

National and State Schools of Character Awards 2011 Application Guidelines



NATIONAL SCHOOLS
OF CHARACTER



STATE SCHOOLS
OF CHARACTER

**Sponsored by the Character Education Partnership and
Participating State Schools of Character Sponsors**

Purpose of the National and State Schools of Character Awards

The purpose of the National and State Schools of Character awards program is to identify and honor exemplars in character education and facilitate their leadership in serving as models for other educators.

Showcasing the National Schools of Character

CEP showcases the National Schools of Character (NSOC) in an annual publication and on its website. Winners receive press coverage and have the right to use the NSOC awards name and logo. CEP honors the winners at its annual National Forum on Character Education, and the NSOC receive a small grant to help with outreach.

Expanded Recognition in 2011

Since 1998, the Character Education Partnership (CEP) has named approximately 10 public and private schools and districts (K–12) as NSOC each year. But beginning in 2011, CEP will recognize ALL schools and districts that demonstrate an exemplary level of implementation of CEP's *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*.

An Achievable Path to Excellence

NSOC status is now an achievable goal for all. Applicants will no longer be in competition with other schools or districts but will be recognized for meeting a standard of excellence. The state and national awards application process is both a path to improvement and recognition. Applicants that do not receive the NSOC award in 2011 will receive feedback to help them develop an action plan for attaining the award in the future.

Expectations of NSOC Winners

NSOC winners serve as models and ambassadors of effective character education. They share their successful strategies with other educators at the National Forum and their home sites. They open their campuses as demonstration sites and contribute to CEP's communication network.

State Awards

State sponsors from 30 states give State Schools of Character (SSOC) awards as a prerequisite to the NSOC award. State winners receive these awards at a state celebration in their honor. SSOC serve as models within their states where they share best practices and develop a state-level mentoring network. CEP honors SSOC winners in its annual NSOC book. CEP and state sponsors also honor SSOC winners on their websites.

Call (1-800) 988-8081 or (202) 296-7743 for further information.

These application guidelines are available on the CEP website at www.character.org/nsoc.



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State Awards, con'd

Beginning in 2011, an SSOC winner will hold its designation for three years. Being an SSOC winner qualifies an applicant to be considered for the NSOC award. State sponsors offer technical assistance or guide applicants to helpful resources so that SSOC winners can reach the goal of becoming a National School or District of Character.

A Continuous Improvement Process

The application process is a rich opportunity to conduct a thorough self-assessment. In addition, all applicants receive a quantitative score sheet and written feedback to guide self-reflection, study, and growth.

“As we worked on the NSOC application, we realized the ‘winning’ was the process itself. Applying for the award afforded us the opportunity to appreciate our strengths and work on our challenges.”

~Nan Peterson, director of service learning, The Blake School

Eligibility

To be eligible for the 2011 awards, a school must have been engaged in character education for a minimum of three full years, starting no later than December 2007. Districts need to have been engaged in character education for a minimum of four full years, starting no later than December 2006. For the first time, NSOC can apply again after five years, making winners prior to 2007 eligible.

Scoring Criteria

CEP and state reviewers screen applications using CEP's 2010 revised *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. CEP is in the process of combining the current Eleven Principles and CEP's *Character Education Quality Standards*. Until the revised document is available, applicants should refer to the current *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education* and Quality Standards now on the CEP website.

Application Contents

The NSOC/SSOC application consists of the following:

1. An **Application Cover Sheet** created online at CEP's website.
2. A 25–page **Narrative with Inserted Artifacts** that explains how your character education initiative exemplifies the Eleven Principles. (Districts may submit up to 30 pages.)
3. A **Self-Assessment Score Sheet** that shows the results of your self-assessment. On the bottom half of the score sheet, you will answer some Background Information questions.

Application Cover Sheet

Begin the application process by going to the CEP website (www.character.org/nsocapplicationprocess) to create your Application Cover Sheet (available in the fall). When you complete the Cover Sheet, you will be asked to enter information such as:

- Demographic and other data about your school (or district).
- The month and year your school (or district) began implementing character education.
- Information about how you heard about this award.

When you hit “submit” after entering all the required information, your monitor will display a one-page Cover Sheet that includes all your entries. Print this document and make it the Cover Sheet of your application.

