

New to CE

I highly recommend those new to CE begin with the CE Partnership's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education and investing in the Source Book. Take the time to review these documents and review what your school already does in CE. Build on those activities to develop a mission statement and an action plan for CE. Provide time and resources for your committee to plan a calendar of CE activities for the coming year that addresses each principle. Lastly, include the children in your planning at every level. You will be pleased to see them work and bring their program to life.

Overview

What is Character Education?

The Pequannock Township Schools and the North Boulevard Elementary School's mission statement is Educating Every Student, Every Day in Every Way (E3). E3 embodies the key character education concepts, the Six Pillars of Character. Our journey began in the 1990's with a "Character Words of the Month" program and New Jersey Bar Association's Win/Win conflict resolution lessons, to arrive in 2011 with daily celebrations of Josephson Institute's core values, the Six Pillars of Character. The NB CE program is highlighted by a developmental approach to conflict resolution (Peace Bridge, Peacemakers, and Heart Club). We are proud and encouraged by the Character Education Partnership's recognition of our Peacemakers Program as a 2010 Promising Practice. NB students learn and apply these core values through our version of the Bucket Filling Program. Our students now have the opportunity to learn and use the vocabulary of Bucket Filling combined with anti-bullying concepts through frequent CE lessons taught by the related arts staff. The values of caring and empathy extend beyond the boundaries of the school through grade-level service learning projects and our School Ambassadors Club. This service club was recognized by the Character Education Partnership Promising Practice Program in 2011. We are confident the three legs of E3 will help our students live the 2011-12 school learning theme, "Our Good Character is Out of this World!"

Eleven Principles

Principle 1: The school community promotes core ethical and performance values as the foundation of good character:

(1.1) Stakeholders in the school community select or assent to a set of core values. The NBS CE Committee has represented the key stakeholders of the school for the last five years. We recognized the need to educate the whole child and this guided the CE Committee in its five year journey to become a school of character founded on the Six Pillars. We aspire to become a school of character and to this end we added the Bucket Fillers program (intro.) It helps our children easily see and apply the Six Pillars. Core values are promoted daily, when students read Words of Wisdom announcements; weekly through the CE club meetings; and monthly, during our Character and Team Spirit (C.A.T.S.) assemblies. **(1.2) Core ethical and performance values actively guide every aspect of life in the school:** New teachers are strong exemplars of CE because CE begins at NB with the hiring of new staff. The value of CE instruction is part of the interview process and continues with the mentoring of new staff. CE instruction of the core values is maintained by constant attention in staff and PLC meetings. Teachers discuss, review CE data, and plan lessons in these meetings that promote a deep understanding of the core values. **(1.3) The school community articulates its character-related goals and expectations through visible statements of its core ethical and performance values:** The Six Pillars are clearly visible at NBS, and the first thing visitors see as they drive past the Six Pillars street signs in our parking lot. Additionally, the pillars are posted in every classroom and on hallway bulletin boards/murals. The community is kept

informed through the school TV station WNBS AV Club, in monthly newsletters, and the NB website. A fine example of this visibility was at the November 2011 Board of Education Meeting hosted by the Heart and School Ambassadors Clubs. The students demonstrated their problem solving/conflict resolution skills and the Bucket Filling program to Board members and then honored parent volunteers for their help in building our outdoor CE classroom, the NB Learning Garden.

Principle 2: The school defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and doing.

(2.1) The school helps students acquire a developmentally appropriate understanding of what the core values mean in everyday behavior and grasp the reasons why some behaviors (e.g., doing your best and respecting others) represent good character and their opposites *do not*: NB students learn empathy and moral reasoning through several key programs. Problem solving is broken down into age appropriate behavioral steps for all students through our PeaceMaker and Win/Win Guideline lessons taught by all staff. The Bridge to Peace is posted in all classrooms, hallways and painted on the playground ready for student use. **(2.2) The school helps students reflect upon the core values, appreciate them, desire to demonstrate them, and become committed to them:** The NBS H.S.A., Reading, Enrichment, and CE committees, seek enrichment programs that help students make connections to core values. Notable visitors included NJ Devils’ hockey greats, children’s author Dan Gutman, and various community leaders. The children learn from exemplars in sports, literature, and the community, that moral action can be inspiring and fun. One of the most moving outcomes of helping students become morally aware is the NB Colors Program. The Colors Program is named for the colors in the Autism Awareness logo. Our 4th and 5th grade students volunteer their free time to tutor and play with students in our two “SNAPP-Children With Autism” classes and pre-school-kindergarten special needs classes. **(2.3) The school helps students practice the core values so that they become habitual patterns of behavior:** Transfer of CE values to daily school life means modeling the Six Pillars, practice with social skills/problem solving, and reflection that makes safe practice by our children become habitual. An example of NB students modeling moral action was the Classroom Close-Up television segment (Peacemakers, NJN December 2010) where students in the Heart Club and Peacemakers showcased their commitment to peacemaking. The spirit of this event continued when Heart Club modeled the Win/Win in an assembly program during the NJ “HIB” Week in Oct. 2011 (1.3). The annual school-wide Polar Express Program held in Dec. of each year is the NB signature CE program that gives each child the chance to give to those less fortunate and act a caring community.

