



Bonner Center for Character Education and Citizenship

Virtues and Character Recognition Award:

Recognizing Middle Schools in 2017

APPLICATION

Name of School: _____

School District: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Principal: _____

Contact Person: _____

E-mail: _____

School Enrollment: _____ Grade levels: _____

Instructions: *Complete the Verification of School Faculty Meeting Form on page 3 and respond to each of the criteria on page 4. Responses should provide reviewers with a clear understanding of what character development and civic education mean in the context of your school and how your school addresses these areas. In addition to the Verification of School Faculty Meeting Form, there is a 5-page limit for schools submitting an application. **NEW PROCEDURE—SCHOOLS CAN ONLY RECEIVE THIS AWARD ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS, SO APPLICATIONS FOR THIS AWARD WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FROM SCHOOLS THAT RECEIVED THE BONNER CENTER'S AWARD IN 2015. SUBMIT 5 COPIES OF THE APPLICATION.** Only one copy of supplementary materials needs to be submitted. Applications **MUST** have one-inch margin, address each question in order, and be written in 12-point font.*

Completed applications to be received on or before December 16, 2016 to:

Dr. Jacques Benninga (Telephone: (559) 278-0253)
 c/o Virtues and Character Recognition Program
 Kremen School of Education and Human Development
 California State University, Fresno
 Fresno, CA 93740-0202
 Questions to: jackb@csufresno.edu

Virtues and Character Recognition Award: 2017

Middle Schools

The word character is derived from the Greek “to mark” or “to engrave”. People with good character display good behavior and such habits are embedded, or marked, on a person. The U.S. **Department of Education** notes the following about character education: “Character education is an inclusive term embracing all aspects of how schools, related social institutions and parents can support the positive character development of children and adults.... For a school to foster character development, it must provide a positive social environment, characterized by leadership; collegiality; a learning orientation among faculty; and ties among school, home and community (*Mobilizing for Evidence-Based Character Education*, USDE, 2007).

Likewise, our education system has a central role in equitably cultivating the qualities that will enable all students to mature well and to participate in American democracy. As Thomas Jefferson stated, “*The qualifications for self-government are not innate. They are the result of habit and long training.*” Civic learning is vital for our increasingly diverse California society. Research has demonstrated that six core activities directly improve the quality and effectiveness of civic learning in schools. These practices are: classroom instruction in government, history, law and economics; service learning projects tied to the curriculum; simulations of democratic processes; extracurricular activities that have a strong civic dimension; student participation in school governance; and discussions of current events and controversial topics (*Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action*, 2014).

The *California Standards of the Teaching Profession* recognize that “teachers in California have a professional responsibility to provide students with safe and caring learning environments, where students’ differences are celebrated and supported, and [where] they acquire the knowledge, skills strategies, and concepts they will need for successful participation in an increasingly technological and global society” (p. 4). Standard 2—Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning—emphasizes the instructional process as one where teachers promote “social development and responsibility within a caring community where each student is treated fairly and respectfully”, where educators establish and maintain “learning environments that are physically, intellectually, and emotionally safe” and where teachers promote “positive behavior to ensure a climate in which all students can learn”.

As well, the portrait of students meeting its criteria for “the literate individual” painted by the *Common Core State Standards* includes three capacities that are especially pertinent for character development and civic education. Students meeting that goal: 1) ...comprehend as well as critique; 2) ... value evidence; and 3) ... come to understand other perspectives and cultures (*English Language Arts Standards: Introduction, CCSS Initiative*).

Our award process is an effort to publicly recognize schools, their faculties and staffs and student bodies that demonstrate outstanding efforts on behalf of students.

WE ENCOURAGE YOUR PARTICIPATION!

**Verification of School Faculty Meeting to Discuss
Character and Civic Education**
(to be included with award application just after cover page)

School Name _____ District _____
Faculty Meeting Date _____ Verified by: _____

Directions: The three criteria below and their quality indicators define the elements that should be present in an exemplary school promoting character and civic education. They are the criteria your school will address in its narrative application (see page 2 for definitions and orientations). **Please discuss each of these questions with your faculty prior to writing and submitting your application for the Character and Civic Education Recognition Award and submit this completed page as part of your application.** Check the items under each criterion that were discussed with your faculty, note the highlights of any pertinent discussion (**see #4, Summary Statement, under the Application Criteria**), and submit this page after the cover page as part of your application.

**Check each item
discussed ✓**

CRITERION 1: This school promotes core ethical values as the basis of good behavior.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for democracy is at the core of the purposes for our public schools. Describe why character and civic education are important for students in American schools? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe what are the character and civic education goals for your school? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has your school made progress in achieving these intended goals? 	
CRITERION 2: This school fosters an intentional, proactive and comprehensive approach to its core values in all phases of school life.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe how character and civic education are infused throughout your school's curriculum? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your school ensure a clean, secure and psychologically healthy learning environment? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe how adults at your school promote and model fairness, equity, caring and respect? 	

CRITERION 3: This school provides students with opportunities for civic learning and service learning projects tied to the curriculum.	
• How do students at your school contribute in meaningful ways to the school, to others and to the community?	
• How does your school promote social competencies and behaviors by students?	
• Can you provide examples of service learning activities at your school connected to the curriculum?	

Virtues and Character Recognition Award: 2017

Application Criteria for Middle Schools

NOTE: The criteria below and their quality indicators define the elements that should be present in a school with an exemplary character and civic education program. Page 2 provides the Bonner Center’s foundation for the criteria in this application. Scoring will be based on how well the school addresses each area. Evaluators will read the application holistically but this application should **address each question in order, by criterion**. In addition to the cover sheet, there is a *five-page narrative limit* (not including page 3). The cover sheet must be completed and attached as the top sheet of the application. Page 3, Verification of School Faculty Meeting, should be next.

Middle schools having received the Bonner Center’s Virtues and Character Recognition Award in 2015 cannot apply for this year’s award. Schools can apply once every four years.

SUBMIT FIVE (5) COPIES OF THE COMPLETED APPLICATION (and one set of any supplementary materials) to be **received** by December 16, 2017 to the address on the cover sheet.

1. CRITERION: This school promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.

- a. Describe why character and civic education are important areas for public schools in America. That is, why should American public schools involve themselves with developing the character education and civic learning of their students?
- b. Describe the character and civic education goals for your school? How (or why) were those goals determined?
- c. Describe your school’s progress in working towards your goals— have you made progress? By what process do you measure (or monitor) progress towards achieving your character and civic education goals?

2. CRITERION: This school fosters an intentional and comprehensive approach to its core values in all phases of school life.

- a. Describe how character and civic education is addressed at your school throughout the curriculum and at all grade levels. Specifically, are character and civic education topics addressed as separate units of study in the core content? Are they infused throughout the core curriculum? Are they addressed in other parts of the curriculum? Provide examples.
- b. Describe how you ensure a clean and secure learning environment as well as a psychologically safe and caring school environment for students at your school.
- c. Describe how the adults at your school (teachers and classified staff) promote and model fairness equity, caring, and respect for others.

3. CRITERION: This school provides students opportunities for civic action.

- a. Describe how your school makes it a priority for students to contribute in meaningful ways to the school, to others and to the community. Do your students volunteer, do they engage in service learning at their school? In their community? Are there service-learning opportunities tied to the curriculum? Please give a rationale for such student involvement and examples of how this aspect is implemented.

4. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Provide a summary of your school's work in creating a healthy character and civic learning climate. Include in your Summary Statement highlights of your school's discussion about its program as checked off on the Verification of School Faculty Meeting form.