



Bonner Center for Character Education and Citizenship

Best Practices in Character and Civic Education: Recognizing High Schools in 2019

APPLICATION

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_
School District: \_\_\_\_\_
Address: \_\_\_\_\_
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_
Principal: \_\_\_\_\_
Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_
School Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade levels: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Your responses should provide reviewers with a clear understanding of what character development and education mean in the context of your school and the means by which your school addresses these areas. You should address each question, be as specific as possible, and cite examples whenever appropriate. There is a limit of 5 pages for schools submitting an application. Applications MUST have a one-inch margin and be written in a clear 12-point font. 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 2017. SUBMIT 5 COPIES OF THE APPLICATION. Only one copy of supplementary materials needs to be submitted.

Mail completed applications to be received on or before December 21, 2018 to:

Dr. Jacques Benninga
c/o Virtues and Character Recognition Program
Kremen School of Education and Human Development
California State University, Fresno
Fresno, CA 93740-0202



Bonner Center for Character Education  
and Citizenship

**Best Practices in Character and Civic Education:  
Recognizing High Schools in 2019**

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 *California Standards for 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). In particular, 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.” (*California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (2009).

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 democratic 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).

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. 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 Central Valley schools, their faculties and staffs and student bodies that demonstrate outstanding efforts on behalf of students.

**WE ENCOURAGE YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

## **Best Practices in Character and Civic Education\*:** **Recognizing High Schools in 2019**

**NOTE:** The criteria below and their quality indicators help define the elements that should be present in a high school with an exemplary character education program. Scoring will be based on how well the school addresses each area. Evaluators will read the application holistically but **the application should address each question in order**. In addition to the cover sheet, there is a *five-page narrative limit*. The cover sheet must be completed and attached as the top sheet of the application. Supplementary information may accompany the narrative. Those materials will not be returned.

---

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

- a. Education for democracy is at the core of the purposes for our public schools. Describe why American public schools should involve themselves with developing the character education and civic learning of their students?
- b. Describe why the development of character is an important concern for public schools in America. That is, why should American public schools involve themselves with developing the character of their students? How is character education a responsibility of our schools?
- c. Describe the character education goals for your school. Has your school held discussions and/or developed common understandings about its purpose or identity?
- d. Describe your school's progress in working towards your goals— have you made progress? By what process do you measure (or monitor) progress toward achieving your character education goals?

### **2. CRITERION: This school engages students and staff to address issues on the quality of student learning, the social/emotional climate of the school and opportunities for democratic participation.**

- a. Describe how your school facilitates student and staff voice to identify issues and to develop creative responses that promote a climate of excellence, ethics, safety and respect.
- b. Describe how this school engages diverse student leaders to develop understandings and solutions related to school issues they believe are vital, and what they have done to address them.
- c. Describe how teachers and support staff at this school identify school issues they believe are vital and how they have been involved in those issues.

### **3. CRITERION: This school engages students in service learning, connecting the Common Core curriculum with projects solving real problems in the school or community, including critical reflection on those experiences.**

- a. Describe how this school encourages students to learn and practice civic responsibility, leadership and meaningful service by all for the common good.
- b. Describe how does this school provides structured opportunities for participants to reflect critically on their service experiences?
- c. Describe how this school encourages multicultural expression and understanding.

\* Criteria for this award were taken from: (1) T. Lickona & M. Davidson (2005), *Smart & Good High Schools*; (2) Allison, Burchett, Grace & Reyes (2012), *The Bonner Character Education Award in Secondary Schools*; (3) Character Counts! (n.d.), *Pursuing Victory with Honor Program Application*