and inclusive both in school and online in social networks.

- The school has a norm of inclusion for all and has strategies to ensure no students are left out. Teachers understand that part of their role is to intentionally build relationships between all students in their classrooms.

- The school uses educational strategies (e.g., cooperative learning, cross-age mentoring, class meetings) to encourage mutual respect and a feeling of responsibility for one another.

4.3 The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments among adults within the school community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Parents, community members, and guests report feeling welcome in the school.

- Staff perceive the work environment as positive and their colleagues as supportive and caring. Artifacts demonstrate ways their relationships are nurtured (e.g., invitations for social gatherings or agendas from helping those in need, working collaboratively, celebrating successes, agenda from professional development and/or faculty meetings devoted to staff relationships and accomplishments).

- Staff make efforts to form positive relationships with students’ parents and guardians. Parents and teachers both report feeling respected by one another.

- Administration intentionally fosters positive relationships and social norms among all staff and staff report that the administration fosters a collegial atmosphere.

(For districts):
- Staff at the district level make efforts to develop caring and respectful relationships among themselves, with staff at the school level, and in the broader community.
4.4 The school takes steps to prevent peer cruelty and violence and deals with it effectively when it occurs.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students report that bullying (including cyber-bullying), teasing, and acts of cruelty or intolerance are infrequent and are not tolerated by staff.

- All students participate in activities, programs, and processes that promote tolerance, understanding, respect, and peace among students (e.g., conflict resolution, bullying prevention programs, peer mediation, class meetings).

- Staff demonstrate ways to identify, constructively address, and discourage peer mistreatment (e.g., put-downs; racial slurs; insensitive gender remarks; remarks on appearance, economic, or social status) and increase students’ understanding and respect for personal, economic, and cultural differences.

- Students are taught to spontaneously and effectively respond to peer cruelty and do not tolerate these behaviors from their peers.

- Students are able to talk about “grey zones,” as well as the more clear cut instances of cruelty and violence.

**EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 4 IN ACTION**

*Imagine Great Western Academy, a K-8 Charter School in Columbus, Ohio,* has created a haven for students from many difficult life situations. Not only do students feel safe and loved, families and community members feel comfortable supporting the students and staff in whatever is necessary to guide students toward success. There are programs in place to provide food to families over weekends, and they have arrangements for ensuring all students have access to affordable or free uniforms through partnerships in the community. Community involvement is strong and supportive in many ways as evidenced through a myriad of community partnerships.
The school provides students with opportunities for moral action.

Service provides students an opportunity to practice putting their core values into action and demonstrate intellectual and civic character. To develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of their character, students need many and varied opportunities to grapple with real-life challenges (e.g., how to plan and carry out an important responsibility, work as part of a team, negotiate for peaceable solutions, recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas, and identify and meet school and community needs). Through repeated experiences and reflection, students develop appreciation for and commitment to acting on their core values. Schools with a culture of character regularly provide ways to serve the needs of their families and community. When providing service to others, the school follows guidelines for effective community service and service learning to include student voice and choice, integration of service into the curriculum, and reflection. In the practice of service learning students are constructive learners—they learn best by doing. In addition to serving the community, moral action can include student leadership to advance topics such as conflict resolution, restorative practices, bully resistance, academic integrity, and sportsmanship.

In this principle, it is important for students to learn to see and fill a need. They need to understand service is important, whether it be community service or service learning. When students participate in the decision-making process about service experiences, it takes their learning to a new level.

It is critical to know the difference between community service and service learning, both of which are valuable. Community service is defined as voluntary work intended to help people in an identified area of need. Service learning is an experiential teaching strategy that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service. Both of these service types create strong community connections, value an individual’s ethical growth and civic responsibility, and meet real needs in the local community and beyond.

5.1 The school expects students to engage in service, both community service and service learning, and prepares them to be competent to do so.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school can point to artifacts that demonstrate how the school’s expectations engage students to advance ethical behavior such as peaceful conflict resolution, academic integrity, good sportsmanship, and service to others. Students can describe how these things have been taught by their teachers and what they have learned through their own activities to support ethical behavior.
The school demonstrates an understanding of the difference between community service activities they support and service learning activities. These activities are explicitly linked to the curriculum, demonstrate opportunities for student leadership and reflection with a focus on core values.

The school establishes and communicates clear expectations regarding service learning. The school can point to school-wide expectations of personal and social responsibility. Relevant stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) know the school’s expectations regarding action that develops and demonstrates good character. Students and staff readily acknowledge their responsibility for these expectations.

