

*Congress shall make
no law respecting an
establishment of religion
or prohibiting the free
exercise thereof; or
abridging the freedom
of speech, or of the press,
or the right of the people
peaceably to assemble,
and to petition the
Government for a redress
of grievances.*

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CHAPTER 14

Character Education*

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We must remember that intelligence is not enough.
Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.

—Martin Luther King Jr.,
Speech at Morehouse College
1948

Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks - no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without virtue in the people is a chimerical idea.

—James Madison

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DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER EDUCATION

What is character education?

Character education is a national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share. It is the intentional, proactive effort by schools, districts and states to instill in their students important core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for self and others. Character education is not a “quick fix.” It provides long-term solutions that address moral, ethical and academic issues of growing concern to our society and key to the safety of our schools.

- Character education not only cultivates minds, it nurtures hearts.
- Character education gets to the heart of the matter – literally.

Why do we need character education?

As Dr. Thomas Lickona, author of *Educating for Character*, stated, “Moral education is not a new idea. It is, in fact, as old as education itself. Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become good.” Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning and practice. It is developed through character education. The intentional teaching of good character is particularly important in today’s society since our youth face many opportunities and dangers unknown to earlier generations. They are bombarded with many more negative influences through the media and other external sources prevalent in today’s culture. At the same time, there are many more day-to-day pressures impinging on the time that parents and children have together. Studies show that children spend only 38.5 minutes a week (33.4 hours a year) in meaningful conversation with their parents, while they spend 1,500 hours watching television. (American Family Research Council, 1990 and *Harper’s*, November 1999.) Since children spend about 900 hours a year in school, it is essential that

schools resume a proactive role in assisting families and communities by developing caring, respectful environments where students learn core, ethical values. In order to create our schools as the caring and respectful communities we know they can be, we must look deeper. We must be intentional, proactive and comprehensive in our work to encourage the development of good character in young people.

How does character education work?

To be effective, character education must include the entire school community and must be infused throughout the entire school curriculum and culture. Character education promotes core values in all phases of school life and includes proactive strategies and practices that help children not only understand core ethical values, but to care about and act upon them. Based on research by the nation's leading character education experts, CEP's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education,TM provide guidelines for the elements needed for **effective, comprehensive** character education.

1. Promotes core ethical values.
2. Teaches students to understand, care about, and act upon these core ethical values.
3. Encompasses all aspects of the school culture.
4. Fosters a caring school community.
5. Offers opportunities for moral action.
6. Supports academic achievement.
7. Develops intrinsic motivation.
8. Includes whole-staff involvement.
9. Requires positive leadership of staff and students.
10. Involves parents and community members.
11. Assesses results and strives to improve.

Schools: According to Lickona, when a comprehensive approach to character education is used, a positive moral culture is created in the school—a total school environment that supports the values taught in the classroom. This is accomplished through the leadership of the principal, schoolwide discipline, a sense of community, democratic student government, a moral community among adults and opportunities to address moral concerns. Schools recruit parents and the community as partners and foster caring beyond the classroom by using inspiring role models and opportunities for community service to help students learn to care by giving care.



Teachers: Teachers act as caregivers, models and mentors, treating students with love and respect, setting a good example, supporting pro-social behavior and correcting hurtful actions. The teacher creates a moral community, helping students respect and care about each other and feel valued within the group, and a democratic classroom environment, where students are involved in decision-making. Teachers practice moral discipline, using the creation and application of rules as opportunities to foster moral reasoning, self-control and a respect for others, and teaching values through the curriculum by using academic subjects as vehicles for examining ethical values. They use cooperative learning to teach children to work together, and they help develop their students' academic responsibility and regard for the value of learning and work. They encourage moral reflection through reading, writing, discussion, decision-making exercises and debate, and they teach conflict resolution to help students learn to resolve conflicts in fair, non-violent ways.

What is the goal of character education?

To develop students socially, ethically and academically by infusing character development into every aspect of the school culture and curriculum. To help students develop good character, which includes knowing, caring about and acting upon core ethical values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness and compassion.

What is a school of character like?

