

Tips on Applying for a State/National School of Character Certification

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character.org



What are the Three BIG U's?



☐ **Understand the Application.**

Go to www.character.org. Click on Schools of Character, then Application Information.

☐ **Understand the scoring.**

Each Principle narrative is scored from 1 to 4. You need an average of 3.3 (no 2's, please).

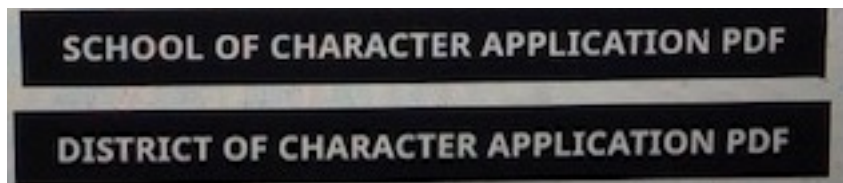
☐ **Understand the 11 Principles.**

Our quick review summarizes the main points.

UNDERSTAND THE APPLICATION



- ☐ Go to www.character.org and click on **Application Information.**
- ☐ Download Application PDF for School or District (Do **NOT** open the Application yet)



School DOWNLOAD

District DOWNLOAD

- ☐ If you are a school or district to be recertified, make certain you download the

RE-CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

Recertification DOWNLOAD

UNDERSTAND THE APPLICATION



PART

CONTENT

(Red type signifies written narrative)

1

General Contact Information

2

Your Character Journey: Compelling Overview (1500 characters-not scored); Core Values; 3 Resources; Info on Forum.

3

Self-Assessment: This is tricky. You need 6 to 10 folks to score your school/district on the 11 Prin. Follow the directions about sending folks the link as well as scoring guide. District applicants must include assessments from all schools not already certified as National Schools of Character.



Understand the Application

PART	CONTENT
3	<p>NARRATIVES ON EACH OF THE 11 PRINCIPLES: 2500 characters each. Save as Word documents.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: All principles now get 2 artifacts each; P. 11 gets 4. (Do not use photos as artifacts!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional Video or Flyer, ppt, etc. Optional (500 char.)
4	<p>Evidence of Impact: State Tests (LA, Math); Attendance; Suspensions; Survey Questions on School Climate, Bullying, Surveys effecting Change</p>
5	<p>Supporting Evidence: 5 Photos with explanation; Testimonials – teacher, non-teaching staff; student, parent, community member; Promising Practices</p> <p>*Begin filling in the Actual Application only after you have all this material completed. 5</p>

Understand the Application



The application has 5 parts. You must provide information for each part. However, the narratives for each Principle & accompanying evidence are the basis for your score.

Applying for a NJSOC, National School of Character: Deadline Nov. 19, 2021



- **SAME Application for State & National.**
- **Scoring based on:** *11 Principles of Effective Character Education*
- **Each Unit of the Narrative** for each Principle scored from **1 to 4. 2500 character limit**
- If your total score is **3.3** with no unit average less than 3, you become a NJ School of Character.
- Invited to try for **National School/District of Character accreditation** – additional \$250 fee required for Schools; Districts pay \$500+, depending on the number of schools.

The Scoring Process

**National Schools of Character
Score Sheet**

School/District: _____
Reviewer #: _____

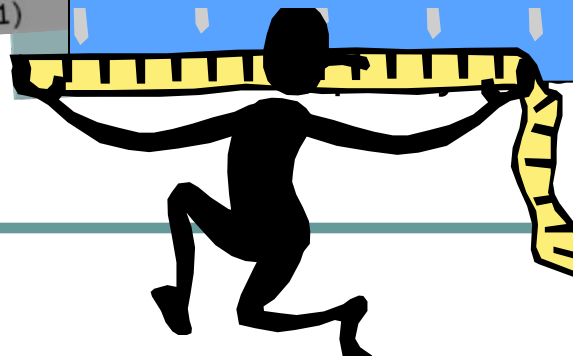
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
Principle #1			
Principle #2			
Principle #3			
Principle #4			
Principle #5			
Principle #6			
Principle #7			
Principle #8			
Principle #9			
Principle #10			
Principle #11			
Total (average of each line divided by 11)			

