

New Jersey Alliance for Social, Emotional, and Character Development

# 2021 Schools of Character Recognition Booklet











# **2021 School of Character Honorees**



# 2021 New Jersey District of Character

Rockaway Township School District Hibernia, NJ

## 2021 New Jersey State Schools of Character

Alan B. Shepard Elementary School	Old Bridge, NJ
Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy	Elizabeth, NJ
Birchwood Elementary School	Dover, NJ
Carl Sandburg Middle School	Old Bridge, NJ
Caroline Reutter School	Franklinville, NJ
Cedar Hill Elementary School	Towaco, NJ
Charles G. Harker School	Woolwich Township, NJ
Cherry Hill East High School	Cherry Hill, NJ
Copeland Middle School	Rockaway, NJ
Donald Stewart School No. 51	Elizabeth, NJ
Dr. William Mennies Elementary School	Vineland, NJ
Hillside Elementary School	Livingston, NJ
Joyce Kilmer Elementary School-Cherry H	Iill Cherry Hill, NJ
Joyce Kilmer School-Milltown	Milİtown, NJ
Katharine D. Malone Elementary School	Rockaway, NJ
Leroy Gordon Cooper Elementary School	Cliffwood Beach, NJ
Roebling Elementary School	Roebling, NJ
Spotswood Memorial Middle School	Spotswood, NJ
Virgil I. Grissom Elementary School	Ôld Bridge, NJ
Woodmont Elementary School	Pine Brook, NJ

## 2021 New Jersey Honorable Mention Schools of Character

Alternative School at Lumberton	Lumberton, NJ
Benjamin Franklin School Number 13	Elizabeth, NJ
Burlington County Special Services	Westampton, NJ
H.W. Mountz Elementary School	Spring Lake, NJ
Middlesex County STEM Charter School	Perth Amboy, NJ
Our Lady of Good Counsel School	Mooretown, NJ
Red Bank Charter School	Red Bank, NJ
Thomas Edison EnergySmart Charter School	Somerset, NJ
University Heights Elementary School	Hamilton, NJ

## 2021 New Jersey Emerging School of Character

PS 23 Mahatma M. K. Gandhi Community School Jersey City, NJ



## State and National Schools of Character Program Description



The School of Character Program was initiated by the Character Education Partnership (now Character.org) to recognize schools across the country demonstrating an exemplary level of implementation of the *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. Originally, this program was competitive with only ten schools being chosen each year as National Schools of Character. Teams of reviewers knowledgeable in the field of character education and familiar with the *Eleven Principles* evaluated applications from schools applying to be Schools of Character.

In 2006, the School of Character Program was expanded to include State Schools of Character (SSOC). New Jersey was the first state to conduct state-level evaluations and the first four State Schools of Character were named by New Jersey in 2006. The New Jersey School of Character Program was initially sponsored by CEP, the Center for Social and Character Development at Rutgers University (CSCD) and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The Rutgers Center coordinated the program from 2006 to 2010. The responsibility for the NJSOC program was transferred to the New Jersey Alliance for Social, Emotional and Character Development (NJASECD), a volunteer professional organization envisioned by CSCD in 2011. The New Jersey Schools of Character program recognizes schools and districts that excel in exemplifying the *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. State Schools of Character are then evaluated by national site visitors for recognition as National Schools of Character. National Schools of Character serve as models and ambassadors of effective character education.

## 2021 New Jersey District of Character

#### Rockaway Township School District \*

Grades: Pre-K-8

District: Rockaway Township School District Contact Person: Mrs. Marie Varcardipane

Title: Assistant Principal

Email: mvarcadipane@rocktwp.net

Address: 16 School Road

City/State/Zip: Hiberna, NJ 07842

Telephone: 973-320-6138 Website: www.rocktwp.net



Although the **Rockaway Township School District** may be small in size with just 2,300 students, it is big in character accomplishments. Appropriately, after getting the input of ALL stakeholders it chose H.E.A.R.T.(honesty, empathy, acceptance, respect, trust) core values that are encircled by effort to make the HEART work. All six schools have been recognized as NJ Schools of Character, and strong district support has helped its schools garner 10 Promising Practices. During the pandemic, all schools worked intentionally to build connections by promoting SEL through videos, student-centered presentations, and innovative programs.

