

## This Month's Best Practice

Each Month the Maryland Center for Character Education at Stevenson University (MCCE@SU) picks one of the Best Practices from a Character Education award winning school to share with you.

**APRIL 2020**

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County: Carroll County

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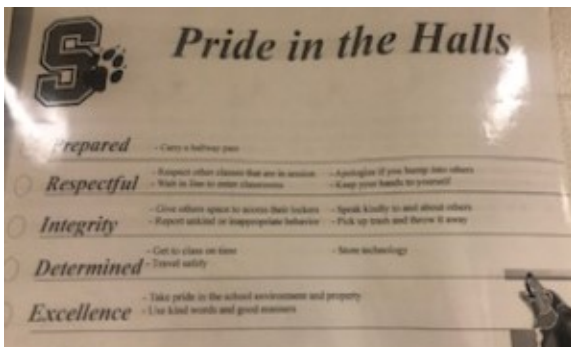
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**PRIMARY PRINCIPLES EMPHASIZED:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11

### Principle 1 Promotes core ethical values as the basis for good character.

Through our PBIS program, Shiloh promotes core ethical values, behavior, and good character through our acronym P.R.I.D.E: Being Prepared, being Respectful, having Integrity, being Determined and striving for Excellence. When students show any of these traits, teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians or any other staff member can reward them with a PRIDE card. Students are able to recognize how to earn a card because there are multiple matrices hung throughout the school, defining each trait in a specific area of the building. Students are constantly exposed to consistent language, in regards to their behavior, “PRIDE in the Pack”, our school motto. Our students hear the PRIDE traits from all staff members. At the end of each month, students may “cash-in” their PRIDE cards for various items: candy, school supplies, ice cream coupon, golf game, high school swag, season passes to high school athletic events, bowling tickets, etc. Students that best exemplify these traits may be identified as a “Student of the Month” and quite a few are recognized with a Positive Office Referral. These students receive a PRIDE card and a positive phone call home to a parent/guardian. At Shiloh, PRIDE trait banners are located throughout the hallways, classrooms, and woven into our daily announcements, achievement assemblies, and are written on our students’ agenda books. PRIDE continues to be integrated into every part of Shiloh’s activities. We are confident that Shiloh students can identify each trait.



## **Principle 2 Defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and doing.**

Shiloh’s PBIS and Character Education Program have helped define exemplary character by acquiring student, staff, and community input. At Shiloh, character Education is integrated through implementation of our curriculum, quality instruction, engaging lessons, activities and school-wide initiatives. Shiloh has defined exemplary character through the use of our PBIS matrices. These posters hang in the Cafeteria, in the Media Center, in classrooms, and in our hallways. The matrices specifically define how each trait of PRIDE looks in our school. These definitions are used by teachers, counselors, and administrators when meeting with students, whether it is during individual conferences or during assemblies with entire grades. Although students are being rewarded with PRIDE cards for their good character, we are finding that some students do not accept the reward because they have already internalized the definition of having and showing good character; they do the right thing simply because they should. While this may seem counter-productive to a reward system, it actually is exactly what we want from our students: ownership of their own good character.

As a school, we have found different ways to reward these students. Each grade level and our PE & Related Arts team choose four students to be “Students of the Month”. They are recognized for showing the traits in PRIDE. These students are recognized on the morning announcements and they receive a certificate and a coupon for a free meal or activity at a local establishment. Their pictures are then displayed on the Wolf PRIDE bulletin board in our main hallway. We have also adopted a PBIS system for the staff. Staff can drop a “Hustle and Heart” card to another staff member that has been of great help or service to that staff member. Staff receives recognition and a paw print pin to recognize the good work that they do for students and/or other staff. Receiving recognition from colleagues, helps to keep a positive atmosphere by letting the staff member know that what they do is noticed and appreciated. It also shows the students that the teachers and administrators are following the PBIS program, as well.



## **Principle 3 Uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive, and effective approach to character development.**

To prepare for the implementation of the PRIDE program, Shiloh’s administration created a schedule to allow for weekly “PRIDE Time”. Twice a month, students meet with their Character Education teacher for lessons. The other PRIDE days are used for students to work on assignments, complete enrichment activities or second-chance learning. Here at Shiloh, we aim to be proactive with our character development of the students. Students start the year with the Camfel assembly. This year the theme was “It’s my Life”. This theme has been intertwined throughout the school year through student recognition assemblies and lessons taught by both our school counselors and classroom teachers. Students also took a pledge to raise awareness of mental health, which can be seen by their signature hanging on a large poster in our main hallway of the school.

The Character Education lessons are centered on topics that pertain to both our PRIDE program and our students' lives and experiences. During this school year, we have had lessons on: team building, our mission, service, kindness and caring, facing conflict perseverance and technology in our schools. The lessons use a variety of techniques to get the students thinking about the topics, such as discussion, games, video clips, articles as well as hands on activities.

The Carroll County Public School system focuses on Respect, Responsibility, and Resilience. Within our school community, we break it down even further.