**3.3 for State
School of
Character**

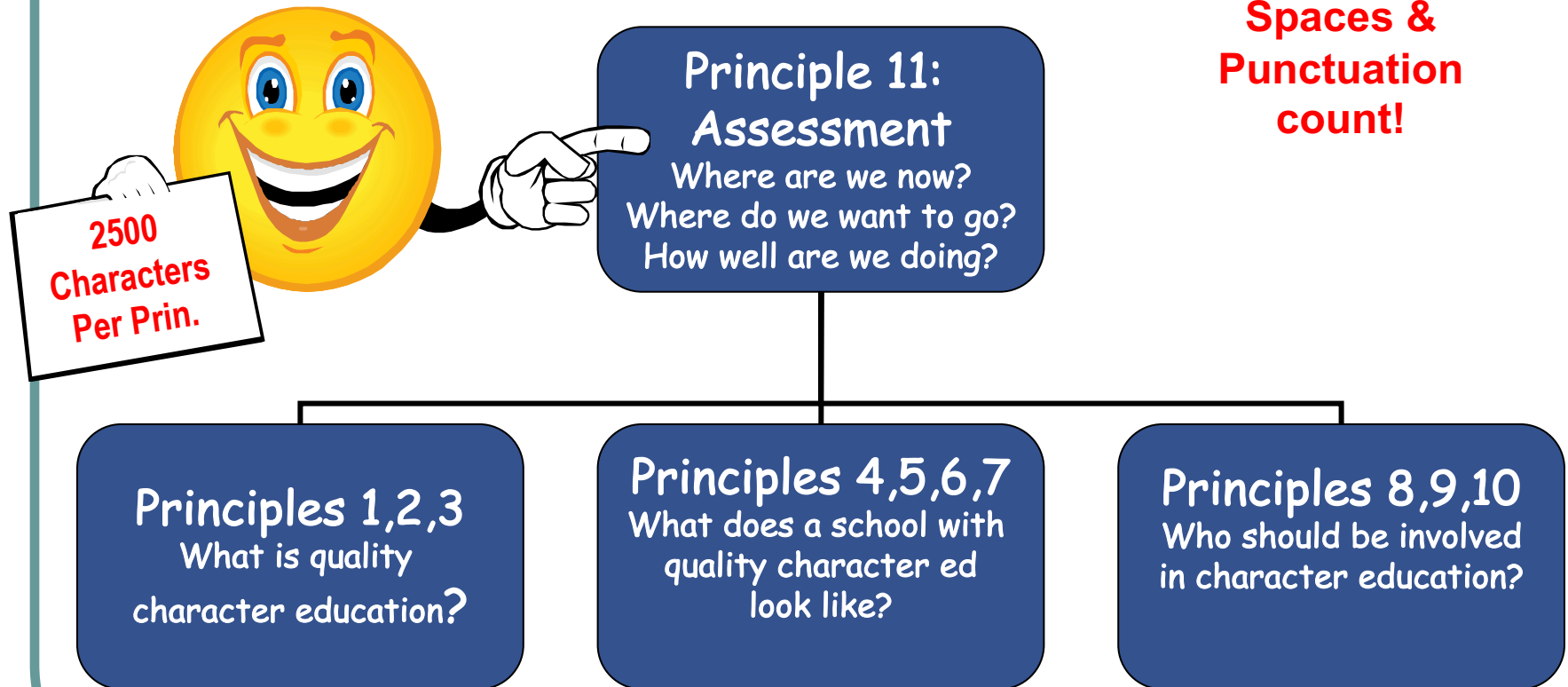
**2.7 for
Honorable
Mention**

NOTE: Items are scored from 1 to 4.
Use the key indicators of exemplary
practice as a guide:

- 1 Lacking evidence**
- 2 Developing implementation**
- 3 Good implementation**
- 4 Exemplary implementation**



Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education: Scoring Rubric





The Scoring Process

Many schools have found the Self-Assessment Tool an invaluable aid to guide them in framing their narratives. Be sure to address the bulleted items as you write your narrative

You can see both pages of the tool on the following two slides. You can download a pdf of the Self-Assessment Tool from the Character.org website at...

<https://www.character.org/application-information>

DOWNLOAD SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL AND SCORING GUIDE



Self-Assessment Tool: Address each indicator (bulleted example) of each scoring item.