Principle 3: The school uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to character development:

(3.1) The school is intentional and proactive in addressing character at all grade levels: The NBS CE Committee develops a yearly calendar of comprehensive CE plan in coordination with other committees and extra-curricular advisors by linking to a school theme encouraging CE integration in all academic areas. Year-long, learning themes enable students to bridge CE lessons to academic success. This year’s school theme, Our Good Character is Out of This World! , helped our school community reach out to those affected by terrible flooding in the spring of and fall of 2011. **(3.2) Character education is integrated into academic content and instruction:** One of the most inspiring examples of integrated values education was the Number the Stars thematic unit taught in a 5th grade classroom in May of 2011. The teacher, nurse, school principal, students, and parents taught lessons of the Holocaust in the novel unit Number the Stars. Each student understood the moral dilemma in the novel and expressed personal feelings in projects explaining their connection to the historical content. The unit culminated with a visit by a Holocaust survivor who inspired all in a special assembly program. The impact on the

children was illustrated in the Holocaust Memorial Quilt created with the help of their parents. One child shared in her reflection essay that the Number the Stars unit “changed her life forever.” The entire school district adopted this thematic unit for all 5th graders in 2011. **(3.3) Character education is a priority in how teachers conduct their classes:** The students and teachers of NB feel they are a part of team each day with the morning announcements read by 5th grade (Words of Wisdom), which include an inspiring thought and a peace pledge. Classroom routines promote student independence through the well-researched Daily Five class-management routine. The D-5 gives the students experience with voice, choice, and responsibility in all instruction. **(3.4) Character education is infused throughout the school day in classes, sports, meetings, and co-curricular activities:** All NB clubs (School Ambassadors, Character Council, Colors, Music Chorus, Heart, Computer, Creativity, and AV) must integrate some aspect of CE in their projects. The highly visible Peace Bridge and Pillars are reminders of CE expectations.

Principle 4: The school creates a caring community:

(4.1) The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments between students and staff: Creating a caring community is a high priority of our school. Daily modeling, practice, and recognition help transfer the pillar of caring into true belonging in our school. Survey results show that NB cares! 93% of students report “My teacher always cares about me.” An outstanding example of building this sense of belonging/teamwork was the “Joes vs. Pros” student-faculty volleyball game held in May 2011. A 5th grade student read *Hot Shot* and asked the Character Council (1.1) to support her desire to make the book come to life. The resulting “Joes vs. Pros” game was successful in building the pillar of caring. Teachers regularly attend school and student social events. **(4.2) The school makes it high priority to help students form caring attachments to each other:** Friendly relationships are taught, modeled, and encouraged through class management strategies (D-5 3.3), direct instruction of social skills, and cooperative learning skills. Students form classroom teams with a unique identity and sense of belonging and most children consistently demonstrate a true sense of caring. It is no surprise that NB survey results show that 91% of students say they “have friends at school.” Activities such as the Mix It Up Lunch, Annual Friendship March, Colors Club (2.2) and School Ambassadors (1.3, 2.1) promote caring in school. Parents agree/strongly agree (92%) that their child’s classmates are caring and trustworthy. **(4.3) The school takes steps to prevent peer cruelty and violence and deals with it effectively when it occurs:** “HIB” programs that prevent bullying behaviors highlight our CE program (intro., 1.1, 2.1, 2.3, 3.4). **(4.4) The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments among adults within the school community:** Community volunteers are an integral part of NB’s success. Parents consistently report they are welcome (100% 2010, 98% 2011) in school. They volunteer throughout the school (1.3) and participate on many standing committees that promote excellence in learning and relationships throughout the school year. The NB staff believes our school has a caring climate (100% “always/most times) and they participate in the Sunshine Club, staff breakfasts, holiday parties, and “Jeans Fridays” to raise money for charity.

