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Bringing Effective Character Education to  
the Schools

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**What is the Character Education Partnership?**

- Coalition of groups and individuals
- Advocate for character education
- Nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian
- Resource to individuals and schools, based on the work of educational experts in the field of character development and education.

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**What is CEP's mission?**

**Character Education Partnership is dedicated to developing young people of good character who become responsible and caring citizens.**

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**What does CEP do?**

- Provides research, resources, consultation and training
- Sets quality standards
- Maintains resource center at [www.character.org](http://www.character.org)
- Hosts National Forum
- Sponsors NSOC awards program
- Provides professional development and consultation

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**How are National Schools of Character and Promising Practices selected?**

With the Character Education Quality Standards:

- A screening tool for CEP
- Based on the Eleven Principles of Character Education
- A Self-Assessment instrument

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Principle 1  
Creating a Foundation

**Effective character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character**

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**Examples of Core Values from NSOC High School Winner**

- Hudson Public School District (K-12), Hudson, MA
  - Theme of service for compassion and social responsibility
  - Theme of empathy for caring and respect
  - Theme of ethics for honesty, fairness, and justice



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Principle 2  
Understanding Character Development

**Effective character education defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling and behavior**

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Principle 3  
Developing a Comprehensive Approach

**Effective character education uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive, and effective approach to character development**

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**The Hidden Curriculum**

- The attitudes, values, and practices that make up much of the moral life of a school, but often go largely unexamined, are the components of the school's "hidden curriculum."
- Students learn or absorb character lessons primarily through the human interactions and the implicit messages that shape the school culture and learning environment



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**The Hidden Curriculum**

- **The hidden curriculum is embedded in the routine affairs of all schools.**
  - What values do school practices teach?
  - Do students feel supported and well liked by their teachers?
  - Is critical thinking encouraged, or is conformity of thought required?
  - Do some students receive more attention and opportunities than others?
  - Is student voice honored, or is it discouraged?



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Principle 4  
Creating a Caring School Community

**Effective character education develops caring relationships in the school community**

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- Motivational research tells us that young people learn best in classrooms that meet their basic psychological needs for *autonomy, belonging, and competence.*

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- Quest High School (Humble, TX)
  - The day starts with “family time,” a 30-minute period in which cross-age groups of 25 students meet under the guidance of three adults.
  - A student shares, “Being in ‘family,’ you listen to each other—opinions on social issues as well as on troubles with assignments. There is a lot of listening—a lot of respect—between staff and kids.”

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Principle 5  
Providing Opportunities for Moral Action

**Effective character education provides students with opportunities for moral action**

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- Service-learning provides valuable opportunities for character development in students have a handful of essential characteristics.
  - The actions are relevant to both moral issues and academic content
  - Arise from students' experiences
  - Serve a genuine purpose
  - And are conducive to teaching and instruction

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Principle 6

Providing a Meaningful Academic Curriculum

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Principle 6

Providing a Meaningful Academic Curriculum

**Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them to succeed**

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Example:

- New Hampton asked 10<sup>th</sup> grade students to design a rubric on “cooperation” similar to the rubric they have for “academic functioning.” Both rubrics are components of the school’s Foundations of Learning, a development curriculum plan that assigns a focus to each grade level.

– Cooperative learning is the focus for sophomore year, while healthy habits of learning, independent learning, and demonstration of learning are the foci for the other three years of high school.

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Principle 7

Developing Students’ Intrinsic Motivation

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Principle 7

Developing Students’ Intrinsic Motivation

The goal of Principle 7 is to help educators create a mutually supportive and seamless relationship between character education and the way educators manage their classrooms and the many ways in which they guide, support, and control their students’ behavior.

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Principle 8  
Engaging School Staff

**Effective character education 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**

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Principle 9  
Fostering Shared Leadership

**Effective character education fosters shared moral leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative**

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Principle 10

Engaging Families and the Wider Community

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Principle 10  
Engaging Families and the Wider Community

**Effective character education  
engages families and  
community members as  
partners in the character-  
building effort**

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Principle 11

The Evaluation Toolkit

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Principle 11

**Evaluation of character education  
should assess the character of  
the school, the school staff's  
functioning as character  
educators, and the extent to  
which students manifest good  
character**

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Final Thought:

**Character education is not  
one more thing added to  
“the plate”...it is the *whole*  
plate!**

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