There is no one particular look or formula, but schools of character have one thing in common: a school-wide commitment to nurture the “whole child.” They develop students socially, ethically and academically by infusing character development into every part of their curriculum and culture. Specifically, a school committed to character education explicitly names and publicly stands for specific core values and promulgates them to all members of the school community. They define the values in terms of behaviors that can be observed in the life of the school, and they model, study, discuss and use them as the basis for all human relations in the school. They uphold the values by making all school members accountable to consistent standards of conduct, and they celebrate their manifestation in the school and community. Character education works in nearly every school environment, from small to large and from urban to suburban to rural. It works in both public and private schools, and with unique school populations and structures, such as charter, magnet, faith-based, and at-risk. The key to success is that character educators are able to find what works in their particular school, district or community.

How does a school implement character education?

Formalized character education begins when members of a school, along with the broad involvement of community members, come together to determine the core ethical values that they share and that form the basis for good education in their particular school. These values then become the foundation for all that the school does—curriculum, teaching strategies, school culture, extracurricular activities, etc. Character education is thereby infused into the broader community.

Is character education as important as academics?

Absolutely. The social, ethical and emotional development of young people is just as important as their academic development. As Theodore Roosevelt stated: “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.” After all, we know that good workers, citizens, parents and neighbors all have their roots in good character. Therefore, it is critical to create schools that simultaneously foster character development and promote learning. In fact, character education promotes academic excellence because it lays a foundation for all learning that takes place in school. While research is in the early stages, it is clear that character education builds classrooms where students are ready to learn and where teachers are freer to teach.

Isn't character education just another “add-on” that contributes to teachers' workloads?

Character education is not an “add-on” but is instead a different way of teaching; it is a comprehensive approach that promotes core values in all phases of school life and permeates the entire school culture. It is not an imposition on already overburdened schools; rather, it helps educators fulfill their fundamental responsibility to prepare young children for the future by laying a foundation for learning through the creation of caring, respectful school environments. Teachers are reporting that their jobs become easier with the implementation of character education because there are fewer discipline and behavioral problems to detract from teaching time.

How much time each day/week is needed for character education?

Character education should take place throughout the entire school day as administrators, teachers and other staff are presented with opportunities to model and teach positive character traits. Character education should not be relegated to a “character education class” that is conducted periodically but should be infused throughout the structures and processes of the entire school curriculum and culture.

Can character education work at all grade levels?

Yes. Varying age-appropriate strategies and practices are being successfully applied to all grade levels, from teaching social and emotional skills in the earliest grades, to service learning and prejudice reduction in secondary schools. It is important to set a strong foundation during the earlier grades and to reinforce and build upon that foundation during the later grades. However, character education can be initiated at any grade level.



Isn't character education just a new fad or buzzword?

No. Character education has always been an essential part of our schools' mission. In fact, since the founding of our nation's public schools, it was always intended that character education be an integral part of schooling along with academics. Today's character education movement is a re-emergence of that important mission.

Why is character education re-emerging now?

Although character education has always been of vital importance, schools strayed from proactive efforts to incorporate character development into their teaching in past decades. Ironically, this neglect came at a time when the need became greater due to increased challenges in raising ethical children. A number of factors, such as a weakening in guidance by some families and communities, brought on widespread reflection and introspection toward the end of the 20th century. The tragedy at Columbine and fatal shootings at a number of other schools punctuated these concerns across the country. Now, character education is becoming a priority in our nation's education reform as we are increasingly realizing that character development must be an intentional part of education rather than just a process that happens naturally.

Is religion a part of character education?

Parents are the primary and most important moral educators of their children. Thus public schools should develop character education programs in close partnership with parents and the community.

Character education focuses on the core civic virtues and moral values that are widely held in our society across our religious and other differences. Under the First Amendment, public-school teachers may neither inculcate nor denigrate religion. The moral values and civic virtues agreed to in the community may be taught in public schools if done so without religious indoctrination. At the same time, core values should not be taught in such a way as to suggest that religious authority is unnecessary or unimportant.