★ indicates a 2021 National District of Character

## 2021 New Jersey State Schools of Character

#### Alan B. Shepard Elementary School \*

Grades: K-5

District: Old Bridge Township Public Schools Contact Person: Ms. Jean Czarkowski

Title: Guidance Counselor Email: jczarkowski@obps.org Street Address: 33 Bushnell Road City/State/Zip: Old Bridge, NJ 08857

Telephone: 732-360-4499

Website: https://www.oldbridgeadmin.org/o/ases



Alan B. Shepard Elementary School, the first school in Old Bridge Township Public Schools to be recognized as a National School of Character, became the impetus for a district-wide transformation, helping all its schools to become National Schools of Character, with the district also gaining recognition. Recertified for the second time, Shepard uses data to drive interventions and activities, continues to do remarkable outreach, and, during the pandemic, made certain that social, emotional and character programming was in place so that children and families could thrive during the crisis.

## Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy \*

Grades: 9-12

District: Elizabeth Public Schools Contact Person: Ms. Margaret Loftus

Title: Teacher

Email: loftusma@epsnj.org Street Address: 310 Cherry Street City/State/Zip: Elizabeth, NJ 07208

Telephone: 732-266-9204

Website: https://www.esnj.org/hamilton



As an AVID school, **Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy** seeks to bridge the achievement gap for 995 underserved students by preparing them to be successful members of a global society. The SEL component is part of the Hamilton core DNA and is shown through Lions' PRIDE (perseverance, respect, integrity, diversity, excellence). Hamilton has incorporated the PRIDE logo and principles into school-wide writing prompts, interactive BINGO game, and PRIDE teacher referrals for students displaying exemplary character. Practices such as the Panorama SEL initiative and the Harmony Power initiative strengthen its approach to building character.

#### Birchwood Elementary School \*

Grades: K-:

District: Rockaway Township School District Contact Person: Dr. Jennifer Macones

Title: Principal

Email: jmacones@rocktwp.net Street Address: 1 Art Street

City/State/Zip Code: Dover, NJ 07801 Telephone: 973-361-7080 x6041 Website: http://bw.rocktwp.net



Proud of a student body that is truly diverse, with 22% of its students in special education and 23% on free or reduced lunch, **Birchwood Elementary School** set out to develop lively practices that could help students and families actualize Rockaway Township's core values of HEART (honesty, empathy, acceptance, respect, trust). Through such staples as Morning Meetings, Responsive Classroom, Great Kindness Challenge, Mindfulness, and its novel Promising Practices--Kindness Ninja and Kind H.E.A.R.T.s, the school has made character development and SEL training the exciting center of school life.

#### Carl Sandburg Middle School ★

Grades: 6-8

District: Old Bridge Township Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Angela Ziemba

Title: Vice Principal Email: aziemba@obps.org

Street Address: 3439 Highway 516 City/State/Zip: Old Bridge, NJ 08857

Telephone: 732-360-4404

Website: https://www.oldbridgeadmin.org/o/csms



Recognized as a National School of Character in 2016, the administration, staff, students and parents of **Carl Sandburg Middle School** continue their commitment to the core values that define the "Sandburg Strong" mission. Sandburg aims to mold students that are academically competent, emotionally intelligent and socially aware. In response to the loss of a student to suicide, trauma-informed practices have become the foundation of many of the school's educational practices. Likewise, in the face of a global health pandemic, the school has stressed the importance of connections, equity, and flexibility in its dynamic approach to learning.

