

MARYLAND CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION APPLICATION/NOMINATION FORM

Please use the criteria from the Character Education Partnership's 11 principles of Effective Character Education to demonstrate your excellence as a leader in character education.

Please return the following information by **June 15, 2009**:

SCHOOL SYSTEM Charles County Public Schools

SCHOOL TO BE RECOGNIZED Thomas Stone High School

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL Larry C. Martin EMAIL lmartin@ccboe.com

CHARACTER ED. CONTACT Michael L. Meiser EMAIL mlmeiser@ccboe.com

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This school meets the following character education criteria (check at least three):

Principle 1 Promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.

Principle 2 Defines "character" comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.

Principle 3 Uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive, and effective approach to character development.

Principle 4 Creates a caring school community.

Principle 5 Provides students with opportunities for moral action.

Principle 6 Includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.

Principle 7 Strives to foster students self-motivation.

Principle 8 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.

Principle 9 Fosters shared moral leadership and long range support of the character education initiative.

Principle 10 Engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.

Principle 11 Evaluates the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

BEST CHARACTER EDUCATION PRACTICES

School: Thomas Stone High School - Charles County Public Schools

Address: 3785 Leonardtown RD, Waldorf, MD 20602

Principal: Larry C. Martin

Title of Best Practice: Capturing Kids Hearts

Primary Principles Emphasized: Principles 3, 4, 8 & 9

Objective(s): Our mission is to provide an education which inspires responsible citizenship, leadership and lifelong learning.

Brief Description (including such items as materials needed, persons responsible, sequence of activities, observable results, references, etc). Feel free to use additional space to more clearly demonstrate/exhibit your character education initiative.

“You must Capture a Kids Heart, to get to his head...” **Capturing Kids’ Hearts (CKH)** is based on trying to eliminate social anxieties to increase student performance. The goal is to build trust between adults and students, in turn creating self-motivation with in the students to perform acceptably academically and behaviorally.

To build this “trust” our teachers develop **Social Contracts** based on the following four central questions:

1. How do you want to be treated by me (leader)?
2. How do you want to be treated by each other?
3. How do you think I (leader) want to be treated by you?
4. How do you want to treat each other when there is conflict?

Once the **Social Contract** is established, all class members, staff members, or team members sign the social contract and agree to follow the contract. The contract is referred to daily and a self-evaluation is conducted to gain feedback to monitor the progress of the group.

To implement **CKH** it is important for all staff members to implement the **EXCEL Model**. The **EXCEL Model** allows for appropriate interaction and learning with in the group and can be related to Relationships, Teaching and Leadership roles.

- E – Engage – Meeting and Greetings “Handshakes”
- X – X-plore – Individual needs
- C – Communicate – Caring and Content Relevance
- E – Empower – Your teaching becomes their doing
- L – Launch – Meaningful Ending.

CKH is mirrored with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs. At the foundation of Maslow’s Hierarchy is Psychological Needs; and at the foundation of **CKH** is the

Security Stage. The purpose of this stage is to develop an atmosphere in which the students can relate to each other without hesitancy and where discomfort is alleviated as trust begins to develop. The teacher/facilitator/leader must be sensitive to each group member's need for physiological safety. This stage is the most crucial to develop and the group can not grow until trust is established amongst all. Second step in Maslow's Hierarchy is Material Security or Physical Safety; CKH calls this the **Acceptance Stage.** This stage focuses on the development of cohesiveness among the group members. This "connectedness" is an outgrowth of a child's psychological need to belong. Caring and being cared about are major considerations in this stage. The students need to experience acceptance as a "total person" before they will be willing to disclose and be supportive of others. Maslow's next step is Love and Belonging; while CKH fosters the **Responsibility Stage.** This stage emerges from young people's psychological need for esteem (respect). They begin to evaluate themselves and others in terms of ownership of behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. Maslow's next step is Esteem Needs; while CKH moves onto the **Work Stage.** The atmosphere and relationships in the group are such that the students can:

1. examine personal fears or concerns without fear of reprisal or rejection.
2. explore alternatives for solving problems.
3. experiment with new behaviors in a safe environment prior to risking them in the outside world.

Maslow's final stage in his hierarchy is Self-Actualization. CKH final stage is the **Closing Stage.** This stage is characterized by the students' actively pursuing new behaviors and attitudes outside the group, while still experiencing the support, encouragement, and positive pressure of the group.