(For districts):

- The school provides all students with opportunities for service and service learning within the school and time to reflect about them.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school effectively provides all students with opportunities for service within the school (e.g., peer or cross-age tutoring, classroom or student body governance, and service projects related to the care of the school or school grounds), and students take advantage of these opportunities and benefit from them.

- Teachers connect service within the school with the curriculum and core values for reflection.

- Teachers provide instruction and students engage in projects to practice and/or advance conflict resolution, ethical decision-making, and/or academic integrity.

The school provides all students with repeated opportunities for service and service learning outside the school and time to reflect about them.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school effectively provides all students with opportunities for participation in service learning (e.g., working with the elderly; helping the homeless, those in need, or

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animals; or caring for the environment) and students take advantage of these opportunities and benefit from them.

❑ Teachers connect community service with the curriculum and core values, creating service learning experiences.

❑ The school sets aside time for students to assess community needs, create ideas for meeting those needs, plan and coordinate service learning projects, and reflect on the positive consequences of community service.

EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 5 IN ACTION

Each summer at Birmingham Covington School (BCS) in Birmingham, Michigan, 7th and 8th graders research and design community service projects. These projects are presented to their peers in Integrated Learning Design class. Each year, projects culminate with students identifying a problem in the community, developing a solution, applying the solution, and measuring the impact of that solution. Service learning is a much a part of the curriculum at BCS as any traditional subject. For example, a hydrosphere unit in 5/6 science was turned into a call to action game for students where students complete ten missions to become H2O Heroes. Students chose to partner with a village in Chilupula, Zambia, to help solve their drinking water issues. Teachers in 3/4 are implementing interdisciplinary projects such hydroponic gardening and raising salmon in the classroom. Each year, students grow a variety of plants which they share throughout the community with random acts of kindness when they harvest. They also raise salmon from egg to smolt, releasing them in the spring of each year in a local river in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources.
The school offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them succeed.

Because students come to school with diverse skills, interests, backgrounds, and learning needs, an academic program that helps all students succeed will be one in which the content and pedagogy engage all learners and meet their individual needs. This means providing a curriculum that is inherently interesting and meaningful to students and teaching in a manner that respects and cares for students as individuals. Effective character educators model persistence, responsibility, and caring as they differentiate instruction, employ a variety of active teaching and learning strategies, and look for ways that character is potentially developed in and through everyday teaching and learning. When teachers bring to the fore the character dimension of their classes, they enhance the relevance of subject matter and content area skills to students’ natural interests and questions, and in the process, increase student engagement and achievement. When teachers promote social-emotional skills, such as self-awareness and self-management, and ethical decision-making, students are able to access the curriculum with greater focus. When teachers promote core values such as academic integrity, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and diligence, students are better able to do their best work and gain greater autonomy, competence, and self-confidence.

6.1 The academic curriculum provides meaningful and appropriate challenges for all students.

Key indicators of exemplary practice:

- Teachers provide all students with opportunities to interact with academic content in engaging, hands-on, developmentally appropriate ways (e.g., cooperative learning, problem solving, and experience-based projects). Students report feeling challenged by and excited about what they are learning in school. Parents report that their children are appropriately challenged and that teachers have high expectations.

- The school community encourages students to seek mastery of content and skills (e.g., by emphasizing progress in meeting instructional goals and using formative rather than only summative assessments).

- Instruction increases students’ sense of competence and emphasizes student autonomy (e.g., by providing them with opportunities to think creatively and test their ideas, by giving them a voice in classroom decisions and plans that affect them).
6.2 The school staff understands and accommodates the diverse interests, cultures, and learning needs of all students.

Key indicators of exemplary practice:

- Staff members engage in ongoing identification of students’ learning needs. Differentiated instruction appears organic—a natural part of the school day for all students (e.g., students move easily into reading or math groups that provide activities that have been differentiated by content, process, or product yet are designed to meet the same objectives).

- Staff members challenge and help all students do high-quality work and strive for continuous improvement.

- Parents and students report that teachers know their students well and understand and respond to their learning needs and cultural differences.

- Schools recognize existing achievement gaps between diverse student subgroups and take active steps to eliminate such gaps.

6.3 Teachers promote the development of performance character traits that support students’ intellectual growth, academic performance, and capacity for both self-direction and teamwork.

