



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Six Pennsbury Schools Recognized by Character.org

(FALLSINGTON, PA – February 23, 2021) The Pennsbury School District is pleased to announce that six of its schools achieved the 2021 State School of Character distinction, bestowed by Character.org, a national advocate for character education based in Washington, D.C. The organization’s announcement release is [linked here](#).

The Pennsbury schools include **Eleanor Roosevelt, Makefield, Manor, Penn Valley, and Walt Disney** elementary schools, in addition to **Pennsbury High School**. All of the schools listed were designated State Schools of Character in 2016 and were re-designated with the same honor this year after a rigorous re-application process. The schools will all now be considered by Character.org for the National School of Character distinction.

Note: Pennsbury’s remaining schools are on different five-year timetables for renewal as State and National Schools of Character.

Following are summaries of each of the school character education programs that earned them this special, five-year distinction.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School is very proud to be honored again as a State School of Character. The mission of Eleanor Roosevelt (ER) is to develop a culture where everyone is “Respectful, Responsible and Safe” so that each student can develop and grow to their fullest potential as a learner and a contributing member of the ER community. “We have combined our efforts through our work with character education and school-wide Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions to create our own *We Are ER Program*,” said Principal **Lisa Follman**. “Our three core values are embedded into explicitly-taught lessons and the core values have become common language at ER.”

ER’s **PTO** helped to design posters that remind the students of the school’s core values. These posters let students know what the core values “look like” and “sound like” throughout the school. The Core Character Team, led by the creativity of teachers, **Jason Miller** and **Kimberly Sendlock**, in conjunction with the talented students on the **ER Character Council**, have created enjoyable videos and lesson plans to demonstrate school values and expected behaviors at ER. “Within our program, students are awarded with Golden Tickets when demonstrating our three core values,” said Ms. Follman. School personnel created a special video broadcast on Fridays

for the morning announcements, in which Ms. Follman and teacher, **Tyree Annick-Hyle**, honor the Golden Ticket winners from the previous week, followed by a special character building segment by the school's very own "Teacher Man."

"Our core values are such a major part of so much of what we do at ER," said Ms. Follman. "We start each day with the morning announcements and then we say the *Pledge of Allegiance*, followed by the *We Are ER Pledge*. We take part in classroom lessons and all-school character assemblies. Many of our intermediate students take part in a character leadership team known as the Character Council, made up of ambassadors of character at ER. These students help newer students join the ER community safely, responsibly, and respectfully. At ER, teachers and parents support various clubs that are centered on our three core values, such as the **Diversity Club**, **Multi-Cultural Youth Leadership Club**, and the **ER Runners' Club**. Teachers work with the children on service projects as students learn to give back to the community, such as Caring for Friends, Caring Kids Cards (for our Military), and an Art Supply Collection for Kids at CHOP. Our students also take part in an annual walk at ER for children being treated at CHOP through Kids Walking for Kids. For over a decade, the ER PTO has supported each classroom in taking part in an annual Valentine's Day Service Project where our students build care packages for the elderly and homebound. More recently, the fifth graders have been excited to take part in the annual MLK Day of Service in Pennsbury. All of these experiences have been shaped by our core values and our commitment to *We are ER*."

MAKEFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Instilling character in Makefield Elementary students has been a consistent priority of this school community. Building the character of Makefield students is a mission of every teacher and staff member of Makefield. Character development is woven into daily lessons across subject areas and emphasized through some of the school's special events. In 2016, Makefield was awarded the designation of State School of Character and National School of Character. Since then, the program has continued to grow as they focused on providing character development instruction and also recognizing students who are making growth and demonstrating positive behaviors.

Makefield's core values of Giving to Others, Respect and Responsibility, Owning Your Behavior, and Work to build your character (GROW) are deeply embedded into the very fabric of the school and its culture. "Through our GROWS 200 Club, students are recognized for their achievements in these aspects of character," said Principal **Donna McCormick-Miller**. "The wonderful outcome of including these virtues in our daily practice is that our students no longer see it as work. These virtues have become part of who they are, part of their character. Makefield also supports the social-emotional development of our students through mindfulness programming via Project CARES: Creating Aware, Resilient, and Empathetic Students and the Second Step Curriculum during our SEL time in all grade levels. We also incorporate into our daily announcements our weekly mindful message and our pledge of respect. Our involved and supportive parent community and our committed Makefield faculty and staff have enabled all stakeholders to strengthen our connection between home, school and community."

Over the past five years, in addition to the focus on character development, the Makefield students, staff and community have emphasized a call to moral action through many events. "In the fall of 2018, we hosted award-winning author, Andrea Davis Pinkney," said Ms. McCormick-Miller. "Through her books, she taught our students about the actions of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the dramatic impact his courage had on our society. We hosted an 'I AM' rally like Dr. King, and our students had an opportunity to stand up and shout something about themselves that makes them proud. We also received the designation of a No Place for Hate

School that same year. Other activities supporting engagement in moral action were: our participation in Mini-THON in February 2020, our YesYouCan! 5K in October 2019, which was a District-wide event to “build confidence and build community” as well as support Family Promise of Lower Bucks. Our Walk to Remember, MLK Day of Service, Salvation Army Kettle Drive, our Thanksgiving food drives and Holiday gift giving are all ways that our students demonstrate their concern for not only their personal well-being but the well-being of those in need in the local community. We are honored to once again be recognized as a State School of Character in 2021.”

MANOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“We are thrilled that our recognition as a State School of Character has been extended for another five years,” shares Manor Elementary Principal, **Terri Salvucci**. “We take great pride in our Manor Strong Program. This is the heart of our school. Manor Strong is a school-wide program that is inclusive of our whole school community.”

Manor Strong was established in 2015 and continues to grow stronger every day. This school-wide plan was established to provide a positive school climate and to create a supportive environment for personal, social, and academic growth for students and staff. “Everything we do falls under our Core Values of Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe,” said Ms. Salvucci. “Manor Strong gives us the common language and the foundation to work together as a community and support one another in a positive way that supports student growth.”

A **Manor Strong Committee** works toward continuous improvement. “Our program is recognized as a State School of Character (2016-2021), National School of Character (2016-2021), and a School Wide Positive Behavior Program that is recognized by the state for implementation with fidelity,” said Ms. Salvucci. “Our team continuously takes feedback from parents, students, and organizations at the state and national level. This is an effort that involves all stakeholders. Our school committee conducts meetings with full staff once a month to report the data, feedback, and to collaborate on activities and tweaks that need to occur to continue character development for our students and community. We have student ambassadors who meet once a month and they have an opportunity for input and action in implementation of program growth. Our PTO supports our work and allows us time to share out with the school community and include their input. This recognition belongs to everyone!”

Ms. Salvucci concluded: “We are very excited that our State School of Character recognition has been awarded for 2021-2026. This work is very important to us because Manor Strong is the soul of our school. We are passionate and will continue this work because we know it is very important to educate the whole child.”

PENN VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Penn Valley Elementary school community takes great pride in the school’s character education program. “We are honored to be selected once again as a State School of Character,” said Principal **Barbara Hidalgo**. “Our character education program is infused with our School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support program. When visiting Penn Valley, the students are able to share that our motto is, WE R PV. We are Respectful, We are Responsible, and We are Safe are our core values. At the beginning of each school year, our students review and practice our core values as a school. Individual direct instruction takes place in each of the classrooms. Our character program provides common language and expectations throughout the

school community. Posters that outline our core values decorate our hallways and classrooms to provide visual reminders to our students, but also to keep our visitors informed.”

Students are recognized with a Panther 200 award when demonstrating responsible and respectful behaviors that keep themselves and their school community safe. “Although the virtual/hybrid model has presented challenges for our school community, our learners continue to rise to the occasion and earn Panther 200 slips, proving that school is not a building but rather a community of learners, teachers, and family,” said Ms. Hidalgo. Students have been recognized with a Panther 200 for responsibility when observed actively participating in Google Meet lessons and for accomplishing curriculum/grade level goals such as completion of the Xtra-Math program. Students have also received Panther 200 slips for demonstrating respect by waiting patiently while their classmates share, remaining muted during lessons and raising their hands to show they would like to add to the discussion. Students have received slips for safety by following our pandemic protocol. Parents are also welcomed to celebrate by sharing about the child with a Panther 200 for contributions in their home and community.”

Ms. Hidalgo added, “We are proud to be honored one again for our efforts to improve our character each school year.”

WALT DISNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“For seven years, the students and staff of Walt Disney Elementary School have traveled on our character education journey,” said Principal **Laurie Ruffing**. “Our character education program focuses on all staff and students in all school settings. With the help of the staff, we provide the students with school-wide expectations for all areas of the school, including the classroom, cafeteria, playground, bathroom, hallways, and bus.” These expectations are taught at the beginning of each school year and revisited multiple times throughout the year.

“Our Positive Behavior Intervention Support/Character Education brochure is shared with all families at the start of the school year,” explained Ms. Ruffing. “We invite all families to join us in being ‘RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIBLE & SAFE!’ as the overall theme of our program is that Disney students are respectful, responsible and safe. We expect all staff members to model these expectations for our Pre-K-5 population. Students and staff are invited to show their school pride each Wednesday during our Wear It Wednesday celebration. As part of our character education program, we like to give the students an opportunity to give back to their community. Students participate in our annual Thanksgiving food drive, the District-wide Day of Service events, as well as several other events.”

PENNSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

“Pennsbury High School is extremely honored to be recognized as a State School of Character,” reports PHS Assistant Principal, **Ryan Regensburg**. Since earning a National School of Character designation in 2016, the school has continued to promote and expand the character education program, specifically highlighting the 11 Principles. “We have further developed our PEACE Challenge to include social-emotional development,” said Mr. Regensburg. “We have made the PEACE Challenge a focal point to model and teach desirable behaviors as outlined by CASEL’s competencies, and continue to find new ways to implement the 11 Principles during the school day as well as within the community. Not only do we focus on the core values of the PEACE Challenge, but we have also aligned those values to our social-emotional learning goals by implementing ‘The Nest’ into our weekly routines. Prior to March 2020, teachers

implemented a 15-minute Nest activity that encourages critical thinking and discussion among students.”

Within the context of the discussion, students listen actively to the comments of others, think critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and responses to the thoughts of others, while building relationships within the classroom. “This has allowed our students to have a voice and to take ownership of their own character development,” said Mr. Regensburg. “In the remote learning environment, staff and students collaborated with the Pennsbury Channel to ‘Build the Virtual Nest’ through morning announcements. Segments were designed for our PHS community to stay connected. As for this school year, clubs and other co-curricular programs such as the **Air Force Junior ROTC, Student Council, Interact, Salt and Light, Operation Smile, Operation Warm,** and **National Honor Society** have found unique ways to transfer the 11 Principles into our community service activities. As we reflect on our character journey, we continue to evolve and integrate social-emotional competencies with the 11 Principles to allow character development to come to life in our high school community.”

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