11 Principles SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

SCHOOL: _____ City, State: _____ Grades: _____ % on Free/Reduced Lunch: _____ SCORE: _____

	Item #1	Item #2	Item #3	Item #4	Ave
1. Core Values are defined, implemented, and embedded into school culture.	<p>Stakeholders in the school community select or agree to core values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All involved in choice; reflect on relevance if existence for some time Understand why & how values selected A balance of both moral and performance values 	<p>Core Values guide every aspect of school life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, students, parents use common language Strong staff buy-in, modeling. Staff ownership for teaching, modeling, integrating core values into everything. Embedded in school policies and procedures Shape hiring practices, new staff training, etc. 	<p>Reminders and statements of core values are visible throughout the school community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In mission statement, handbooks, discipline code, website, school goals, etc. Defined in behavioral terms; "looks like" Staff, students, parents can identify/explain <u>District</u> promotes values in vision, mission, goals, objectives, policies, public relations. 		
2. The school defines "character" comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, & doing.	<p>Staff teach and provide opportunities for students to understand core values, ethical decision-making, and applications to life situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff clarify values through instruction Staff can explain how students understand Students can explain/define/demonstrate behavior which models values 	<p>The school provides experiences and time for students to reflect on and internalize the core values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing empathy and a sense of responsibility for others Reflect thru real-life problems Safety, belonging, autonomy needs met 	<p>The school provides opportunities for students to practice the core values, so they become habitual patterns of behavior.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine self thru journals, discussions Practice and receive feedback ("I-messages," goal setting, active listening, role plays) Demonstrate/live core values (coop. groups, cross-grade tutoring, class meetings, peer mediation) 		
3. The school uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive approach to develop character.	<p>The school is intentional and proactive in addressing social, emotional, and character development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research-based standards, core competencies, or key developmental indicators to assure seed skills are taught. Seed skills are taught at all grade levels <u>District</u>: identified and adopted seed skills in its instructional program or curriculum/. 	<p>Character is integrated into all aspects of teaching and learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In content of all subjects Opportunities to address ethical issues <u>District</u>: CE included in curriculum frameworks 	<p>CE is infused in all aspects of the school day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All settings (lunch, fields, bus) Artifacts show that values guide TOTAL school life (sports, co-curricular codes) 		
4. The school creates a caring community.	<p>Caring attachments adults/students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students perceive staff as caring Teachers attend school/social events Teachers/students connect in small groups Teachers counsel, mentor Discipline approached in caring and respectful way 	<p>Caring attachments among students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students perceive student body as friendly Educational strategies foster caring/respect (Coop. learning; class meetings; cross-age groups) 	<p>Adults have caring attachments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents welcome Staff feels supported Staff, parents get along Administration collegial <u>District</u>: district-level develops caring with ALL staff 	<p>Peer cruelty, tolerance issues, bad language, put downs, bullying, differences are addressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students report bullying is infrequent Staff, students receive training in dealing with cruelty, bullying, intolerance. 	
5. The school provides students with opportunities for moral action. (particularly, service learning)	<p>Clear expectations for service and service learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artifacts to Demonstrate: eg. conflict resolution, academic integrity, good sportsmanship, service, etc. Understanding of service and service learning Expectations for service learning <u>District</u>: Guidelines or expectations for SL, academic integrity, sportsmanship/reflection 	<p>Within school—all participate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides in-school opportunities e.g. cross-grade buddies, peer mediation, school care Connects service with the curriculum Training/projects in conflict resolution, academic integrity, ethical decisions. Reflection connected to service opportunities 	<p>In community—"all" involved & reflect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time provided Connects service with curriculum Students assess community needs, initiate, plan Reflection connected to service opportunities 		



Self-Assessment Tool: Address each indicator (bulleted example) of each scoring item.