Principle 5: The school provides students with opportunities for moral action:

(5.1) The school sets clear expectations for students to engage in actions that develop and demonstrate good character: Students have the opportunity to demonstrate moral action daily at NBS and live the Six Pillars of Character. Conflict resolution programs {Heart Club & Peace Makers (intro.)} provide all students with a means to problem solve and interact with peers and adults. CE lessons (Bucket Fillers) help students rise to higher levels of understanding as they make connections between true moral action and core academic content (Polar Express (2.3), Number the Stars (3.2), and the

Character Council's Code of Conduct (7.2). **(5.2) The school provides all students with varied opportunities of engaging in positive, responsible action within the school, and students engage in these opportunities and reflect on them:** NBS offers multiple opportunities for service in the school. NB Students may serve as Library and Art Room Helpers, Safety Patrol, Study Buddies, Peace Bridge, Peer Mediators, School Ambassadors, Character Council, and help autistic children through our Colors program. The student recycling programs begun under the Go Green theme programs have become part of the daily routine at NBS demonstrating that NB kids care about their school and the environment. **(5.3) The school provides all students with repeated and varied opportunities for making contributions to the larger community, and students engage in these opportunities and reflect on them:** We believe the best form of CE is service learning where students have opportunities to turn action into learning. One outstanding example of NB service learning was the March 2011 "Read to Feed" program. The CE and Reading Committee teamed with the students (Creativity Club) to link service learning with Read Across America Week by helping the Community Food Bank of NJ. Students held a twelve-hour reading marathon raising one thousand dollars for the Food Bank. The students read after school hours with their teachers, parents, and notable guest readers such as our Township Mayor, and the 2011 NJ State Teacher of the Year.

Principle 6: The school offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed:

(6.1) The academic curriculum provides meaningful and appropriate challenges to all students: North Boulevard School instructional model respects all learners by giving them a voice and choice in their learning. The D-5 is the best example of how NB teachers give students personal choices and provide them an opportunity to exercise responsibility in the classroom (3.3, 4.2). The 4th grade's New Jersey Day and Inventor's Day, 5th grade's Colonial Day, and Number the Stars, are just a few of many examples of project based learning at NB that promote critical thinking. **(6.2) The school staff identifies, understands, and accommodates the diverse interests, cultures, and learning needs of all students:** We focus on student achievement at NB and make a strong effort to maximize student learning. A "football game plan" analogy captures the big idea for developing comprehensive plans for student achievement. Each staff member has their own S.T.A.R.S. binder that organizes student data to facilitate differentiation (the playbook). Teachers use data collected from common formative assessments to individualize instruction (the plays). Learning is individualized at NB and students help develop personal goals for their learning on a daily and weekly basis (D-5). The data is discussed in regular PLC meetings to help the teaching team meet the needs of all students. They work to close achievement gaps or enrich the curricula (the touchdown!). When the Super Bowl of Tests arrives, we help alleviate anxiety associated with the standardized testing, by holding a NJ ASK Pep Rally. Students wear special "No Stress" T-shirts, participate in "Testercize," and given "You Can Do It" cards by the younger, non-test taking students (Cheerleaders). **(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:** Teachers model good habits and expect students to be cooperative, supportive, honest, and responsible for their individual learning. The Character Council chose to take the idea of academic integrity one-step further by linking the pillars of character to the school code of conduct (7.2).

Principle 7: The school fosters students' self-motivation:

(7.1) Staff and students recognize and celebrate the natural, beneficial consequences of acts of character rather than rewarding students with material recognition or rewards: “The definition of good character is doing the right thing when no one is looking” is a banner that hangs in the NBS Cafeteria with the Pillars of Character. The CE Committee adopted the Bucket Fillers Program (1.1) for school-wide implementation to help even our youngest students act “from within” and “because it is right.” The CE Committee changed the morning line-up routine in 2011 to include the Words of Wisdom Program (1.1) and a daily peace pledge to model intrinsic positive behavior and recognize good character every day. All students help develop classroom rules to encourage student ownership and reflection on behavior and is part of the classroom routines. Our student survey results show 93 % students say that their teacher believe they can learn. This is a direct result of expectations for trust and excellence fostered daily in the classroom. Monthly C.A.T.S. assemblies recognize all students for their service to the school and participation in helping reduce conflicts. The Panther Pride showcase of student achievement is a new kind of “trophy case” featuring the outstanding achievements of NB students outside of school. **(7.2) The school’s approach to student conduct uses all aspects of behavior management- including rule-setting and rule-enforcement-as opportunities to foster students’ character development, especially their understanding of and commitment to core values:** The NB Character Council accepted the challenge of helping their classmates understand the Pequannock District Code of Conduct. They rewrote the code of conduct in student friendly words emphasizing academic integrity and the Six Pillars of Character. Students in the Heart and School Ambassadors Club demonstrated a deep understanding of the connections between school rules and the pillars of character during a presentation before the Pequannock Township BOE. Now, NB staff and teachers will have professional development on the “student friendly” code of conduct. The students will teach the teachers.