Key indicators of exemplary practice:

- Teachers promote thinking habits (e.g., curiosity, truth-seeking, critical thinking, open-mindedness, growth mindset) that lead to intellectual growth in students. Students set goals and are aware of their growth as learners and are taught reflection skills and given time to practice reflection regarding their own academic and character growth.

- Teachers promote work-related habits (e.g., perseverance, responsible decision-making, self-management, and challenge-seeking) that help students do their best work.

- Teachers promote social habits (e.g., honesty, responsibility, collaboration) that help students work together harmoniously (e.g., through cooperative learning).

- Teachers promote, and students report, the importance of academic integrity in all classes.
“We don’t limit experience, we expand horizons. We don’t narrow the curriculum, we deepen knowledge.” Once a person speaks with staff, students and parents at Christel House Academy-South in Indianapolis, Indiana, one can understand this school practices what they preach. Walking through the halls there is a rare level of excitement and engagement in academics K-12. Students take ownership of their own learning through setting “CHoW,” Character and Habits of Work goals. Each student sets academic and character goals. Then, they individually monitor their progress toward achieving the goal and set a new goal once the initial goal is attained. This process increases student ownership of their learning. “Students understand what character and good habits of work look like and strive to meet these standards,” shares K-3 Special Education Teacher Annie Barton.

Teachers create their own project-based curriculum using state standards and differentiate instruction based upon student need. There are support systems in place for students who are struggling and need extra help. “We have these things called Enrichments, where we can get extra help with our schoolwork. Teachers will explain things to us in a way we can understand,” says 8th grade student Terrance. Teachers create intervention groups based upon student assessments to assist students in attaining the standards. They use standards-based grading, and students have multiple opportunities to create a learning plan to attain the standard. This learning approach is making a difference in the lives of their students. One hundred percent of their students graduate. Honors students have the potential to have a four-year scholarship to the University of Indianapolis, and some students are dual enrolled. This school is living out its mission!
The school fosters students’ self-motivation.

The development of self-motivation is a powerful force in a person’s life. This principle emphasizes intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation. Character means doing the right thing and doing our best work even when no one is looking. The best underlying ethical reason for following moral rules, for example, is respect for the rights and needs of others—not fear of punishment nor desire for reward. We want students to be kind to others because of an inner belief that kindness is good and an inner desire to be a kind person. We want them to do a good job—work that applies and further develops their best abilities—because they take pride in quality work, not just because they want a good grade.

In a culture that is awash in extrinsic rewards, this is a challenging task. Teachers are encouraged to learn about the historical research describing moral stages, and more recent work in Domain Theory to engage students in discussions that elevate the students’ ability to reason with moral principles. Moral principles often include justice and fairness, which we recognize as core ethical values. Teacher professional development focused on leading discussions to support student awareness and reasoning with core ethical values can help cultivate student understanding and appreciation of those values and an intrinsic motivation to live them out.

Becoming more self-motivated is a developmental process that Schools of Character are careful not to undermine with an emphasis on extrinsic incentives. Intensive focus on rewards and behavior modification is consciously limited. This principle emphasizes true heart change and celebration (intrinsic motivation) over compliance and reward (extrinsic motivation).

Schools of Character work with students to develop their understanding of rules, their awareness of how their behavior affects others, and the character strengths—such as self-control, perspective taking, and conflict resolution skills—needed to act responsibly in the future. Rather than settle for mere compliance, these schools seek to help students benefit from their mistakes by providing meaningful opportunities for reflection with awareness of their core values, problem solving skills, and a goal of restitution.

Consequences are relevant (logically related to the rule or offense), respectful (not embarrassing or demeaning), reasonable (not harsh or excessive), restorative (restoring or repairing the relationship by making restitution), and resource-building (helping empower students to develop the character qualities—such as empathy, social skills, and the motivation to do the right thing—that were not put into practice when the behavior problem occurred). Staff routinely deal with behavior issues in positive ways that encourage reflection according to the core values, offer students opportunities for reparation and moral growth, and respect students as individuals.
7.1 Staff and students recognize and celebrate the positive, natural benefits of acts of character rather than rewarding students with recognition or material rewards.

**Key indicators of exemplary implementation:**

- Students are able to articulate on a personal level what it means to be self-motivated and why it is important (e.g., students can cite personal goals, achievements, and challenges).

- Staff understand the implication of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation and can explain how they have specifically addressed it. They reflect on whether their practices develop self-motivation and seek agreement on a shared philosophy and associated practices.

