

*Character Education Newsletter*

**CHARACTER MATTERS!**

Volume 1 Issue 3 July 2007

**Character Education: Threads in the Fabric of Every School**

**“Growing Together: Integrating Character Education for Academic Achievement” Conference Yields Systemic Character Education Guidelines**

In the networking session of the character education conference, “Growing Together: Integrating Character Education for Academic Achievement,” associate superintendents, principals, central office personnel and Maryland State Department of Education directors named successful systemic strategies for character education initiatives.

The following strategies comprise one of the most comprehensive lists published and written by those professionals actually in the field.

- ◆ The character education initiative follows logically from the district Master Plan.
- ◆ A timely action plan defines the district character education initiative through the local school improvement team.
- ◆ Character education initiatives are based on individual needs assessments and relevant data.

- ◆ A central office committee coordinates and directs the district character education initiative.
- ◆ The character education initiative is present in all schools in the district.
- ◆ Chamber of Commerce and Local Management Board connection promotes character in the community.
- ◆ Service-learning is incorporated with character education at the district level.
- ◆ Public relations and news coverage highlights the district/schools character education initiative.
- ◆ Schools with exemplar character education initiatives are recognized.
- ◆ Continuous staff development is scheduled and implemented.

A comprehensive list of the systemic strategies identified will be available in a Maryland State Department of Education publication on the Partnerships in Character Education Grant.

**Common Elements  
Effective Systemic  
Character Education  
Initiatives**

Finding the **commonalities** of successful systemic strategies was a significant task undertaken by the superintendents, supervisors, and coordinators during their networking session.

Following are their four most successful strategies for implementing character education effectively throughout the system:  
First, character education is a **vital part of the district Master Plan** in that it is deliberate with an intentional action plan; **intertwining PBIS, Positive Interventions and Support program**, with the district character education

initiative; a **commitment to the initiative** by the central office staff; and **community involvement**.

*Character education is not an initiative that happens by accident.*

*It develops as a result of deliberate planning and implementation.*

*Character education is the ‘deliberate effort’ to cultivate virtue.*

Tom Lickona,  
CHARACTER MATTERS  
Touchstone, 2004

## School Personnel Identify Effective School-Level Character Education Strategies

Teams of teachers, counselors, and other school-based personnel identified effective character education strategies for moving the initiative forward at the school level. Below is a sampling of identified strategies from their networking session at the "Growing Together: Integrating Character Education for Academic Achievement" conference.

1. Common character language throughout the school.
2. Closed-circuit TV character skits on announcements.
3. Character Education scripts/recognition assemblies.
4. "Caught Being Good" reinforcement component.
5. Morning announcements focusing on character.
6. Positive referrals available to all students.
7. Relationships built with students through character education.
8. Recognition of students exemplifying good character at an assembly attended by parents and family.
9. Posted character matrix for every area of the school: classroom, restroom, hallways, playground, busses, cafeteria.
10. Teacher commitment to the school-wide character education initiative.

**"Teacher commitment to the school-wide character education initiative is essential."**

School-level Networking Group

A comprehensive list of the systemic strategies identified will be available in a forthcoming Maryland State Department of Education publication.

### Most Common Challenges and Solutions to School-Level Character Education Initiatives

Consistency, parent involvement, time, resources/funding, and teacher motivation are some of the challenges the school-level networking group cited.

Following are some proposed solutions to these challenges:

- ◆ For consistency, delineate a theme of the month/word of the day, so the character education plan is regulated;
- ◆ For parents, give them the resources necessary to participate in the character education initiative;
- ◆ To provide time, create a specific character class or have a pull-out for students;
- ◆ For funding, contact community/business partnerships;
- ◆ For teacher motivation provide staff development and publicize character education program successes

CHARACTER MATTERS is sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education and was developed under a grant from the Partnerships in Character Education Grant Title 4 Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs.