### **P.R.I.D.E.**

Respect: Being a digital citizen

Respect: **Prepared**

Respect: Anti-bullying – Camfel Assembly

Responsibility: Service/Helpful

Responsibility: **Integrity**

Responsibility: Commitment/Dependability

Resilience: **Determination**

Resilience: Self Confidence

Resilience: **Excellence**

### **Principle 4 Creates a caring school community.**

Shiloh is a very caring place and this is evident in the amount of charity work that our students participate in. Every year, our students raise money for Rescue 1 in New York through our Hats for Heroes fundraiser. Students can bring in a donation of \$1 and then wear a hat for the day. This school year, Shiloh students raised approximately \$900 for Rescue One, the first responders on 9/11.

During the holiday season, the school participated in a canned food drive, which benefitted our local food bank. Students gathered approximately 250 pounds of food, which was then donated to NESAP, our local food pantry. Students also participated in another fundraiser, Hats for Hospitals, which raised money for Johns Hopkins children in the hospital. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students completed several different mini service projects throughout the year. In the Fall semester, the students made cards and cookies for the children at the community center to deliver for the “half way through the school year” party. They also made supply bags (with shampoo, conditioner, warm socks, soap, and toothbrushes) for the families that visit the center.

In the Spring semester, they made cookies for the Crossroads Community center in downtown Westminster. They also created activity booklets for the children who attend the community center on a regular basis. The center has mostly Spanish speaking visitors, so the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students made booklets with alphabet coloring pages, dot to dots with a variety of numbers and letters, and math problems for various age groups. The classes also had a contest to collect the most toiletry items for a local food pantry. They collected 4 large boxes worth of shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, hand sanitizer, and mouth wash.

Teachers and staff also provide support for families within our school through “Secret Santa” gifts. Shiloh determines the needs are for several families and the staff is able to provide a holiday, which may have been meager due to the family’s financial need. Shiloh also has a field trip fund to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in enriching activities. These charities listed are just a few, but they are examples of how we reach out to the community and teach our students the importance of creating a caring community through good deeds, actions, and character.



**Principle 5 Provides students with opportunities for moral action.**

Students at Shiloh are active in providing services and goods in the community. Students participated in a food drive that resulted in over 250 pounds of food collected. These items were donated to a local food bank to help families during the holiday season.

The Student Government Association at Shiloh is the largest SGA group in a middle school in our county. With 42 students across grades 6-8 the SGA has been an influential impact within the school and community. The SGA helps with Flag Football that raises money for Shiloh students that may be in need of various items throughout the school year. Shiloh sixth grade students are able to attend Outdoor school one week during their sixth grade year. Students work on environmental topics and reducing waste.

Each year, Hats for Heroes raises funds for 9/11 Rescue One unit. These funds are raised by students donating a dollar or more to wear a hat for the day at school. This school year, we raised approximately \$900 for Rescue One.



**Principle 6 School offers meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.**

Shiloh Middle School offers Honor level courses, with Gifted and Talented opportunities, to our high achieving students. These students work directly with CCPS staff who are trained to expand and extend learning in the areas of Humanities and STEM. The curriculum for the Gifted and Talented program is designed to extend the learning covered in the Honors classes and provides students with the opportunity to go deeper into the curriculum that would otherwise not be covered. The Gifted and Talented students participated in a field trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to extend their learning from Honors English/Language Arts.

Concurrently, the staff at Shiloh continues to further their own professional development needs. In the faculty lounge, a bulletin board is posted to allow staff to list their professional development needs. This allows the PD time at school to be effective, engaging, and “just in time learning” for the staff. The professional development is offered by our highly qualified teachers and when needed, outside individuals. Through various professional developments (system-wide, supervisor directed, college courses, and school initiatives), the staff has been trained in brain-based learning and the development of the middle school student. The staff at Shiloh is active in supporting each other through peer coaching, cross-curricular planning, and utilizing the team approach to meet the diverse needs of our students.

Our faculty has selected committees to meet once a month. One of the faculty directed committees is PBIS (Positive Behavior Incentives and Supports) and Character Education. The Character Education committee meets to discuss the character traits for the month and what needs to be presented or reinforced. The Character Education Trait is advertised school-wide, is addressed each month in the lessons, and is then modified to meet the needs of each grade level. The school motto “PRIDE in the Pack” is reinforced in each class in regards to academics and behavior. Teachers and students encourage each other to be a positive member of the pack.

**Principle 7 Strives to foster students’ self-motivation.**

Shiloh Middle School students are very self-motivated when it comes to lending a helping hand to those in need. The events that the students create and participate in is overwhelming and says a lot about our school and the climate that has been created. For example, one of our students has developed and organized a free food pantry in the community and has requested assistance from her fellow students to restock the shelves for the summer. As a result, our students are conducting an end of year food drive to benefit those in our community who may be in need throughout the summer.