Principle 8: The school is an ethical learning community that shares responsibility for character education and adheres to the same core values that guide the students:

(8.1) Staff model the core values in their interactions with students and each other, and students and parents perceive that they do: We believe NBS is a caring community that promotes the values of the Six Pillars of Character for all. Teachers and staff continually model core values and respectful behavior each day, whether it be greeting each other as they pass in the hallway, sharing materials or thanking each other for help given. Staff survey results demonstrate (89%) teachers believe character education is an integral part of our school. Parents state (99%) that teachers respect their children and care about their success. Our teachers “walk the walk” because they know the kids are watching. **(8.2) The school includes all staff in planning, receiving staff development for, and carrying out the school wide character education initiative:** All teaching staff includes CE professional development in their required NJ Professional Development Plan statements (1.2). Staff members have opportunities to participate in PD training opportunities (Win/Win strategies, Peace Bridge, and I&RS/RTI) that are ongoing and a necessary component of a caring school. The NB teachers participated in a Book Club blog and staff members contributed to an on-line Pro Development dialog on critical CE issues ([Lost At School](#)). CE committee members are examples of professionals in action for others. They volunteer their time during summer recess to brainstorm, plan, collaborate, implement, model, maintain, and evaluate the CE Calendar of Events and CE Action Plan for the school year (3.1). Staff survey results show 80% of staff are given opportunities to participate in CE and Service Learning in our school. **(8.3)The school makes tiem available for staff planning and reflection in regard to character education:** Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) and general staff meetings are frequently dedicated to CE program development. The Pequannock Township Schools meet this challenge through a creative mix of release time for CE

committee members and volunteer time from teachers and parents. Teachers meet in PLC's and use their Common Planning Time (CPT) to plan service learning projects. Staff meeting and PLC agendas are evidence that CE programs and instruction are a constant topic of discussion and professional development at NB.

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

(9.1) The school's character education initiative has leaders, including the school principal, who champion character education efforts, share leadership, and provide long-range support: School climate and culture begin with leaders who believe the CE pillars and principles are the "plate on which all learning is served." The NB principal, members of the CE Committee, staff and the community, share the responsibility of upholding the reality of this analogy. Staff and students take the initiative to sustain conflict resolution and safety programs through ongoing training. Several NB staff members share the role of CE leader and are empowered to carry on no matter who is in "charge". Most significantly, the principal ensures there are adequate resources to promote the CE curriculum {personnel (1.2, 9.2) (time-budget (8.3), professional development (8.2), and activities (2.2)}. **(9.2) A leadership group or structure (several linked groups) inclusive of staff, students, and parents guides the ongoing planning and implementation of the character education initiative and encourages the involvement of the whole school in character-related activities:** The NB CE Committee is the most important standing committee in our community. The annual CE Calendar (3.1) and Action Plans drive the community activities. Shared leadership is promoted through a partnership between standing committees, parents and the children. **(9.3) Students are explicitly involved in creating and maintaining a sense of community and in other leadership roles that contribute to the character education effort:** NB students play an active role in daily morning affirmations of character (Words of Wisdom), conflict resolution activities, and service learning. The NB School Ambassadors and Character Council give students voice and choice in CE activities and service learning. Individual students feel empowered to act for causes outside the school. A student in 5th grade connected with a high school student's "Take Action" service learning project to benefit her "Op Smile" mission to Ethiopia resulting in a wonderful collaboration between the schools. The freshman student taught classes to the 5th graders and encouraged them to brainstorm, plan, survey the students, and execute the fundraiser. The children exceeded their goal and wrote reflection essays on what it meant to help children so far from home. High school students joined the 5th grade to celebrate what they had accomplished.