Thomas Stone High School has implemented CKH and its many components throughout our school. Below we indicate how we meet 4 of the *11 principles of Effective Character Education*. ***It should be noted, staff and administration, should attend CKH training before attempting to implement CKH practices.***

Principle 3: CKH is a process implemented by many teachers at Thomas Stone High School. This process is rooted in **affirming students for showing positive behavior, self-management skills,** and **provides structure for handling conflicts.** Teachers begin each class by greeting their students at their classroom doors daily, and provide students the opportunity to share their "good news" before the lesson begins.

The classroom social structure is centered around a **Social Contract** developed and signed by the students and teacher for each individual class. The **Social Contract** is a living document that provides a structured routine and guidelines on how everyone in the classroom wants to be treated. Implementation of the **Social Contract** begins from its inception, which is developed by answering the four fundamental questions stated above. The **Social Contract** is reviewed on a regular basis (at least weekly) by both the students and teacher, and is enforced daily with the aid of nonverbal cues.

Since many teachers have been trained to use this process, for many of our students it is part of their daily routine as they move from class to class throughout the school day.

Capturing Kids' Hearts, as part of our classroom routines, address students' need for belonging, autonomy, and competence, and it supports classroom routines that are respectful of students and engage them in ways that develop traits such as responsibility, fairness, and caring.

Principle 4: **(CKH)** first step is to **Engage** students and build **Relational Capacity**. The greeting creates a positive interaction, affirms the student, welcomes them and gives them our full attention. It also models *social and professional skills*, in response, students practice this daily with other adults and other students. They become accustomed to meeting and interacting appropriately with other students and adults and take this into their daily lives. Students are greeted with a handshake every day by teachers, Principal, vice principals and school counselors as students enter into classrooms, offices or passing in the hallways. By **Engaging** the students at the door, or in the hallway, we are preparing the way for the student to be involved with us in the learning process.

CKH second step is **X-Plore** and lays the foundation for the class which is to follow. In this stage, we share the "Good News". It is a 3-5 minute exploration of good news that will get the class started on a positive/up beat feeling. We use this time to get in touch with where the students are personally, emotionally, and academically. The step allows us to identify students needs and state of mind before we can serve them effectively academically.

CKH third step is **Communication**. This stage focuses on how we communicate our content and personal messages to the students. How we communicate to the students is important to our students who are treated as our "customers". Communication is important in determining if the students/customers are going to want to come to our school/classroom and learn. There is no place for sarcasm and defensive body language when dealing with students, as either one will turn the student off or away from the negative atmosphere.

CKH fourth step is **Empower**. Empowerment occurs when students gain the ability to "use and do" the things they have been taught. The key to this step is building an atmosphere of **"Trust"** in which the students feel free to fail while going through the learning process. With the **Social Contract** in place, everyone knows the rules – what is acceptable and what is not, as well as the consequences. Allowing the students the ability to practice and apply what is being facilitated by the teachers, empowers the students own their work and their finished product, free from ridicule and put downs.

CKH fifth and final step is **Launch**. In the **EXCEL Teaching Model**, **Launching** has to do with the way we end and send. This is the ability to tie in the days lesson with some meaningful closure activity, creating Passion within the students to carry on the learning outside the classroom. We must be able to effectively use quotes, anecdotes, poems, stories, and other motivational experiences to drive home the points we want the students to remember. Passion is the thrust we use to propel our students toward

their destination.

Principle 8: Most staff members at Thomas Stone High School have been trained in the process of CKH including Administrative Staff, teachers, and support staff. The process itself is a very general one and is applicable outside the school environment, making it effective not just in the classroom but in teacher's own lives. Such a commonality among staff provides a shared sense of responsibility on implementing the process.

Monthly CKH meetings allow staff members to review aspects of the process, to share what is/is not working regarding the process, and what their greatest needs are for implementing it.

Principle 9: The goal of CKH is to make every classroom a positive self-managing classroom. With support from the Administrative staff to fully implement CKH in every classroom and to provide opportunities to expand their CKH training, it is our goal to make Thomas Stone High School a self-managing school

Write a paragraph or more describing the evidence that explains how your school addresses each of the identified principles. Optional: Attach any photos or electronic artifacts as examples to support your initiative. Please e-mail supporting materials that are indicative of the quality character education program of the school along with the BEST PRACTICES template so that your school's best practice can be included in the annual book of Best Practices.