Narrative and Supporting Evidence

You have up to 25 pages (30 for districts) to explain how your character education initiative exemplifies the *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. Your application will be a narrative with supporting evidence, formatted as a jpg or gif file, inserted directly into your Word document. For example, if you talk about discussing character education issues at professional learning community meetings, you might reduce and insert a meeting agenda as verification. The important thing with insertions is to make sure they can be easily read when your application is copied. You can decide the ratio of narrative to artifacts, but at least one quarter of your application should be text and at least one quarter should be artifacts.

Your Narrative should clearly answer the following three questions:

1. What are your character education goals?

On page 1, define your school's (or district's) view of character education and the values your school community has agreed upon. Describe your philosophical approach, and explain what your character education initiative is trying to accomplish. Explain why you are doing what you are doing. Citing the texts, publications, or experts that have influenced your initiative helps evaluators understand your philosophy.

2. What is so special about your school or district that it deserves NSOC recognition?

As part of page 1 or within the narrative, explain what is special about your accomplishments in character education. What feature of your initiative would CEP want to hold up as a model of exemplary implementation of the Eleven Principles?

3. How are you implementing character education?

On pages 2–25, describe your accomplishments in each of the Eleven Principles. Note that each principle has three or four “scoring items.” While you will receive a score for each item based on the supporting evidence you provide, it is not necessary to write a separate paragraph for each item. Rather, write a separate paragraph (or more) for each principle. Include specific, illustrative examples and insert artifacts that address the scoring items. Keep in mind that to receive a score of 4 on an item, you must show evidence of all the key indicators of exemplary practice described under each scoring item.

Number each section with the number of the principle you are describing. To use space effectively, only mention information once even if it applies to more than one principle. It is not necessary to repeat information. When describing activities, explain how frequently they occur and how many students or staff they involve. For example, saying “All teachers hold class meetings once a week” paints a clearer picture than “teachers hold class meetings.”

Principle 11 is your opportunity to make a persuasive case that your school (or district) has thoughtfully implemented character education. To demonstrate positive and significant results, provide specific *qualitative* and *quantitative* evidence. Provide full data and analysis from climate surveys and other measurements. Use numbers, not percentages, when reporting changes in student behavior. Your narrative and supporting artifacts should clearly demonstrate that your community has gathered data, reflected upon it, and then acted as needed.

Supporting Evidence

Insert artifacts (documents that lend evidence to what you say in your narrative) directly into your application. Artifacts are critical but should not be an alternative to answering any of the narrative questions. Their purpose is to amplify and support.

Examples of Artifacts

- Data on positive behavioral or academic change
- School climate survey results
- Mission statements and school mottos
- Examples of student work or student reflections
- Lesson plans or assignments that integrate character education into the curriculum
- Articles from newsletters or newspapers
- Documentation of staff development

Guidelines for Inserting Artifacts

- Clearly label each artifact.
- Be mindful of how well your artifacts will reproduce and how clearly readers will be able to see your evidence after it has been copied.
- Do not reduce items to less than 10 pt. (news articles are an exception) or include more than one item in an insertion.
- Date newspaper articles and other date-sensitive items.
- Do not use photographs unless there is some compelling reason they give evidence.
- Do not include original documents, as your application will not be returned.

In Lieu of Inserting Artifacts

If you are unable to insert your artifacts into your narrative, you may include them as an appendix to your application. Follow the guidelines for artifacts above and also do the following:

- Include a Table of Contents and continue numbering the pages where your narrative ends.
- Put evidence in order of the Eleven Principles and label each page with the principle(s) addressed.
- Do not put more than four items on a page.
- Use only one side of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper and place items on the page vertically.

Self-Assessment Score Sheet

Assemble a group of knowledgeable stakeholders, including staff, parents, and students (if appropriate) to assess your character education initiative using the revised *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. (See information above in the Scoring Criteria section regarding the revision of this document.) Create a compilation score sheet on which you have averaged your stakeholders’ scores. Make this score sheet the last page in your application.

An Excel score sheet is available for your use on the CEP website (www.character.org/nsocapplicationprocess). You can use it to enter your averaged scores in Excel. You can then print your compiled score sheet and submit it with your application. Or you can simply copy, use, and submit the score sheet page in the revised Eleven Principles. If you use this score sheet, do not complete the strengths and areas of growth section.