- Recognition is inclusive of members of the school community (e.g., recognizing the character strengths and unique qualities of each student in a classroom rather than having students earn the title “student of the month”). The school may recognize students or classrooms for outstanding behavior or service but refrains from excessive singling out of students or groups of students.

- Staff use methods of classroom management that foster intrinsic motivation (doing the right thing because it’s the right thing to do) and avoid adopting programs that are rewards-based. Schools and districts that integrate PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support) with character education can benefit from the focus on setting expectations for school settings and then connect those expectations to core values. Then, they can limit their use of behavior modification techniques and help students develop the desire to do what is right even when there is no extrinsic reward.

- Teachers use methods of academic instruction—including the opportunity for revision based on feedback—that enable students to produce quality work of which they are proud and which is worthy of pride.

- Staff and students recognize and express positive comments to each other in natural settings (e.g., hallways, classrooms, playing fields, meetings) as part of the everyday life of the school.

(For districts):

- Districts use their public relations programs to focus attention on outstanding acts of good character.

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**11 Principles of Effective Character Education**
7.2 Student behaviors and mistakes are used as opportunities to teach and reinforce character development.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

❑ The school provides staff training in developmentally appropriate forms of classroom management, which includes a focus on developing clear character-based expectations for behavior throughout the school and is supported by the publication, instruction, and practice of procedures to support school expectations.

❑ The school’s discipline code uses explanation, discussion, and natural and logical consequences in ways that help students learn from their mistakes, reflect on core values that may have been violated in discipline situations and how those core values might be practiced and demonstrated in the future, repair relationships, and implement a plan for behavior improvement.

❑ Students have a developmentally appropriate role in classroom management and school governance (e.g., participating in the creation of behavioral norms and rules, class meetings, conflict resolution programs, and student governance bodies such as student court).

7.3 Character education is evident in how teachers organize their classes.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

❑ Students help to create classroom routines and procedures that address their needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence.

❑ Classroom routines and procedures are respectful of students and engage them in ways that develop core values such as responsibility, fairness, caring, diligence, and perseverance. Teachers explain to students how the core values underlie classroom routines and procedures.

❑ Teachers and students can point to and explain the policies and procedures that support academic integrity, establishing clear guidelines around owning work and acceptable levels of collaboration (e.g., lessons on proper citation of sources and plagiarism, testing strategies to resist cheating, honor pledges or honor codes, and honor committees or courts).
EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 7 IN ACTION

Intrinsic motivation is very evident at **STEM Early College in Greensboro, North Carolina** where high school students are immersed in a college environment. As teacher Ashley King says, “We value effort, not just end results.” Students realize learning is a process that is exciting in its own right. King continues, “We help our students develop their own academic plans and recognize the personal steps they must take.” Whether it’s tutoring offered by older students, student-led cultural fairs, “lunch and learn” sessions, senior internships, or a host of other student-centric initiatives, young people take ownership at STEM. Clearly, the students buy-in and feel personally invested.

At the same time, intrinsic motivation is modeled by the teachers and staff. **STEM** is not a place where students are given frequent “prizes.” In every classroom others can observe students who are on task with teachers who are equally engaged. Teachers partner with students in project-based learning and show their own enthusiasm for the process. The **STEM** teachers’ passion is contagious and provides students with a natural template for learning; it shows them motivation comes from within and is not dependent upon external honors and awards. Whether it’s the relationships they form, or the content they explore, or a combination of both, **STEM** teachers bring a lot of heart to the table. Principal Williams says it well: “We love a lot; we care a lot.”

Illustrating **STEM**’s success with intrinsic motivation, Marshall Matson (who provides county / region-wide support to NC schools and who represents four colleges) says, “**STEM** is very intentional with their approach. They are building a sense of ‘authentic people.’” This notion of “authentic people” is indeed very rich at **STEM** and underscores the depth and breadth of their intrinsic motivation. **STEM** is clearly building up “authentic people” who love learning for the sake of learning combined with learning for the sake of making a difference.
**PRINCIPLE 8**

All staff share the responsibility for developing, implementing, and modeling ethical character.