Sound character education programs affirm the value of religious and philosophical commitments. Faith formation is the province of families and religious communities. But public schools may teach about religion (as distinguished from religious indoctrination) as part of complete education. For example, the curriculum may include teaching about the role of religion in history and contemporary society, alerting students to the fact that moral convictions are often grounded in religious traditions.

PARTICIPATION IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

Shouldn't parents be the primary character educators?

Developing good character is first and foremost a parental responsibility, but the task must also be shared with schools and the broader community. As today's society provides more and tougher challenges to raising ethical, responsible children, increasingly parents and communities are looking to schools for assistance. And sadly, school may be the only place where some children are taught virtuous behavior because they live in homes where their families are not serving as positive role models and are not providing adequate character development.

Who decides what character education traits are emphasized?

It is very important that each school community reach consensus on what values should be taught in a school in order to create the sense of ownership that is needed to obtain "buy-in" for the program. To be effective, school-based character education programs need broad support from all stakeholders in the community—educators, parents, community leaders, youth service groups, businesses and faith and charitable groups.

Early in the planning process, schools should collaborate with parents and their communities to craft a shared vision and objectives. Collectively, they should identify the core values to be taught in their school as well as the particular approaches to teaching them.



Effective character education schools across the country have shown that, despite deep differences, schools and communities can join together around a commitment to our common ethical inheritance. We know that there are some things that we all value for ourselves and for our children. We want our children to be honest. We want them to respect those different from themselves. We want them to make responsible decisions in their lives. We want them to care about their families, communities and themselves.

These things do not happen on their own. It takes all of us, with the support of our schools, to get us there.

Who teaches character education in a school?

Inherently, each and every adult in a school is a character educator by virtue of exposure to students. Regardless of whether a school has formalized character education, all adults serve as role models. Students constantly watch as all adults in the school – teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, secretaries, cafeteria aides, bus drivers – serve as models for character, whether good or bad.

Beyond modeling, no matter what the academic subject or extracurricular activity, educators are afforded the opportunity to develop good character in their students on a daily basis by intentionally selecting character-based lessons and activities and by the way they educate their students.

Are schools qualified to teach character education?

Many teachers across the country are being trained in character education through staff development and in-services. Meanwhile, it appears that the nation's schools of education are doing very little to prepare future teachers to be character educators, according to a 1999 study conducted by CEP and the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University.

The study found that, while character education is very strongly supported by the deans of education at the colleges and universities that are training new teachers, very few of the schools are addressing character education during teacher preparation. In order to implement effective initiatives, schools require access to resources and guidance in establishing, maintaining and assessing their programs.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

What do Americans think about character education?



As Americans examine the moral standards of our society and the quality of our nation's education system, they are increasingly looking to schools and communities to help develop good character in our young people. Poll after poll shows that Americans place issues such as ethics and morality high on their list of concerns. For instance:

- Various studies show that more than 90 percent of the population believes schools should teach character traits to students.
- A 1998 Gallup poll found that Americans consider crime and violence; declines in ethics, morals and family values; and drug usage the issues of most concern in our society today.
- A 1998 poll (conducted by The Tarrance Group and Lake Snell Perry & Associates) of 1,000 likely voters showed that Americans want Congress to restore moral values and improve education more than anything else.

Should character education be mandated?

Legislation and policies should encourage character education in general, but not a particular approach or program. Character education works best when local schools and communities work together to identify the core values to be taught in their schools as well as the particular approaches to teaching those values.

States should encourage comprehensive approaches to character education that involve all aspects of school culture and curriculum. Since very few educators and administrators receive training on how to incorporate character education into their classrooms and schools during their initial preparation at teacher colleges and universities, providing funding for staff development is a critical role for states and districts.

Why should the business community support character education?

Since the American workforce ultimately comes from our schools, businesses have a vested interest in seeing that our youth develop into responsible, ethical people. The very qualities that today's work force needs are character traits and skills that form the building blocks of character education. In 1991, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a report "What Work Requires of Schools"—also known as the SCANS report—which cautioned that students must develop a new set of foundation skills and competencies such as interpersonal skills, individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity.