#### Caroline Reutter School \*

Grades: 5-6

District: Franklin Township Schools Contact Person: Mr. Theodore Peters

Title: Principal

Email: tpeters@franklintwpschools.org

Address: 2150 Delsea Drive

City/State/Zip: Franklinville, NJ 08223

Telephone: 856-694-0892

Website: http://www.franklintwpschools.org/



All members of the **Caroline Reutter School** family place a strong emphasis on developing the pre-adolescent mind, character, and emotional well-being. Students are encouraged to focus on a particular school-wide character trait each month during their academic studies and advisory periods. Monthly, students are nominated for character excellence, and quarterly, the school acknowledges students for positive behavior, academics, and attendance through a school-wide "All Star" program. To promote respecting the differences in others, Reutter has a working relationship with the Anti-Defamation League in order to become a "No Place for Hate School."

#### Cedar Hill Elementary School 🖈

Grades: PreK-5

District: Montville Township Public Schools

Contact Person: Ms. Heather Praml

Title: School Counselor

Email: heather.praml@montville.net Address: 46 Pine Brook Road City/State/Zip: Towaco, NJ 07082 Telephone: 973-331-7100

Website: www.montville.net



"Connect with Respect" is not only the name of **Cedar Hill's** homegrown character education program, but also it is the school's way of life. Accenting respect for self, others, property and community, the program, originating in 1998 with a small group of teachers, is now fully integrated into school life with parents, staff and students embracing it. Students learn to respect each other, celebrate differences and answer the call to make a difference by engaging in local and global service opportunities. Recertified this year, the school is proud of the strong relationships that exist between all stakeholders in transforming school culture.

#### Charles G. Harker School

Grades: 3-5

District: Swedesboro-Woolwich School District

Contact Person: Mrs. Jamie Flick Title: Chief Academic Officer Email: jflick@swsdk6.com

Street Address: 1771 Oldmans Creek Road City/State/Zip: Woolwich, NJ 08085 Telephone: 856-241-1552 ext: 1026

Website: https://www.swedesboro-woolwich.com/



This year to keep everyone connected in both distance and in-school learning, the **Charles G. Harker School** started a live morning news program. Each morning, the principal goes live to bring school news to all families and students. During the news program, all the school's programs are reviewed, guest student anchors are invited to share stories of the monthly Character Counts trait, school spirit days are promoted, and the motto: "Possibilities are endless if you imagine, believe and achieve," is used as the sign-off for the news program.

## Cherry Hill East High School ★

Grades: 9-12

District: Cherry Hill Public Schools Contact Person: Mr. Aaron Edwards

Title: Assistant Principal Email: aedwards@chclc.org Address: 1750 Kresson Road

City/State/Zip: Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

Telephone: 856-424-2222

Website: http://east.cherryhill.k12.nj.us/



Cherry Hill High School East is a large, diverse educational community that enjoys success in academics, athletics, generosity of spirit and good citizenship. Cherry Hill East's approach to character education as both the community and the world have evolved, the school encourages character in all aspects of life. Cherry Hill East embodies a lifestyle of self-respect, gratitude and excellence and recognizes the benefits of a school where all students feel known, safe and valued. We have made a commitment to diversity, our core values, and student voice and choice. Students have been directly involved in our journey becoming our guiding lights.

#### Copeland Middle School ★

Grades: 6-8

District: Rockaway Township School District

Contact Person: Mrs. Rosie Iannicelli

Title: School Counselor

Email: riannicelli@rocktwp.net Street Address: 100 Lake Shore Dr City/State/Zip Code: Rockaway, NJ 07866 Telephone: 973-627-2465 ext 6218 Website: https://cms.rocktwp.net/



Copeland Middle School's character education program reaches students in a comprehensive manner influencing daily thoughts, feelings, & actions in a positive way. Restorative Practices are the ideal way for teaching and practicing H.E.A.R.T. values. The fundamental principle of Restorative is doing things with people not for them or to them. The restorative culture blossomed at CMS during 2019-2020, through research, conversations, and family involvement. CMS made mental health the number one priority for both staff and students. Copeland's character journey was transformative for its students, staff, and community.