All school staff—teachers, administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, resource teachers, school psychologists and social workers, nurses, coaches, secretaries, cafeteria workers, playground and classroom aides, bus drivers—need to be involved in learning about, designing, discussing, and taking ownership of the school’s character education effort. First and foremost, staff members assume this responsibility by modeling the core values in their own behavior and taking advantage of opportunities to positively influence the students with whom they interact. Second, the same values and norms that govern the life of students serve to govern the collective life of adult members in the school community. Like students, adults grow in character by working collaboratively, sharing best practices, and participating in decision-making that improves all areas of the school. They also benefit from meaningful staff development and opportunities to observe colleagues and then apply character development strategies in their own work with students. Third, a school devotes time to staff reflection on issues that affect their collective pursuit of excellence and ethics. Through faculty meetings and smaller support groups, a reflective staff regularly asks questions such as: What character-building experiences is the school already providing for its students? How effective and comprehensive are these? What negative behaviors is the school currently failing to address? What school practices are at odds with its professed core values and desire to develop a School of Character? Reflection of this nature is an indispensable condition for developing an all-encompassing culture of character.

8.1 All staff commit to and hold each other accountable for modeling ethical character.

**Key indicators of exemplary implementation:**

- Staff act in accordance with the school’s core values (e.g., are courteous to students and each other, demonstrate respectful and supportive behavior toward students).

- Staff have created behavioral norms and feel comfortable approaching peers to discuss their actions and/or challenging situations.

- When asked how they can best help students understand and act on the core values, staff members will specifically cite their role as a model for student work and behavior.

- Students and parents report that staff model the core values (e.g., courtesy, friendliness, honesty, integrity).
8.2 All staff members are involved in planning, designing, and implementing the school-wide character initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- All professional and support staff receive training and information on their role in the character education initiative and understand the part they play in its success. Administrators, teachers, and counselors receive ongoing staff development. There are artifacts or summaries of these professional development activities, and faculty note how these activities affect teaching or classroom practices.

- The school has created a sustained “ethical learning community” through professional development and opportunities for sharing and input. Staff demonstrate, through their words and behavior, that they understand their role as moral educators. Staff can identify resources and research in character education that is relevant to their work.

- Individual teachers, grade-level teams, and the staff as a whole participate in planning for character education.

- All staff members are empowered and have opportunities to be involved in character education planning, design, and implementation in their roles.

(For districts):
- The district trains teachers, principals, and other school personnel in character education and social-emotional learning on a recurring basis; trains new teachers; and provides funding for staff planning, training, and attending conferences on character education.

8.3 Time is given to staff to learn about, plan, and reflect on the teaching of character in their roles.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Aspects of the character education initiative appear regularly on the agendas of faculty meetings and in-service days.

- The administration provides staff release time for development of competencies, research on best practices, planning of events, and reflection.

- All staff use core values to reflect on their own behaviors and procedures, in each of their roles.
8.3 Time is given to staff to learn about, plan, and reflect on the teaching of character in their roles (continued).

(For districts):
❑ The district encourages sharing information by providing venues for collaboration among schools; establishing a centralized source of materials, curricula, and other tools; and sponsoring regular conferences or meetings on character education.

EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 8 IN ACTION

The central administration in Sewell, New Jersey provides the resources and professional training for the staff, but Mantua Township Public School District’s character program is anything but a “top-down” initiative. At the helm, always planning next steps and activities is the Character Council, consisting of administrators, guidance counselors, and staff. Meeting once a month, the members, in turn, go to the three schools and confer with the staffs at faculty meetings. Christine Connelly, basic skills teacher and a Character Council member from the outset, remarks, “Teachers do great things all the time.” Realizing this, the Council has assembled a digital file of character lessons related to the curriculum so that all teachers have access to a host of worthwhile lessons and activities.
The school’s character initiative has shared leadership and long-range support for continuous improvement.

Schools that are engaged in effective character education have leaders who visibly champion the effort and share leadership with all stakeholders. Many schools and districts establish a character education committee—often composed of staff, students, parents, and community members—that takes responsibility for design, planning, implementation, assessment, and support. Over time, a leadership team of the school or district continues to set goals and sustain the character initiative. The leadership also takes steps to provide for the long-range support (e.g., adequate staff development, time to plan and implement, funding) of the character education initiative, including, ideally, support at the district and state levels. In addition, within the school, students assume developmentally appropriate roles in leading the character education effort through, for example, class meetings, student government, peer mediation, cross-age tutoring, service clubs, task forces, and student-led initiatives.

9.1 The school principal and other leaders champion the character initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Stakeholders (i.e., faculty, parents, students, community members) report that the principal is a visible and supportive champion of the effort, values and trusts their input, and creates a shared leadership and school culture that would allow character education efforts to continue at full strength even if the principal left the school.