Principle 10: The school engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort:

(10.1) The school engages families in the character education initiative: Character Education is a community responsibility that requires active participation from staff, parents, and children. The NBS CE Committee and NB H.S.A Executive Council have formed an effective partnership dedicated to building character. Parents serve on the CE committee and they inform parents of initiatives and recruit volunteers. 94% (2010) and 88 % (2011) of parents report they have an opportunity to collaborate with the school on CE learning projects. Outstanding examples of recent parent partnerships were Read to Feed, building of the new Learning Garden/Street Signs of Character/NB Spirit Trail, and the annual Polar Express. **(10.2) The administration and faculty regularly communicate with parents and guardians, providing suggestions and activities that help them reinforce the core values, and they survey parents, both formally and informally, on the effectiveness of the school's character education efforts:** NBS has a strong two-way communications program with parents and the community. In addition to the

traditional report cards, our school also has an official website, Homework Hero-Genesis Grade Reports, newsletters, parent e-mail blasts, and nbsuccess.com to keep parents informed of classroom assignments, grades, and CE activities. The monthly H.S.A and Principal's Advisory meetings provide parents with forums to discuss CE ideas and areas of concern. New families are personally welcomed to the school and a fine example of this was our School Ambassadors welcoming a new family from the Philippines in October of 2011. **(10.3) The school recruits the help of the wider community:** A great example of community involvement by NBS is the partnership with the NJ Community Food Bank's Kid's Café program in 2010-2011. The resulting year-long NB school-Food Bank activities solidified our standing as a community resource. The November 2011 (7.2) Parent Action Community Team (PACT) presentation to the Pequannock Twp. Schools Board of Education of the Learning Garden, Spirit Trail, and Street Signs of Character showcased powerful school-community relationships. Our students presented Solid Citizen Awards to parent volunteers, Township DPW personnel, and the Historical Society for their effort to build and literally "cement" lasting school-community relationships.

Principle 11 The school regularly assesses its culture and climate, the functioning of its staff as character educators, and the extent to which its students manifest good character:

(11.1) The school sets goals and regularly assesses (both quantitatively and qualitatively) its culture, climate, and functioning as an ethical learning community: The Pequannock Township Schools regularly measures academic growth in the key areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. Academic data from standardized assessments are collected, charted, and utilized to improve instruction. The community is informed of data trends and action plans to improve instruction in published Quarterly Reports. A section of each Quarterly Report is devoted to school highlights of the quarter featuring CE activities. Plans are in place to develop a quantitative and qualitative instrument assessing school climate. Data was collected for two years including: the number of discipline referrals; survey data from parents, students and teachers; observations; interviews; and essays. The Character Education committee will undertake an action research project in 2011-2012 using the collected data as a baseline for continuing year over year comparisons of key indicators of CE effectiveness. **(11.2) Staff members reflect upon and report on their efforts to implement character education, as well as on their growth as character educators:** Our school community regularly assesses progress on our character education goals at staff meetings, Character Education committee meetings, informal lunch table conversations, and through formal and informal surveys. Data from surveys is reviewed and the CE Committee and the Executive Council of the NB H.S.A. make recommendations on how to improve school climate. Student made surveys have been an effective means to empower the children to take ownership of CE and take moral action through the Character Council (Intro, 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 3.3, 5.1, 7.2) and School Ambassadors (Intro, 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 3.3, 5.1, 7.2). **(11.3) The school assesses student progress in developing an understanding of and a commitment to good character and the degree to which students act upon the core values.** The school uses report cards, parent-teacher conferences and a variety of rubrics to assess student progress in the area of character development. Survey data from students indicate (insert 2010 and 2011 data).

Advice from Previous Applicants

We were very pleased when the NJAECED recognized the North Boulevard School as an Honorable Mention State School of Character in 2010. The areas of growth noted in the CE Partnership's feedback helped us make program adjustments and improve our commitment to shared CE leadership. Core values are affirmed every day by adding the Words of Wisdom Program managed by the students to the morning line-up. The staff embraced the streamlined morning program because it saved time and sent

a clear value message every day. The CE Partnership's feedback indicated a need for more leadership at the student level. The children met this challenge and took on the new role of Character Council members. These children sit on the school CE Committee and they have made a real difference for all of our students. One outstanding example of their work is the student version of the NB Code of Discipline linked to the Six Pillars of Character. Additional time and resources were made available to staff for regular CE planning in 2011. Related arts teachers plan and teach CE lesson to all grades giving classroom and special education teachers additional time for CE planning (PLC). Finally, we have made an effort to involve members of the community beyond our school. The Township Mayor, Director of Public Works, Township Historian, local artists, a Holocaust survivor, and the NJ State Teacher of the Year are just some of the community leaders contributing to our program.