#### **Donald Stewart School No. 51** ★

Grades: PreK

District: Elizabeth Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Jocelyn Rodriguez

Title: Principal

Email: rodrigjoc@epsnj.org

Street Address: 544 Pennsylvania Ave City/State/Zip Code: Elizabeth, NJ 07208

Telephone: 908-436-6410

Website: https://www.epsnj.org/Domain/16



**Donald Stewart School No.51** believes in the fundamental idea that character development in the early childhood classroom lays the foundation for life-long learning. "Friends Care, Friends Share" is a pillar that encompasses the core values necessary for developing responsible citizenship. Donald Stewart School is committed to establishing the foundation of character development with its preschoolers. Initiatives such as "Kids Dig In." "Eco-School," and "Pennies for Patients" allow for the opportunity to develop character and compassion which extend beyond the school walls. Its character journey has impacted students' compassion for self, others and the environment.

#### Dr. William Mennies Elementary School

Grades: K-5

District: Vineland Public Schools

Contact Person: Mrs. Kristen Speakman

Title: Assistant Principal

Email: kspeakman@vineland.org Street Address: 361 E. Grant Avenue City/State/Zip Code: Vineland, NJ 08360

Telephone: 609-519-3940

Website: www.vineland.org/william-h-mennies/



At **Dr. William Mennies Elementary School**, the "Mennies Marvelous Friends" are made up of diverse backgrounds and cultures. The students would not achieve academically unless they first master the people, communication, and social skills that encompass character education. Mennies celebrates the students' unique qualities by focusing on three core values introduced as the Mennies Pledge: "Today I have the Power to Choose. I have the power to choose to be respectful, I have the power to choose to be respectful, at school, at home and in the world."

#### Hillside Elementary School ★

Grades: K-5

District: Livingston Public Schools Contact Person: Carlos Gramata

Title: Principal

Email: cgramata@livingston.org Street Address: 98 Belmont Drive

City/State/Zip Code: Livingston, NJ 07039

Telephone: 973-535-8000, ext. 8150

Website: https://www.livingston.org/hillside



At Hillside Elementary School. the Character Education Committee encourages the Peer Mediation Program. The implementation of a Quiet, Peaceful Place in all classrooms encourages students to use mindfulness techniques, and calming, conflict resolution strategies. Service learning has become a school norm, where all grade levels are expected to participate in meaningful and curriculum-relevant projects. Hillside's Character Education Committee has developed school initiatives and projects including creating lessons for our cross-grade, small group "Caring Communities" program. Community outreach is a major focus of our character efforts.

Joyce Kilmer Elementary School-Cherry Hill \*

Grades: K-5

District: Cherry Hill Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Jenna Martin

Title: Teacher

Email: jmartin@chclc.org

Street Address: 2900 Chapel Ave. West City/State/Zip Code: Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

Telephone: 856-373-6509

Website: https://www.chclc.org/kilmer



**Joyce Kilmer Elementary School** in Cherry Hill focuses on developing the Leader in Me by highlighting Seven Healthy Habits and Bucket Fillers within a PBIS framework. Grade-level PAWSitive meetings, wellness surveys, and class meetings include lessons on student voice. Daily interactions enable students to develop maturely into global thinkers. Students at JKE are growing to be "good citizens" by participating in service projects and practicing habits that include behavioral/ academic growth mindsets.

#### Joyce Kilmer School-Milltown

Grades: 4-8

District: Milltown Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Jaclyn Citro

Title: Assistant Principal Email: jcitro@milltownps.org Street Address: 21 W. Church St.

City/State/Zip Code: Milltown, NJ 08850

Telephone: 732-214-2370 Website: www.milltownps.org



From the start to the finish of every day at **Joyce Kilmer School** in Milltown, one of the major focuses is the development of students' social-emotional skills and character development. The school believes in teaching students what it means to have character, how to have respect for yourself, others, and your environment, and the importance of being intrinsically motivated. All students are held to the same core value: CARES. Students work in cross-age groups to support the five values in action – cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control in all that you do.