CHARACTER EDUCATION QUANTIFIED

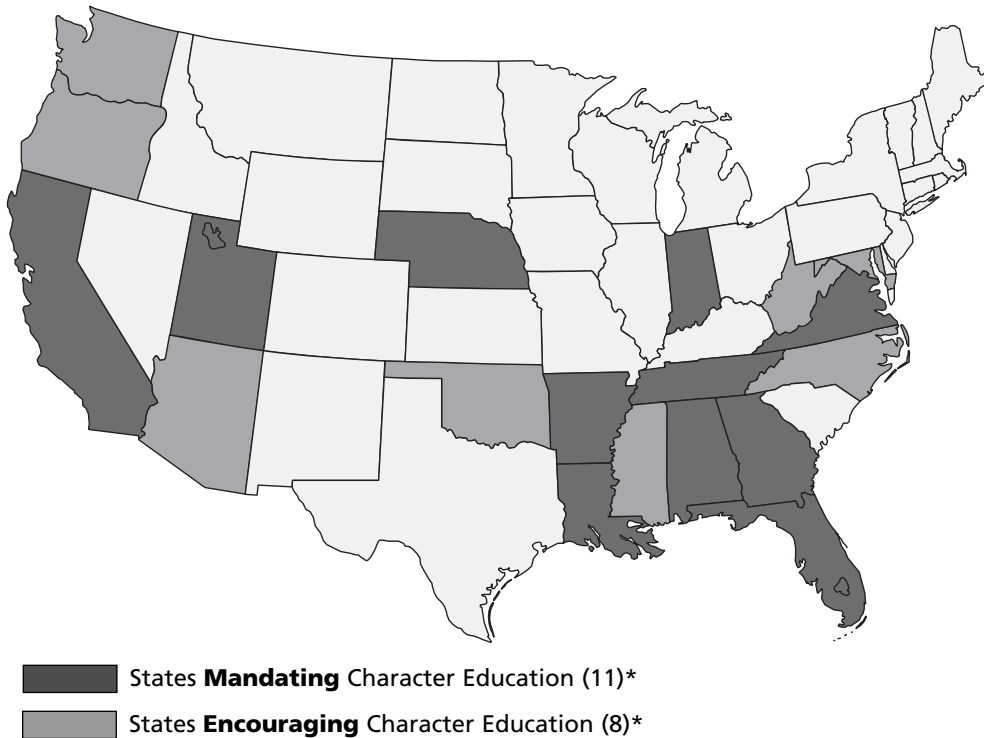
How many schools/districts use character education?

While it is impossible to quantify the number of schools using character education, we do know that it is being implemented to varying degrees in schools all across the country. The combined number of states that are recipients of federal character education grants and states that either require or encourage character education through legislation is 40.

Do any states require character education?

Many state boards and departments of education and, currently, 19 states address character education through legislation. Nearly half a dozen others are currently pursuing legislation regarding character education.

- Eleven states *mandate* character education through legislation: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Nebraska, Tennessee, Utah and Virginia.
- Eight states *encourage* character education through legislation: Arizona, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington and West Virginia.



*As of October 2001

RESULTS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

How do we know character education works?

Schools that are infusing character education into their curricula and cultures, such as CEP's National Schools of Character, are finding improved academic achievement, behavior, school culture, peer interaction and parental involvement. They are seeing dramatic transformations; pro-social behaviors such as cooperation, respect and compassion are replacing negative behaviors such as violence, disrespect, apathy and underachievement. When you walk into a character education school, you know it. You find an atmosphere of mutual caring and respect, where students value learning and care about their teachers, classmates, communities and themselves. Some specific examples of research conducted on character-based programs include:

