



Minnesota Character Council

CHARACTER Connect

November 2020

Volume 1, Issue 1

In This Issue

- Character in Stressful Times
- What are Core Values? ...The Ones You Decide
- Seeking 2021 MELA Nominations
- Character Resources

Minnesota Character Council

Dave Adney

Matt Bostrom

Bob Brown

Don Craighead

David E. Foster

Michael Hartoonian

Bill Mittlefehldt

Todd Otis

Don Salverda

Jack Serier

Barbara Shin

Steve Young*

Deborah Yungner

*Chair

The MCC is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange.

Learn more: www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-character-council

Contact: bbergseth@synergyexchange.org

Character In Stressful Times

By Michael Hartoonian

Attacking COVID-19 demands attention to clear communication, community involvement and character development. Communicating the best information—facts, definitions and calm consistency—as well as listening to and engaging the larger community is now part of leadership’s obligation. Understanding that the virus is as deadly to our mental health as it is to our physical health must be a major component of community conversations. This is the case because the COVID-19 pandemic is causing an attending dis-ease that’s effecting our children’s, as well as our own, mental well-being. Child abuse has increased by 22% since March (Kamanetz, A., NPR), and 45% of adults and 33% of children are reporting signs of mental and emotional issues (Calderon, V.J., Gallup).

The problem is not our brain but the swift and massive alteration of our environment. Similar numbers of mental stress are experienced after hurricanes, during wars and other catastrophes. This happens because we experience cultural and environmental phenomena that are strange—social distancing; store, school and firm closings; sickness and deaths; and a desperate feeling of helplessness. As a family, community and institution, we feel the financial and social pressures of simply paying our daily bills, not being able to hug our family members and friends, and caring about the well-being of others—wondering always, what will tomorrow bring?

We hear a great deal about what each of us can do, but the rhetoric and practices of citizens as well as of leaders are often nonaligned. We need to bring into line individual practices, with the deep principles of our civic/generational covenant, with common reciprocal duty, and with the spirit and humility of being truly human. In a word we need character.

Our character is what will help us through the pandemic, move closer to racial and economic justice, and sustain mental health; all are the biggest stressors of today. Thanks to school leaders who understand what happens in school through curriculum, treatment and relationships is vital to character development and hence a healthier society. Our character today, will always leave footprints in our future.



What Are Core Values? ... The Ones You Decide!

Core values are the values you and your organization/school/community decide are important to you. They are often identified by using the 11 Principles framework, a guide to cultivate a culture of character in a school.

Principle 1 focuses on defining, implementing and embedding core values into the school culture. Schools that effectively emphasize character development bring

What Are Core Values . . . Continued

together all stakeholders to consider and agree on specific character strengths that will serve as the school's core values. These basic values transcend religious and cultural differences and express our common humanity.

Ideally, a balance of moral, performance, intellectual and civic character strengths, these "shared values" represent the school's highest priorities and deeply held beliefs. A school committed to its students' character development uses a common language to teach, model and integrate their core values into all aspects of school life. When Principle 1 is fully integrated, all staff, students, and parents can explain how their "shared values" are a distinctive feature of their school (www.character.org/11-principles-framework).

Understanding and using the 11 Principles framework not only helps schools identify core values, but to learn what effective character education is, how to build a school environment that fosters character development in students, who must be involved in designing the character education initiative and how to assess areas of strength and growth. To learn more visit www.character.org/11-principles-framework.

Seeking Nominations For The 2021 Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award



Do you know an exceptional community program that develops character strengths and ethical leadership skills in its participants? If so, please nominate them for a 2021 Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award! Complete a short online nomination and your nominee will be invited to complete an application. Nominations are due Dec. 4. Learn more or submit your online nomination at <https://www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-ethical-leadership-award-1>.

The recognition was created by the Minnesota Character Council to celebrate ethical leadership and character development as measures of success. Honorees are celebrated at an event in May. The award is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange.

Character Resources

Featured Books and Article

By Tom Likona:

"Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues"

"Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility"

"How to Raise Kind Kids: And Get Respect, Gratitude, and a Happier Family in the Bargain"

By Hal Urban:

"Lessons from the Classroom: 20 Things Good Teachers Do"

"Life's Greatest Lessons: 20 Things That Matter"

"Grandpa's School of Life: 7 Great Lessons on Being a Good Person"

Kaler-Jones, C. (2020). When SEL is used as another form of policing. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@justschools/when-sel-is-used-as-another-form-of-policing-fa53cf85dce4>

Minnesota Promising Practices Awards

View proven, award-winning character development practices to implement in your school at www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-promising-practices-awards.

Minnesota Schools Of Character

The Schools of Character provides certification through an application and evaluation process based on the 11 Principles framework. To view honorees and learn more about the 11 Principles and Schools of Character visit www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-schools-of-character.

Organizations

Character.org – www.character.org

National Council for the Social Studies – www.socialstudies.org

Minnesota Council for the Social Studies – www.mcass.org

Teaching Civics – www.teachingcivics.org