- Actions and statements of the principal and other key leaders are clearly supportive of character education and the long-range survival and growth of the initiative (e.g., through articulation of goals and principles; modeling and personal example; and decisions regarding policies, personnel, staff development, and allocation of time and other resources).

- Key leaders seek professional development about character education and relevant leadership knowledge and competencies.

(For districts):
- Character education is a shared priority of the district board and district superintendent.
The district hires school principals and central office personnel committed to character education and encourages them to incorporate character education into their work and evaluation of staff.

The district requires central office personnel (e.g., superintendents, athletic directors, directors of guidance and other student and administrative services) to incorporate character education into their work.

9.2 There is a leadership team dedicated to the character initiative that includes staff, students, and parents.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- An inclusive leadership group or structure (e.g., character education committee or task force open to volunteers rather than merely appointed, standing school committee(s), committee of the whole) guides character education strategic planning, implementation, and assessment. Artifacts such as minutes, strategic plans, and/or project portfolios describe this group’s activities.

- Key stakeholders can identify the groups or structures that guide character education planning and ways they can have input into decisions that affect them. They report shared ownership of the decision-making process and perceive the leadership team to be competent and representative of the whole school community.

- Leadership teams engage the entire school community in taking ownership for the character initiative and nurture new leadership.

- The leadership team is responsible for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the school or district’s character education plan and ensuring it is sustainable.

(For districts):

- An ongoing district-community character education committee guides the planning and implementation of districtwide character education efforts. The committee includes representatives of local government agencies, business partners, religious organizations, youth organizations, parents, students, and staff representatives from the schools.
9.3 Students are explicitly involved in leadership roles that contribute to the character initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

❑ Students value the leadership roles available to them and identify themselves as members of wider communities (e.g., state, nation, world) in which they can play positive and contributory roles.

❑ Students have frequent and real opportunities to advise the staff on character education.

❑ Multiple artifacts recognize the recruitment, training, and activities involved in student-led projects.

❑ Students are taught leadership skills and are offered developmentally appropriate ways to demonstrate responsibility and respect for one another in school activities and programs.

EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 9 IN ACTION

At Medlin Middle School in Trophy Club, Texas, 8th grade Student Council President Sophia states, “Mrs. Cantrell has done a great job of emphasizing the core values throughout our school since she became principal.” But most impressive is the student buy-in and input. They own this movement, and their leadership is evident throughout the school. Students plan character lessons and videos for training during advisory period, research and facilitate empathy projects, plan and conduct community service projects, choose clubs for promoting connectivity, and participate in community parades and drives. Eighth grader Dakota stated, “They don’t see us as a bunch of middle school students. They see us as people who are growing. They see us as individuals. We’re treated as young adults, and I think that helps towards feeling like a young adult and being able to handle issues like a young adult.”
The school engages families and community as partners in the character initiative.

Schools that reach out to families and include them in character-building efforts greatly enhance their chances for success with students. They communicate with families—via newsletters, emails, family nights, parent workshops, the school website, and parent conferences—about goals and activities regarding character education. To build greater trust between home and school, parents are represented on the character education committee or through whatever decision-making structures exist. These schools also make a special effort to reach out to subgroups of parents who may not feel part of the school community.

Finally, schools and families enhance the effectiveness of their partnership by recruiting the help of the wider community (i.e., businesses, youth organizations, religious institutions, the government, and the media) in promoting character development. There are many benefits from these partnerships: Young people continue learning whether in or out of the school building and receive the support and resources of the larger community, while the larger community is strengthened by giving to and interacting with schools. When schools take the time to build these partnerships, they find that rather than adding more work to an already full plate, they lighten their load and enhance the effectiveness of their character education initiative. Character education must be a community-wide effort as it takes a village to raise children. It is a labor of love to prepare the next generation to be ready to ethically lead us all.

10.1 Families are involved in the character initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Parents serve in character education leadership roles and are actively involved in carrying the character initiative to the parent-teacher organization and parent community.

- Families report being aware and supportive of the initiative and can identify the school’s core values.

- Parents are recruited, trained, and frequently volunteer and are active contributors to and participants in school and classroom events that go beyond fundraising.

- The school, and in particular, the front office, is welcoming to parents, and staff prioritize inclusive outreach to parents.
10.2 The school communicates often with parents and guardians about the character initiative and seeks families’ input and engagement.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school communicates with families about its character education efforts using a variety of techniques (e.g., report cards, notes, emails, phone calls, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, group meetings, websites).

