

2009 Virginia Schools of Character Awards



STATE SCHOOLS OF CHARACTER

Call (540) 904-2427 for further information.

These application guidelines can be downloaded from the Valley Character website at www.valleycharacter.org.



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Virginia Schools of Character Awards 2009 Application Guidelines



Sponsored by the Character Education Partnership and Valley Character

Purpose of the Virginia Schools of Character Awards Program

Every year, the Character Education Partnership (CEP) names approximately 10 public and private schools and districts (K–12) as National Schools of Character (NSOC) for their outstanding work in character education. The awards program honors these exemplars, showcases their work, and facilitates their leadership in the field of character education.

Through a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, CEP has expanded its program to include State Schools of Character (SSOC). Many states, including Virginia, are now conducting SSOC competitions as a preliminary step to advancing to the NSOC awards. The purpose of this tiered approach is to allow more schools and districts to be recognized and to provide exemplary sites within states to serve as models for other educators.

Structure of the SSOC Program

Modeled after the NSOC awards program sponsored by CEP, the Valley Character is again sponsoring the Virginia Schools of Character awards program (VSOC). The VSOC program recognizes schools or districts that excel in exemplifying CEP's *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education* and demonstrate an outstanding character education initiative that yields positive results in student behavior, school climate, and academic performance. The VSOC winner(s) may be nominated to advance to the national level competition for possible selection as a national finalist. The number of Virginia schools or districts selected to advance to the national competition (NSOC) depends on the quality of the applications.

Scoring Criteria

CEP reviewers screen applications using CEP's *Character Education Quality Standards*, a scoring rubric based on CEP's *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. In evaluating school district applications, reviewers also use *Guidelines for School Districts in Fostering Character Education*. All documents can be viewed and printed from CEP's website. Applicants can also call (1-800) 988-8081, ext. 10 or (202) 296-7743, ext. 10 to request copies.

State and National Schools of Character Recognition

The school(s) or district(s) named 2009 Virginia Schools or Districts of Character will be honored by Valley Character at the winner's school in the spring. State winners also receive the right to use CEP's SSOC awards logo.

National Schools of Character receive a banner and an engraved award at the annual CEP National Forum on Character Education in October in the Washington, DC area. Winners receive national and local press coverage, and CEP features the NSOC in its annual book and on the CEP website. In addition, award recipients have the right to use the NSOC awards name and logo.

Financial Grant

NSOC winners receive a financial grant of up to \$10,000. The amount of each grant is based on the size of the school or district, the extensiveness of the winner's outreach plans, and available resources. Half of each grant is used to enhance the winner's program and send a team to present at the CEP Forum; the other half is used for outreach to other educators. Outreach efforts include providing staff development and mentoring to other schools or districts.

Benefits for All Applicants

Completing the application process is a rich opportunity to conduct a thorough self-assessment.

"This process allowed us to really focus on integrating character into everything we do—and keep a portfolio to tell our story." Past Applicant

Applicants receive detailed feedback in the form of a *Quality Standards* score sheet that includes a score and written feedback. Applicants also receive a subscription to *Essential Character*, CEP's electronic newsletter. CEP also gives applicants an additional month to apply for a Promising Practices award and then gives their applications special consideration.

Helpful Information

See the Helpful Information section on the NSOC application page on CEP's website for helpful resources on writing a winning application.



CHARACTER
EDUCATION
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Leading a National Call to Character



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Virginia Schools of Character Awards

Eligibility

To be eligible for the 2009 awards, a school must have been engaged in character education for a minimum of three full years, starting no later than December 2005. Districts must have been engaged in character education for a minimum of four full years, starting no later than December 2004. Smaller administrative units that maintain a separate identity within a large district may apply in the district category, e.g., a school pyramid or cluster. CEP suggests that schools not apply the same year as their district applies to avoid competing with one another. Previous National Schools of Character are ineligible to apply.

Application Process

For questions regarding this application, please contact Dr. Helen R. Stiff-Williams, Center for Character Education and Civic Development, 800-846-4198, or stiff.williams@comcast.net.

The SSOC and NSOC applications are the same. The SSOC/NSOC application consists of the following:

- An **Application Cover Sheet** created online at CEP's website by entering information about your school or district.
- A page that describes the **Demographics** of your students and faculty and other **Application Information**.
- A 7-page **Narrative** that explains how your school's character education initiative exemplifies the **Eleven Principles** (districts may submit up to 10 pages).
- A 25-page **Portfolio** that provides supporting evidence for the Narrative.
- A **Self-Assessment Score Sheet** using the **Quality Standards** that shows the results of your school's or district's self-assessment.

Submit four copies of the completed application, assembled in the order given above, by **December 8, 2008**. Applicants should be sure their applications are postmarked by December 8, 2008.

Timeline

By December 8, applicants submit their application. In December and January, a panel of character education professionals reviews applications using the **Character Education Quality Standards** scoring criteria. In evaluating school district applications, evaluators also use the document **Guidelines for School Districts in Fostering Character Education**. In January, Valley Character forwards Virginia's nominee(s) to CEP for further review. In February, CEP selects the national finalists. In March and April, two-person evaluation teams visit the national finalists. In May, a blue-ribbon panel of professionals in the field of character education selects the National Schools of Character.

Documents Needed

Download copies of the **Character Education Quality Standards**, the **Eleven Principles**, and **Guidelines for School Districts** from www.character.org/nsoc or call CEP at (1-800) 988-8081, ext. 10 or (1-202) 296-7743, ext. 10 to request copies.