#### Katharine D. Malone Elementary School ★

Grades: K-5

District: Rockaway Township Public Schools

Contact Person: Mrs. Kelly Bodnar

Title: School Counselor

Email: Kbodnar@rocktwp.net Street Address: 524 Green Pond Rd. City/State/Zip Code: Rockaway, NJ 07866

Telephone: 973-320-6950

Website: https://kdm.rocktwp.net/o/kdm



**Katharine Malone Elementary** provides opportunities for students to practice the core values, so they become habitual patterns of behavior. Students are provided an opportunity to review I-messages, role plays, and other activities related to "HEART." Classroom teachers infuse these core values into everyday curriculum. Students participates in cross-grade buddy activities and have built-in time for class meetings every day, to discuss real-life problems and to develop a sense of safety and autonomy at school.

#### **Leroy Gordon Cooper Elementary School** ★

Grades: K-5

District: Old Bridge Township Public Schools

Contact Person: Mrs. Cathy Gramata

Title: Principal

Email: cgramata@obps.org

Street Address: 160 Birchwood Dr

City/State/Zip Code: Cliffwood Beach, NJ 07735

Telephone: 732-290-3881

Website: https://www.oldbridgeadmin.org/o/

cooper



**Leroy Gordon Cooper School** takes pride in its strong sense of community. In order to design a welcoming atmosphere for all who enter their doors, the school has continued the Cooper Family Album which displays staff, students, activities, PTA events detailing their character education journey, a display for all monthly birthdays, and a completed community mural of recycled bottle caps which included the winning design by a student. To acknowledge the diversity of Cooper, a bulletin board highlights the word "Hello" in 25 different languages.



## **Roebling Elementary School**

Grades: PreK-3

District: Florence Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Sara Trombly

Title: Guidance Counselor

Email: strombly@florence.k12.nj.us Address: 1330 Hornberger Avenue City/State/Zip: Roebling, NJ 08554

Telephone: 609-499-4640

Website: https://www.florence.k12.nj.us/schools/

roebling-elementary-school



**Roebling Elementary School** is committed to providing students a nurturing environment supporting academic, social and emotional growth. They believe the optimal learning environment is one defined by their core values. Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, Be Positive, & Be Kind are embedded into daily practices, through the use of video lessons, staff PD, and class lessons. These core values are intentionally infused into the academic curriculum, daily interactions, and development activities.

#### Spotswood Memorial Middle School ★

Grades: 6-8

District: Spotswood Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Erin Glassen

Title: Teacher

Email: eglassen@spsd.us Address: 115 Summerhill Road City/State/Zip: Spotswood, NJ 08884 Telephone: 732-723-2200 ext 2000

Website: www.spsd.us



**Spotswood Memorial Middle School** students, parents, community members, and staff work cohesively to create a welcoming, educational experience for all learners. The staff utilizes many strategies to instill their core values: charitable, optimistic, leadership, trustworthy, and successful. A balance of both moral and performance values was chosen by the stakeholders. All students can learn here. A positive school climate and high expectations are essential to student achievement. The school has added more leadership opportunities, increased involvement, and built a caring and collaborative learning environment for students and staff.

## Virgil I. Grissom Elementary School 🖈

Grades: K-5

District: Old Bridge Township Public Schools Contact Person: Mrs. Clarissa Morebal

Title: Secretary to the Principal Email: cmorrabal@obps.org Street Address: 1 Sims Avenue

City/State/Zip Code: Old Bridge, NJ 08857

Telephone: 732-360-4481 ext 3

Website: https://www.oldbridgeadmin.org/o/viges



After previously achieving National School of Character status, **Virgil Grissom Elementary School** did not rest on its laurels. The Character Education Team looked at new activities and programs and analyzed how they were developed, who developed them, and the genuine character growth cultivated through the activity. Many of the character activities and programs became far less teacherdriven and have become student-developed and student-led. The culture and climate of excellence and determination is unmistakable at Grissom School.