- The school hosts workshops for parents and families which integrate character. Topics might include internet safety, parenting techniques, healthy sexuality education or homework tips.

- The school can provide evidence of strong two-way communication regarding the character education initiative.

- Parents provide input, guidance, and evaluation data to the school regarding the effectiveness of the initiative and how it might be improved.

- Strategies are in place to welcome new families to school and orient them to the school’s academic and character education mission.

10.3 The school seeks help and involvement from the wider community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Community members (e.g., representatives of local government agencies, business partners, religious organizations, youth organizations, other schools) serve in character education leadership roles and are actively involved in carrying the character initiative into the larger community.

- Members of the larger community report being aware and supportive of the initiative, and elements of the initiative may be integrated into community activities (e.g., youth sports programs, after-school activities, youth-serving organizations such as 4-H or scouts, businesses or other organizations that promote core values or help with service projects).

- Community members volunteer in the school and are active contributors to and participants in school and classroom events (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, support of learning experiences).

11 Principles of Effective Character Education
10.3 The school seeks help and involvement from the wider community (continued).

(For districts):

- The district engages a broad spectrum of the community in its character education initiative with particular focus on involvement of appropriate local government agencies, youth-serving organizations, and the business community.

EXAMPLE OF PRINCIPLE 10 IN ACTION

Parents feel loved and accepted at Wilton Manors Elementary School in Wilton Manors, Florida. Stephanie Craig shared, “We are VIPs here, but we don’t have to be VIPs to get here.” Frederick Sykes, PTA president, shared, “This is an awesome school! It is an inclusive environment where everyone feels a part of the family. People move into the area to be at this school. There is mutual respect, and it is down to earth. The principal, Mrs. Holtz, never turns any parent or anyone away. She knows everyone and loves the kids.” The care and devotion of the parents is truly incredible! Frederick Sykes no longer has students at the school, but the group of PTA parents asked him to return and help them for another year, and he agreed. The school offers Active Parenting classes (in three languages) and provides childcare for children with Autism so that their parents can attend. This school is connected to their community through before and after school care that is provided by the city. The people who work for the city providing the care feel like they are also part of the school. They are using the common language of the attitudes and teaching character in their program now as well, and the school works closely with them. They have established a true partnership!
The school assesses its implementation of character education, its culture and climate, and the character growth of students on a regular basis.

Effective character education includes ongoing assessment of progress and outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative measures. The school uses a variety of assessment data (e.g., academic test scores, focus groups, survey results) that include the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents. Schools report on these data and use them to determine next steps. Schools administer assessments to stakeholders early in their character education initiative and again later to assess progress.

Three outcomes merit attention. First, schools assess the culture and climate of the school in light of the core values by asking stakeholders questions about the extent to which members of the school community demonstrate the core values and thereby function as an ethical learning community. For example, schools might administer climate surveys in which they ask students whether they agree with statements such as, “Students in this school (classroom) respect and care about each other.” These core values are reviewed annually so that they can be kept current and stakeholders feel connected. Second, the school assesses the staff’s engagement as character educators by examining the extent to which they model the core values and integrate these values into their teaching and other interactions with students. Schools ask teachers to reflect upon their character education practices, survey students about their perceptions of their teachers as role models, and have administrative procedures in place to monitor desired teacher behaviors. Third, the school assesses the initiative by examining the degree to which students manifest understanding of, commitment to, and action upon the core ethical values. Schools can, for example, gather data on various character-related behaviors (e.g., attendance, suspensions, vandalism, service hours, drug incidents, and cheating). Effective schools collect data on desired student attitudes and behaviors and report to parents on students’ reflections on character through standard practices such as report cards and as a part of parent/teacher conferences).

11.1 Core values are reviewed and discussed annually so that they can be reaffirmed, updated, or revised as needed.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- All stakeholders (anyone who has a vested interest in the school community) have been surveyed about the effectiveness of the core values.
Core values are aligned with daily activities, discipline, code of conduct interactions, events, etc.

Core values are communicated with everyone (students, staff, parents, secretaries, custodians, paraprofessionals, aides, substitutes, etc.), including a process for new stakeholders to help sustain the character initiative.

Schools have created a touchstone, mantra, creed, or other way of embedding the core values.

11.2 The school sets goals and measures (both quantitatively and qualitatively) its culture, climate, and character initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

.wrapper{x}{• The school has created and can document a plan for character education, or the school follows the district’s plan.