6. Meaningful, challenging academic curriculum that respects all, develops character & helps them succeed	Curriculum meaningful, challenging for all <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages students (problem-solving, coop. learning, experience-based learning) Accents student autonomy, mastery goals Student voice & choice 	Staff Identifies & accommodates diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiates instruction to needs Helps ALL students achieve high level Parents/students say teachers know, understand & respond to students 	Promotes the performance values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops thinking habits (curiosity, crit. think.) Promotes work-related habits (perseverance) Fosters social habits for working together Teachers, students promote academic integrity 		
7. Fosters students' self-motivation	Emphasizes intrinsic over extrinsic rewards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, students can explain self-motivation Staff has addressed extrinsic motivation Refrains from honoring just a few students Methods stress intrinsic motivation Stresses pride in one's work, doing what is right, revision after feedback, gratitude <u>District:</u> Use PR to publicize good character	Behavior management emphasizes values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff training in behavior management Discipline code tied to values Infractions tied to reflection on values Students play role in group management 	A priority in way staff organize classes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routines show respect for all students & reinforce sense of belonging Core values underlie routines Policies and procedures support integrity 		
8. All staff share the responsibility for developing, implementing, and modeling ethical character.	All staff commit to and hold each other accountable for modeling ethical character. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff courteous to students, each other Staff live by created norms Staff sees themselves as role models Students & parents say staff models core values 	All staff members are involved in planning, designing, and implementing the schoolwide character initiative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All prof./support staff receive CE training Staff is ethical learning community Administrators, staff involved in planning <u>District:</u> Trains all personnel & new staff in character/SEL; provides funding	Time is given to staff to learn about, plan, and reflect on the teaching of character in their roles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CE on agenda for faculty meetings Release time for CE planning, reflection Teachers use core values to reflect on self. <u>District:</u> provides central source for CE info & fosters collaboration between schools.		
9. The school's character initiative has shared leadership and long-range support for continuous improvement.	The school principal and other leaders champion the character initiative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal: visible, supportive CE champion, but CE would continue if principal left Key leaders support CE long-range and study current research, and training. <u>District:</u> CE a priority in district's goals, hiring of principals, district personnel incorporate CE.	Inclusive leadership group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character committee leads CE effort and responsible for monitoring, assessing, and ensuring sustainability of CE initiative. Guides planning Artifacts show CE team's meetings, actions <u>District:</u> CE committee, with community, business, religious leaders, parents, students, guides planning	Students are explicitly involved in leadership roles that contribute to the character initiative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students see themselves as playing roles in the wider community Students have opportunities to advise the staff Multiple opportunities for leadership and artifacts to show. Students are taught leadership skills and demonstrate responsibility & respect. 		
10. The school engages families and communities as partners in the character initiative.	Families are actively involved in CE effort <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents assume active CE leadership roles Parents aware of, supportive of CE Parents recruited; volunteer frequently School welcomes parents (office, e-outreach). 	School communicates with families and seeks their input and engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of techniques used (report cards, e-mails, newsletters, conferences; Web sites.) Proof of two-way communication Welcomes new families, orients them Parent workshops offered 	Recruits the help of wider community in CE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community leaders have CE leadership roles Larger community supportive of CE/may integrate CE in activities Volunteer in school/participate in events <u>District:</u> Recruits gov. agencies, business, community & other youth organizations.		
11. Assesses character education implementation, culture and climate and student growth.	Core Values are reviewed and discussed annually so that they can be reaffirmed, updated, or revised as needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders surveyed about core values effectiveness. Values are aligned with all aspects of school Schools have created a touchstone, mantra, creed and communicated with everyone. 	Sets goals & assesses culture, climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a written action plan for improvement Has artifacts that show conclusions drawn from input from students, staff, parents Uses quantitative/qualitative data to make CE changes, plan initiatives <u>District:</u> Arranges for and finances assessment	Staff reflect & report on CE efforts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get data on student perceptions of teachers Report on their CE efforts through surveys Reflect formally/informally on CE data Reports to all stakeholders on CE <u>District:</u> evaluates principals on implementation of CE & asks them to do so with staff 	Assesses how CE initiative impacts students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of approaches (report cards/parent conference /goal-setting) Survey students on how values affect their lives Surveys, data collection on student behavior demonstrates growth	



TIPS before we review each Principle



4 Tips for Narrative Writing



- Make a list of Effective Practices that address the bulleted items BEFORE you start to write. Keep the Self-Assessment handy.
- Buttress each general statement with SPECIFIC EXAMPLES, often giving three or more in one sentence.
- To conserve characters, use abbreviations, “&” for “and”; just one space between sentences.
- Double check your narrative vs. the Self-Assessment Tool to make certain you covered ALL scoring items. Take a character count!