Background Information

Please include the following on the bottom of the score sheet page at the end of your application:

- An explanation of your AYP status, if you have not met AYP.

- An explanation of who participated in completing the Eleven Principles self-assessment.
- An explanation of who contributed to completing the application, and the names and titles of those individuals who wrote the application narrative.
- Information about any previous NSOC/SSOC applications, the years of submission, and the outcome of these applications. For example, has your school or district ever applied or been named a finalist before? If so, when?

Additions and Tips

- If your school or district has previously applied for the NSOC/SSOC award, include and identify the changes that you have made since the last application somewhere in your narrative.
- If you see your school or district as a leader in helping others schools with their character education efforts or if you have outreach plans, describe your leadership efforts in Principle 9.
- If you are using a commercial program as part of your initiative, include a brief explanation of the program. Don't assume evaluators are necessarily familiar with it.
- Be aware that evaluators may look at your website to see whether it reflects your character education initiative.

Formatting Guidelines

- Use 1-inch margins, 12-point type, Times New Roman font. (Artifact margins may extend beyond 1 inch.)
- Use only one side of the paper.
- Double-space.
- Number the pages 1–25 (1–30 for districts). Page 1 will be the first page of your Narrative after the Cover Sheet. Page 26 (31 for districts) will be your Score Sheet and Background Information page. Pages over the limit will not be reviewed.

Two Formats for Application Submission

1. **Mail three copies** of the completed application, assembled in the order outlined above, by December 1, 2010. That is the postmark date, not the arrival date. *Or*
2. **Make a PDF** of your assembled application, including your Cover Sheet and Self-Assessment Score Sheet, and submit the PDF via e-mail by December 1, 2010. Keep dense documents to a minimum because systems for sending and receiving documents have varied size limits. If you use an outside vendor to create your PDF, have them reduce the file size.

Where to Submit Your Application

If you are from a state participating in the NSOC/SSOC awards program, you send your application to your state sponsor via the mail or via e-mail. State sponsors' mailing addresses and a link to their website for additional information are listed on the last pages of these guidelines. If your state is not participating, you send your application to CEP. The address is on page 1 of these guidelines.

Timeline

Applicants must mail their applications or send an electronic PDF by December 1, 2010. From December to January, state sponsors and CEP staff review the applications. In January, state sponsors send status letters to all state applicants and forward the applications of their SSOC winners to CEP. In February, CEP selects the finalists. In March, CEP notifies state nominees and applicants from non-participating states of their status. In March and April, CEP reviews applications and gathers other data through a variety of strategies, such as telephone interviews, the applicant's website, or site visits. In May, CEP announces the National Schools of Character winners.

Helpful Information

See the Helpful Information section on the NSOC application page on CEP's website for some tips on writing a winning application.

Please note that all NSOC/SSOC applications become the property of CEP and may be used for training, promotional, or educational purposes.

Deadline:

Applications must be postmarked or sent via e-mail by December 1, 2010. The contact person listed on your application will receive an e-mail confirmation from the state sponsor or from CEP, if you are from a non-participating state.

Application Checklist:

Assemble the pages of your completed application in order.

- Application Cover Sheet**
- 25-page Narrative with Artifacts Inserted** (30 pages for districts)
- Self-Assessment Score Sheet with Background Information**

If you are mailing your application, make three collated copies and clip each copy together. Do not bind or cover the copies as your application may need to be copied. Send the three copies to your state sponsor, if you are from a SSOC participating state, or to CEP, if you are not from a participating state. See last pages of these guidelines for the mailing and e-mail addresses of the participating states.

Promising Practices Awards

CEP gives annual Promising Practices (PP) awards in character education for unique and specific exemplary practices. Selected schools and districts receive an award certificate at the Promising Practices awards ceremony at the CEP Forum. In addition, descriptions of the winning practices appear on CEP's website. PP applications must be submitted online by March 15, 2011. ([See separate Promising Practices award application online.](#))

CEP gives NSOC applicants an additional month to apply for a PP award for a specific activity or strategy described in their application. In addition, their PP applications receive special consideration.

DUE DATE ... December 1, 2010

SSOC Participating States

Click on your state's name for additional information.

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