While students understand that there are consequences for their actions, teachers here at Shiloh have worked hard to create a safe, supportive environment for students, affirming their belief in a student’s abilities rather than laying out the consequence of not doing things. Students have responded by staying more motivated to do their work.

Shiloh values good character traits and students are rewarded for exemplifying those traits. While some students are extrinsically motivated (i.e., receiving PRIDE cards), many of our Shiloh students are intrinsically motivated. (i.e., representing our “PRIDE in the Pack” motto because it’s the right thing to do).

Groups of students were polled to determine how we could improve the incentive program to meet the needs of the students and encourage them to participate in the PBIS program. The overwhelming response was “This is just the right thing to do.” Students did not want or feel the need to receive PRIDE cards for doing what should be done. Another group of students was polled to determine information about service learning projects. This group of students felt that they did not need to turn in service learning forms because helping others in the community was just “the right thing to do”.

Our Team Leaders meet every two weeks and our grade teams meet every week. These teams help to set and achieve academic goals and look at the academic success of the students. Within PBIS, discipline trends and issues that the school experiences and needs to address are reviewed. As a result, a new format has been implemented. During each student discipline meeting, the administration asks the student how their behavior and actions demonstrated “PRIDE in the Pack”. Students that are struggling with student-to-student conflict meet with a school counselor to work through the issue and then sign conflict resolution contracts that define and limit inappropriate interactions among the students and their peers. During the meeting with the students, they are provided with time to reflect by asking questions to determine other ways they could have handled the situation.

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

At Shiloh Middle School, we take pride in including ALL school staff to help carry out our school wide character education efforts. This includes our secretaries and even our custodial staff.

As a school, we hold monthly committee meetings such as SIT (School Improvement Team), PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports), Character Education, ETM (Multicultural Education) and Discipline. All teachers serve on a committee. We meet during the school day so that we have a greater impact with teacher contribution and involvement, which aids in the implementation of character education.

There is no better way to implement Character Education than through modeling by staff as a result of their interactions with other staff members and students. Teachers have the core values posted in their classrooms and, if stopped in the hallway, students can tell you what they are. Both teachers and students take “PRIDE in their Pack”!

The Character Education Committee is comprised of twelve teachers. The Character Education initiative is embedded in initiatives devised by our PBIS, SIT and ETM committees, which are then discussed monthly at faculty meetings. Feedback is sought from staff after a character education lesson has been taught to determine what worked, what needs to be revised, and ideas to improve for next time. The lessons focus on the core values and are comprised of articles detailing current events, video clips, songs, visuals, and more.



## **Principle 9 Fosters shared moral leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative.**

Shiloh Middle School has worked hard to embed character education into various areas of our school. Through collaboration among PBIS, ETM, Character Education, and Student Government, we are able to address and include all students and their diverse needs. Our motto is “PRIDE in the Pack” and we work together to plan and implement our action plan by integrating our PRIDE values within everyday curriculum, teacher’s conduct, and acknowledgement when a student is showing great character.

Teachers work hard to use consistent vocabulary in classroom conversations with students, especially when acknowledging students who show PRIDE in the classroom. For example, a teacher might say, “Thank you Joey, for showing integrity by choosing not to engage in conversation while taking your quiz.”

PRIDE does not just exist here at Shiloh Middle School. When 8<sup>th</sup> grade students travel to the high school in preparation for 9<sup>th</sup> grade, they see that many of the values posted in our hallways are in their hallways as well. We have worked very hard to bridge the gap between middle and high schools to make student adjustment easier. Students are able to see that they can find programs to fit their needs just like at Shiloh. For example, the Stand-up club works to spread an anti-bullying message throughout a high school that Shiloh Middle School feeds into. National Honors Society also holds an annual Unity Day to bring the school community together. They also have an SGA and Key Club that helps in fundraising and organizing events to assist the community and beyond.

When students are able to see the bigger picture, taking their values and morals with them wherever they go, they have the upper hand to stand up against students who may potentially pull them off course. Consistency and commonality aids in our students’ transition and results in a successful school year.



## **Principle 11 Evaluates the character of the school, the school staff’s functioning as character educators and the extent to which the students manifest good character.**

Shiloh Middle School regularly assesses its culture and climate. The PBIS and Character Education Committee value the modeling and examples set forth by the staff for the students. Teachers are rewarded for demonstrating positive character through other staff members submitting their name for a Hustle and Heart. These are cards for administration and teachers to write shout outs to each other to recognize the efforts of the staff.

Celebrating the little successes and the personal triumphs helps Shiloh to keep a positive school culture and climate. The School Improvement Team takes bi-annual reflections from the staff on how things are progressing at the school and shares the information with each committee. The committees then work closely with the School Improvement Team to identify areas of concern and areas to focus on for improvement.

Climate surveys have been given to the parents, students, and staff in the past and we are currently in the process of collecting survey data for this school year. Some items of the survey include but are not limited to providing us with data, specifically the perception of students/parents/staff on bullying. This will continue to be an initiative at Shiloh. Our goal is to be more proactive than reactive when it comes to issues of bullying and student conflict.