Application Cover Sheet

Begin the application process by going to the CEP website (www.character.org/nsoc) to create your **Application Cover Sheet**. Doing so will give Valley Character and CEP valuable information that will enable us to keep track of your application and communicate with you. When you complete the Application Cover Sheet, you will be asked to enter information such as:

- Basic information about your school (or district).
- The month and year your school (or district) began implementing its character education initiative.
- Information about how you heard about this award.

Demographics and Application Information

On a separate sheet of paper, please provide the following:

- Student and faculty demographics. Include ethnicity, special needs populations, and other pertinent information.
- AYP Status: If you have not met AYP, please explain.
- An explanation of who participated in completing the **Quality Standards** self-assessment.
- An explanation of who contributed to completing the application, and the names and titles of those individuals who wrote the application narrative.
- Information about any previous NSOC/SSOC applications, the years of submission, and the outcome of these applications. For example, has your school or district ever applied or been named a national finalist before? If so, when?

Narrative

The body of your application should be a 7-page narrative (up to 10 pages for districts) that explains how your school's (or district's) character education "story" exemplifies the **Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education**. Follow these formatting guidelines in your document:

- Use 1-inch margins, 12-point type, *Times New Roman* font.
- Double space and use only one side of the paper.
- Number the pages 1-7 (1-10 for districts).

Your Narrative should clearly answer the following two questions:

1 What are your character education goals?

On page 1 of the Narrative, define your school's (or district's) view of character education and the values your school community has agreed upon. Describe your philosophical approach, and explain what your character education initiative is trying to accomplish. Explain why you are doing what you are doing.

2 How are you implementing character education?

On pages 2 – 7 of the Narrative, give evidence of your accomplishments in each of the **Eleven Principles**. Use the **Character Education Quality Standards** as a guide. Note that each of the Principles has three or four "scoring items." While you will receive a score for each item based on the supporting evidence you provide, it is best not to write a separate paragraph for each item. Rather, write a separate paragraph (or more) for each Principle and include specific, illustrative examples that address the

scoring items. Keep in mind that the “exemplary practices” bulleted under each scoring item are meant to serve as examples of effective implementation rather than a required list.

Clearly number each section with the number of the Principle you are describing. To use your limited space effectively, only mention information once even if it applies to more than one Principle. Cross reference your Portfolio when possible.

The Narrative is your opportunity to make a persuasive case that your school (or district) has thoughtfully implemented character education and that your initiative has had positive and significant results. Be sure to provide and explain specific *qualitative* and *quantitative* evidence to support your argument. Provide full data and analysis from climate surveys and other measurements. Use numbers, not percentages, when reporting changes in student behavior. When describing activities, explain how frequently they occur and how many students they involve. Your Narrative (and Portfolio) should clearly demonstrate that your community has gathered data, reflected upon it, and then acted as needed.

If your school or district has previously applied for the NSOC/SSOC award, be sure to include the changes that you have made since the last application somewhere in your narrative.

Finally, if you are using a commercial program as part of your initiative, be sure to include a brief explanation of the program.

Portfolio

Submit a 25-page Portfolio that amplifies and supports your Narrative. The Portfolio should contain evidence of the effectiveness of your program but should not be an alternative to answering any of the narrative questions.

Examples of items to include in the Portfolio:

- Data on positive behavioral or academic change.
- Copies of surveys on school climate and survey results.
- Mission statements and school mottos.
- Examples of student work or student reflections.
- Lesson plans or assignments that integrate character education into the curriculum.
- Articles from school newsletters or local newspapers.
- Documentation of staff development.

Guidelines for assembling the Portfolio:

- Include a Table of Contents and number the pages.
- Do not exceed 25 pages, not including the Table of Contents.
- Put evidence in order of the 11 Principles.
- Use one side only of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper.
- Be mindful of how well your pages will reproduce and how clearly readers will be able to see your evidence after it has been copied.
- Do not reduce items to less than 10 pt. (news articles are an exception) or partially cover items with other items.

- Date newspaper articles and other date-sensitive items.
- Keep photos to a minimum.
- If including original documents, keep in mind that Portfolios will not be returned.

Self-Assessment Score Sheet

Assemble a group of knowledgeable stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, parents, and students (if appropriate) to assess your character education initiative using the *Character Education Quality Standards*. Send in a compilation (average) of your scores on one score sheet as the last page in your application. An Excel score sheet is available for your use on the NSOC page of the CEP website (www.character.org/nsoc). You can use it to enter and compute your scores in Excel. You can then print your compiled score sheet and submit it with your application. Or you can simply copy, use, and submit the score sheet page in the *Quality Standards*.

Promising Practices Awards

CEP gives annual Promising Practices awards in character education for *unique* and *specific* exemplary practices. Selected schools and districts receive an award certificate at the Promising Practices Awards Ceremony at the CEP Forum. In addition, their award is noted in the annual National Schools of Character book and a description of their winning practice appears on CEP’s website. Promising Practices applications must be submitted online. (See separate Promising Practices award application.)

Application Checklist

Assemble all 36 pages of your completed application in order.

- Application Cover Sheet
- Demographics and Application Information page
- 7-page Narrative (10 pages for districts)
- Portfolio Table of Contents
- 25-page Portfolio
- Self-Assessment Score Sheet

Make four copies and clip each copy together. Do not bind or cover the copies.

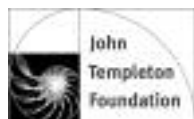
Send to:

Valley Character
4415 Pheasant Ridge Rd.
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Deadline:

Applications must be postmarked by Monday, December 8, 2008. Applicants will receive e-mail confirmation of receipt of their applications.

Please note that all NSOC/SSOC applications become the property of CEP and may be used for training, promotional, or educational purposes.



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DUE ... December 8, 2008 (postmarked)