Prin. 1: Core values defined, implemented & embedded into school culture.

- Who, how, when were values chosen?
- Are they a mix of moral & performance?
- How are they common language?
- How did they affect hiring & training of new staff?
- How are they publicized?

Stony Brook School, N. Plainfield: All district stakeholders chose C.A.R.D. – Caring, Acceptance, Respect, Determination – as core values & promoted them visually & in multiple ways.



*Core Values Spark
EVERYTHING.*

Prin. 2: Defines character comprehensively¹⁶ to include thinking, feeling & doing

- How is character taught?
- What proof is there the kids get it?
- How do you develop empathy? A sense of belonging? Autonomy?
- What strategies do you use to make it habitual? Cross-grade tutoring?

**Dennis B. O'Brien, Rockaway Township,
uses cross-grade grouping, "i-messages,"
role playing, cooperative groups.**



Prin. 3: Uses a comprehensive, intentional, proactive approach to develop character.¹⁷

- What research-based competencies do you use?
- How are SECD skills taught at all levels?
- How is character connected to the curriculum in all subjects?
- How is character infused into all settings (lunch, recess, sports, online) during school?



3.1: NJ's 5 SEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, social decision-making) are derived from CASEL's research-based framework. Use this in 3.1.

Prin. 4: School creates a caring community

18

- What proof is there that teachers are caring? That discipline is caring too?
- Do students perceive peers as caring?
- What strategies foster caring in kids?
- What proof is there that teachers & parents get along? That staff gets along?
- Proof that bullying is infrequent? What training is there in handling HIB?

Juan Pablo Duarte-Jose Julian Marti - School 28 in Elizabeth, transformed itself by creating a caring culture. Twice recognized as a National School of Character!



Prin. 5: Provides opportunities for moral action (particularly service learning).

- How are students involved in conflict resolution, good sportsmanship, service?
- Can students differentiate between service & service learning? Is there reflection?
- Provide examples of service learning in school; show ties to the curriculum.
- Provide examples of service learning in community with its curricular ties.



Hanover Park Regional High School has an amazing service-learning program. Check out its character education section: <https://www.hanoverpark.org>

Prin. 6: Meaningful, Challenging Academic Curriculum that Respects All, Develops Char.

- How is your curriculum challenging & how does it promote mastery, voice & choice?
- How do you accommodate diversity? Do parents say teachers know students?
- How do you promote the performance values & academic integrity?



Pauline Petway School in Vineland, twice recognized as a National School of Character, does extraordinary work in raising the aspirations of its diverse student body, many of whom are economically disadvantaged.

Prin. 7: Fosters Students' Self-Motivation.

- Do students understand the difference between intrinsic & extrinsic motivation?
- How has staff stressed intrinsic motivation?
- How do the core values enter into behavior management?
- How does class management reflect core values (students write class rules, etc.)?

Unity Charter School in Morristown, with a mission to educate young citizens to be eco-literate with a strong sense of protecting the environment, has motivated them to initiate many projects on their own.



Prin. 8: Staff shares responsibility for implementing & modeling good character.²²

- Evidence that teachers act as role models?
- Proof that all staff is involved in planning & implementing character education?
- Is CE training given to ALL staff, including support staff?
- Is sufficient release time given to staff for CE planning & training?



Old Bridge Township Public Schools, whose 15 schools are also National Schools of Character, has excellent CE training for all. New staff are welcomed via interviews, summer trainings, New Teacher Orientation & ongoing frontline training.

Prin. 9: Shared Leadership & Long-Range Support for Continuous Improvement.²³

- How is the principal a champion of CE & what long-range support for it exists?
- How does the CE Committee plan, implement & monitor CE initiative?
- What leadership opportunities exist for all students?

Zane North School in Collingswood, twice recognized as a National School of Character, is a model of shared leadership with the principal, staff, parents, and students working harmoniously.



Prin.10: School engages families, community as partners in character education.²⁴

- How are parents actively involved in CE?
- In what ways do you communicate with them?
- How do you welcome them (especially newcomers) & recruit them for service?
- What parent workshops do you give?
- How do you involve the larger community?