#### Woodmont Elementary School ★

Grades: K-5

District: Montville Township Public Schools

Contact Person: Douglas Stech Title: School Counselor

Email: douglas.stech@montville.net Address: 39 Woodmont Road

City/State/Zip: Pine Brook, NJ 07058 Telephone: 973-331-7100 ext. 1815

Website: https://www.montville.net/7/Home



#### Families at Woodmont Elementary School call

themselves "the Woodmont family." This phrase has permeated the climate and culture at Woodmont. Woodmont brings staff, parents, and community members together to review and revise foundational elements, school mission, vision, and the Code of Conduct. All members of the school community follow Woodmont's "Paws Promises." The school "brand" is to work hard, play hard, and, most importantly to care about each other. The focus on caring is the most important thing at Woodmont.



#### 2021 National District of Character

Rockaway Township Schools Rockaway Township

#### 2021 National Schools of Character

Alan B. Shepard Elementary School Old Bridge Elizabeth Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy Birchwood Elementary School Rockaway Township Carl Sandburg Middle School Old Bridge Caroline Reutter School Franklinville Cedar Hill Elementary School Montville Cherry Hill East High School Cherry Hill Copeland Middle School Rockaway Township Donald Stewart School No. 51 Elizabeth Hillside Elementary School Livingston Cherry Hill Joyce Kilmer Elementary School Rockaway Township Katherine D. Malone Elementary School Leroy Gordon Cooper Elementary School Old Bridge Spotswood Memorial Middle School Spotswood Virgil I. Grissom Elementary School Old Bridge Montville Woodmont Elementary

Congratulations to our National Schools of Character! These schools will be formally honored by Character.org at the Annual Forum which will be held virtually in October.



## 2021 New Jersey Schools of Character **Program Volunteers**



#### 2021 BLUE RIBBON PANEL

Eileen Dachnowicz (Chair) NJASECD Trustee NJASECD President William Trusheim Nina Kemps Former NJASECD Trustee Thomas Santo Zane North Elementary School Kathy Hoeker & Maryann Villegas Old Bridge Township Public Schools Laurie Coletti & Phyllis Bloom James A. McDivitt Elementary Elizabeth McLaughlin & Cassandra Pedrosa Juan Pablo Duarte - Jose Julian Marti School No. 28 Mary Reinhold NJASECD Secretary

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#### New Jersey Alliance for Social, Emotional and Character Development (NJASECD)

njasecd@gmail.com • http://njasecd.org/

The New Jersey Alliance for Social Emotional and Character Development is a not-for-profit 501c3 organization, composed of volunteers who work throughout the New Jersey to support that work that schools do to improve school culture and climate by focusing on character education and social-emotional learning. One of the important missions of NJASECD is to provide useful resources for all the educators, schools and individuals interested in promoting the social, emotional and character development of the students in our public, private, and charter schools in New Jersey.

#### **NJASECD Officers**

Dr. William H. Trusheim, President Laurie Coletti, Vice President Mary Reinhold, Secretary Ted Frynkewicz, Treasurer Dr. Philip M. Brown, Past President

#### NJASECD Members at Large

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Eileen Dachnowicz

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Conference Committee Peter Clark, Leigh Cline, Carol Lawrence, William Trusheim

Communications Leigh Cline and Jim Sarto

Schools of Character Mary Reinhold and Laurie Coletti

Regional Centers Marc Citro, Chris Kelly, Mona Noyes, Joe Marinzoli, Jeff Havers, Cindy Dacey, and Jennifer Frederico

Membership Peter Clark



# 2021 New Jersey Schools of Character Acknowledgments



The New Jersey School of Character Program is affiliated with the National Schools of Character which is a program of

# **☆**Character.org

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NJASECD wishes to recognize the New Jersey Education Association for their support of the New Jersey Schools of Character Program



New Jersey Education Association, 180 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211 www.njea.org Phone: 609-599-4561 Fax: 609-599-1201

NJASECD wishes to recognize the NJPSA/FEAfor their support of NJASECD and the Schools of Character Program



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