• The school can provide artifacts demonstrating character education assessment results and conclusions drawn from these results (e.g., data on school climate, academic integrity, and digital citizenship gathered from students, staff, and parents).

• The school uses qualitative and quantitative data in an ongoing manner to make changes and improvements to the character education initiative (e.g., data on academic achievement shows positive results since the implementation and growth of the character education initiative).

(For districts):
• The district arranges for and finances assessment of the district’s character education initiative.

11.3 All staff members are given time to reflect upon and discuss character implementation and individual growth.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

• Teachers periodically gather feedback from their students on their perceptions of character-related activities and the extent to which teachers are modeling the core values.
The school requires all staff to report on their efforts to meet character education goals (e.g., through lesson plans, participation in activities and projects, through staff surveys).

Staff examine and reflect on data through structured and informal opportunities (e.g., focus groups, professional learning communities, faculty discussions, and committee meetings).

The school character education leadership team reports to stakeholders on efforts to implement character education.

(For districts):

The district builds implementation of character education into the assessment of school principals and in turn asks principals to evaluate integration of character education into their assessments of school staff.

11.4 The school assesses how the character education initiative impacts students.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school uses a variety of approaches (e.g., report cards, student-led parent/teacher conferences, goal-setting rubrics) to assess student progress in the area of character development.

- In questionnaires and reflections on character-related behaviors and core values, students rate the importance of core values in their lives as high (e.g., on a survey question such as “Students in the school (classroom) respect and care about each other,” more than 80 percent of students would agree or highly agree).

- Data collected on student behavior (e.g., attendance, suspensions, vandalism, service hours, drug incidents, and cheating) demonstrate growth in the understanding of and commitment to good character.

- Program development and modifications can be attributed to evaluation of the character initiative.
MacArthur High School in Lawton, Oklahoma is very intentional about surveying all stakeholders about character development. They disaggregate data, use the 11 Principles to assess the campus, and then create a strategic plan to make changes based on the results. A freshman course was piloted this year to teach character development as well as other skills. The course has been so successful that all freshmen will be required to take it next year. It is clear the educators at this school are aware of the data and use it to make informed decisions about all facets of campus life.
ABOUT THE 11 PRINCIPLES

Tom Lickona, Ph.D, Eric Schaps, Ph.D, and Catherine Lewis, Ph.D., wrote the *11 Principles of Effective Character Education* in 1995. It has since become the cornerstone of Character.org’s philosophy on effective character education, well respected in the field, and widely used by practitioners.

To provide an assessment tool based on the 11 Principles and a scoring rubric by which to evaluate Schools of Character applicants, Character.org developed the *Character Education Quality Standards*.

Character.org revised the Quality Standards document in 2003 and again in 2006 with Kathy Beland writing the 2006 revision after coordinating feedback from the Schools of Character Blue Ribbon Panel, Schools of Character site visitors, and other experts in character education. In a 2008 reprinting, Character.org added “performance values” language to the document.

In 2009, Character.org decided to combine the 11 Principles and Quality Standards into a single document and update its language to reflect current movements within education and better reflect the best practices being implemented in model schools as revealed in Schools of Character applications and site visits. Rebecca Sipos and Lara Maupin led a staff committee that included Janice Stoodley, Dr. Merle Schwartz, Barbara Luther, and Michael Shreve. The committee worked in consultation with experts in the field of character education and experienced character education practitioners as it wrote the 2010 revision.

In 2017, additional revisions were made with the goal of simplifying language and updating to current educational concerns. This revision was completed with the Education Advisory Council subcommittee of Dr. Marvin Berkowitz, Dr. Phillip Brown, and Dr. David Wangaard along with Dr. Amy Johnston, Sheril Morgan, Tamra Nast, Sora Wondra and Character.org state coordinators.

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ABOUT CHARACTER.ORG

Founded in 1993, Character.org, is a national nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. with a mission to provide leadership and advocacy for character worldwide. It is dedicated to help people everywhere become educated, inspired, and empowered to be ethical and compassionate citizens. Character.org validates character initiatives in schools, sports, families, and the workplace through certifications and sharing of best practices.
ELEVEN PRINCIPLES OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

Effective character education:

1. Promotes core values.
2. Defines “character” to include thinking, feeling, and doing.
3. Uses a comprehensive approach.
4. Creates a caring community.
5. Provides students with opportunities for moral action.
6. Offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum.
7. Fosters students’ self-motivation.
8. Unites staff through collaborative learning.
10. Engages families and community members as partners.
11. Assesses the culture and climate of the school.