Mantua Township Public Schools partners with its parents & wider community in its “Big Night Out.” The brainchild of the Character Council, it is a three-hour outdoor party, open to the public & offering many activities for families & celebrating character education.

Prin.11:Assesses CE implementation, school culture, climate & student growth²⁵

- Have you reviewed values annually? Made changes? Created a touchstone?
- Used quantitative & qualitative data for improvement & setting goals? Give examples.
- Has staff reflected & reported on character initiative? How?
- Assessed growth through data (surveys, state tests, report cards, behavior stats, exit surveys)

Terence Reilly School 7 in Elizabeth uses multiple data – surveys, focus groups, state assessments, HIB reports, attendance stats, student exit reports - to monitor progress & plan next steps.



Portfolio Evidence



All Portfolio documents submitted in PDF or Word Format. Document (not longer than 3 pages) must be clearly READABLE.

- **All Principles** get up to **2** documents.
- **Principle 11** gets up to **4** documents.
- **NO** Photos/Collages
- May submit one additional piece of evidence by checking box and submitting (May be a video).

Suggestions: Letters on CE from Principal; flyers; CE agenda; lesson plan; service-learning project; student reflection; SEL competencies; local news article; school climate survey result; attendance; academic growth stats, charts,

LABEL DOCUMENTS ON TOP FOR CLARITY!



CAUTION!

- Double check all Scoring Items of your Narratives to make certain that they rate **3 or above.**
- NO PRINCIPLE can have a score of **less than 3.**



TWO Principles requiring CAUTION:

P. 5: Make certain you have **service learning** (with curricular ties) not just community service.

P. 7: If you can't eliminate **extrinsic motivation** altogether (maybe your district requires PBIS), show that the staff is doing everything possible to stress **intrinsic motivation** over **extrinsic rewards**.

Applying for a NJSOC, National School of Character Fees



Mock Audit: \$250: Score Sheet with Strengths, Areas of Growth – no official accreditation.

State School/District of Character Accreditation:

School Application Fee: **\$250**

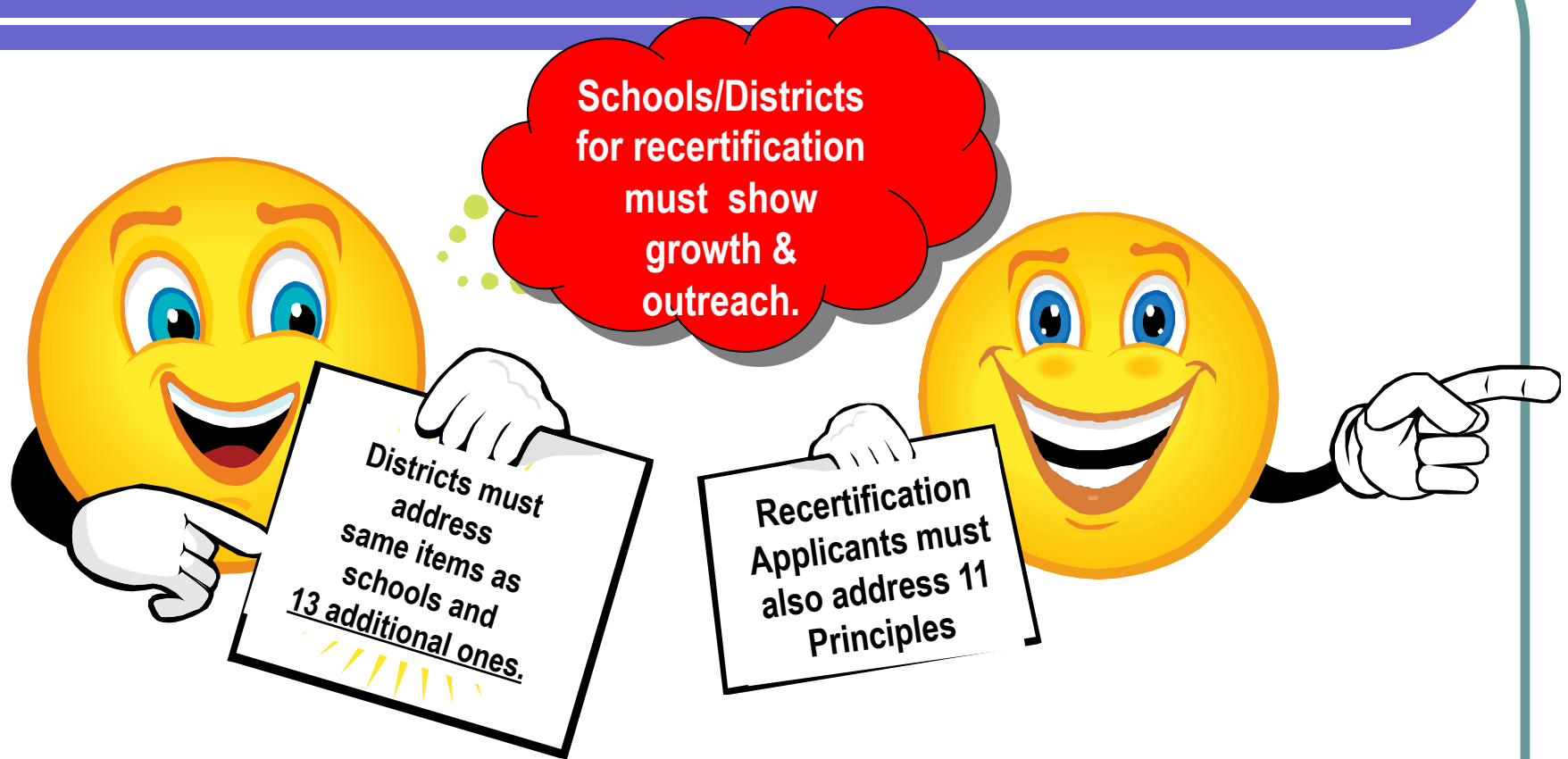
District: \$250+ depending on number of schools.