## Family/Community Involvement Strategies and Common Elements

Members of the Parent/Community Involvement character education group identified **successful strategies** for integrating character education into the family and community:

Following are some of their strategies: minority family forums, Character Coaches, Character Counts corner in the library, The Family Fair, Family Nights, Resource Fair, Raffles involving parents and students

Finding the **common elements** of successful community, family and student involvement strategies was a significant task undertaken by the family/community group during their networking session.

- ◆ Parents serving as volunteers in the school.
- ◆ Strong PTO (Parent, Teacher Organization).
- ◆ School-to-Home Newsletters.
- ◆ Agenda books supplied by Character Counts.
- ◆ Morning Character Counts announcements.
- ◆ Reinforcement of character initiative with bulletin boards, award ceremonies, etc.
- ◆ Parents valued as a resource and powerful medium for student achievement.
- ◆ Safety assured so parents and students feel emotionally and physically secure.
- ◆ Representation from a variety of resources in the community.
- ◆ All stakeholders are working toward the same goal.
- ◆ Strong action planning team with parent and student representatives.
- ◆ Clean and attractive school that parents and students are able to promote.

**"Parents must be valued as a resource and powerful medium for student achievement."**

Family/Community Involvement Network Group

## National Schools of Character Maryland Finalists

Two Maryland middle schools are among the 25 finalists to be named National Schools of Character.

- **Carroll County Public Schools**  
**East Middle School, Westminster, Maryland**
- **Montgomery County Public Schools Newport Mill Middle School, Kensington, Maryland**

Approximately ten schools will receive this honor, and the winners will be announced in late May. Being a finalist is a high honor, as hundreds of schools across the nation apply, and only a small number are chosen to be finalists. These 25 finalists will be visited by Character Education Partnership evaluators in the next few weeks, and their findings will be reviewed by the Blue Ribbon Panel who will name the ten 2007 National Schools of Character.

Schools are chosen based on their compliance with the Character Education Partnerships 11 Principles. Once schools are named, the Character Education Partnership helps these schools serve as models for other educators.

The 2007 National Schools of Character will be recognized at the Character Education Partnership's 14th National Forum on Character Education November 1-3, 2007 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, D.C.

For more information on the National Schools of Character program or the National Forum visit <http://www.character.org>

## United Streaming “Streamlines” Integration of Character Education into the Curriculum

United Streaming is a service that many school districts subscribe to, and it has a myriad of character education videos. In this issue of CHARACTER MATTERS, character lessons on “respect” were researched. There were 48 full videos and 119 video segments on the character trait “respect”.

The lessons that were researched included lesson plans complete with objectives, backline masters, facilitators’ guides, teachers’ guides, and curriculum standards. Videos range from elementary age to middle school age. There are some videos appropriate for high school, but they are not as prevalent. Type in the word :respect” in the search box and choose “within all content.”

Videos can be downloaded onto a CD and broadcast to the school via in-house video system, or teachers can be provided with individual CDs to play in their classrooms. Lessons and video clips can be tailored to your school population and needs.

To access United Streaming resources, go to <http://www.unitedstreaming.com>

**Free access to 48 full videos and 119 video segments on the character trait of “Respect.”**  
**Videos are complete with lesson plans, objectives, hand-outs, teachers guides and curriculum standards.**

### Save the Date!

#### Partnerships in Character Education Conference

September 27, 2007 Holiday Inn BWI

#### Character Education: A Framework for Academic Success

Including Maryland Center for Character Education Recognition Ceremony

#### Focus of the Fall Character Education Conference—

Effective strategies for integrating character education, funding/resources for sustaining character education initiatives, current research on successful character education strategies, evaluation procedures for assessing district character education initiatives, networking opportunities with local and national character education professionals.

Character Educators from all Maryland Districts are invited to attend.

For more information, contact Paula McCoach at (410) 767-0047 or [pmccoach@msde.state.md.us](mailto:pmccoach@msde.state.md.us)