National School of Character Accreditation

School: Additional \$250 Fee if you have been named a SSOC. National Site Visit with Report

District: Additional \$500+ Fee if you have been named a State District of Character.

STOP: Additional Directions for Districts and Recertifications.



District & Recertification Applicants: Be aware of Additional Requirements

DISTRICTS

- In addition to covering the bulleted items in their narratives, they must address the following 13 items:

1.3	8.2, 8.3
3.1, 3.2	9.1, 9.2
4.3	10.3
5.1	11.2, 11.3
7.1	

RECERTIFICATIONS

In addition to covering the bulleted items in their narratives, they must show how they've grown, done outreach, kept some processes, changed others (and why), the impact of their work through data for 5 years.



Check your work, fill in the Actual Application, & wait for the phone call



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Need more assistance?

NJASECD has Regional Networking Centers across the state that can provide further help as you prepare your application to become a School of Character.

These centers can answer questions, provide information, or even help to set up a mentor relationship for your school. See the contact information for these Regional Centers on the following slides...



Northern Region

Hanover Park Regional HS District

- Chris Kelly, Principal, Whippany Park HS
ckelly@hpreg.org
- Tom Gaglione, Hanover Park HS
tgaglione@hpreg.org



West Milford Township Public Schools

- Marc Citro, Principal, Macopin School
marc.citro@wmtps.org

Central Region

Old Bridge Township Public Schools

- Joe Marinzoli, Principal, Alan B. Shepard ES
jmarinzoli@obps.org



Hamilton Township Public Schools

- Cindy Dacey, Retired Principal,
cndacey@yahoo.com
- Ann Wilmot, awilmot@hamilton.k12.nj.us

Southern Region

Cherry Hill Public Schools

- Mona Noyes, Retired, NJASECD Trustee
mknoyes@comcast.net

Pemberton Township Public Schools

- Jeff Havers, Superintendent
jhavers@pemb.org



Vineland Public Schools, Pauline Petway ES

- Jennifer Frederico, Principal
jfrederico@vineland.org

NJASECD Contacts

Dr. William Trusheim, President

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Laurie Coletti, Vice-President and
State SOC Coordinator

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Mary Reinhold, Secretary and State SOC Coordinator

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Eileen Dachnowicz, Trustee and former State SOC
Coordinator

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Thanks and Good Luck!



www.njasecd.org