- A 2000 evaluation of **South Carolina's four-year character education initiative**, which is a pilot program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, reports dramatic improvements among both students and adults. In surveys of South Carolina administrators, the study found that 91 percent reported improvement in student attitudes, 89 percent reported improvement in student behavior, 60 percent reported improvement in academic performance, and more than 65 percent reported improvement in teacher and staff attitudes since implementing character education. The independent study was conducted by the University of South Carolina's Center for Child and Family Studies.
- In three separate studies spanning almost 20 years, the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, Calif., has documented numerous positive outcomes for students who have attended elementary schools implementing its **Child Development Project**. This research has consistently shown that students in CDP schools engage in more pro-social behavior (e.g., are helpful and cooperative), are more skilled at resolving interpersonal conflicts, are more concerned about others and are more committed to democratic values. Findings from the most recent study of CDP also showed significant reductions in use of alcohol and marijuana and in delinquent behaviors (outcome variables which were not examined in earlier studies). Preliminary findings from a follow-up study of students in middle school indicate that, relative to comparison students, former CDP students are more "connected" to school, work harder and are more engaged in their middle school classes and have higher course grades and achievement test scores. In addition, they engage in less misconduct at school and are more involved in positive youth activities (e.g., organized sports, community groups), and report that more of their friends are similarly positively involved in school and their communities than comparison students.
- Students trained in **Second Step**, a violence-prevention program, used less physical aggression and hostile, aggressive comments and engaged in more pro-social interactions than peers who were not exposed to the curriculum.

- An independent evaluation of the **Resolving Conflict Creatively Program** found that, of those participating in the program, 64 percent of teachers reported less physical violence and 75 percent reported an increase in student cooperation. Additionally, 92 percent of students felt better about themselves, and more than 90 percent of parents reported an increase in their own communication and problem-solving skills.
- In a study of four schools using **Positive Action**, the average number of behavioral incidents (including violence and substance abuse) requiring discipline referral dropped by 74 percent after the program was implemented for one year and by an average of 80 percent during the next six years. Additionally, absenteeism decreased between 30 to 60 percent, and achievement scores improved from an average of the 43rd to an average of the 71st percentile range after the first year of implementation to an average of the 88th percentile after two to nine years.



- Longitudinal studies from the **Responsive Classroom** program, which emphasizes social skills and good character, have shown increased academic performance across several grade levels. Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores rose 22 percent for the Responsive Classroom students and only 3 percent for the control group. The Responsive Classroom has also resulted in above-average academic growth between grades four and eight, decreases in discipline referrals and increases in pro-social behaviors.

How can character education be assessed?

Through evaluation studies, the impact of character education can be seen through changes in school environment and student attitudes and behavior. For example, many character education schools are reporting reduced violence, discipline referrals and vandalism, and improved attendance and academic performance. While it is challenging for a district or school to assess its program, educators and administrators agree it is worth the effort. More assessment tools are needed, but some existing tools include school surveys, behavioral observations and statistics, and self-assessment questionnaires. CEP's assessment database provides the most comprehensive information available on assessment tools and instruments.

Can character education create safe schools?

Yes. While character education is not a panacea to ridding schools of violence, it is a long-term solution to creating environments where negative and anti-social behaviors are less likely to flourish or go unnoticed and unreported. Character education creates schools where children feel safe because they are in an atmosphere that values respect, responsibility and compassion—not because a guard or metal detector is posted at the door.

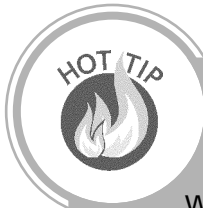
FUNDING FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

How much funding is needed to implement character education?

Character education does not require vast funding. Primary expenses include initial staff training and periodic in-services.

What are possible funding sources for character education?

The U.S. Department of Education provides seed money for character education through its “Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Projects.” Since 1995, a total of 36 states and the District of Columbia have received a combined total of approximately \$27.5 million through the grants. State grant recipients include Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Additionally, other federal programs that are tied to the goals of character education can be used to launch and support local initiatives. Some of the department's high-profile grant programs that can direct funds to character education include 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants to States and Partnerships, and America Reads.



Character Education and Religion

When schools and communities adopt character education programs, they must keep in mind that the moral life of a great many Americans is shaped by deep religious conviction. Both the approach to character education and the classroom materials used should be selected in close consultation with parents representing a broad range of perspectives. When care is taken to find consensus, communities are able to agree on the core values they wish taught in the schools and how they wish it to be done.

The civic and moral values widely held in our society, such as honesty, caring, fairness and integrity, can be taught without invoking religious authority. In public schools, where teachers may neither promote nor denigrate religion, these values must be taught without religious indoctrination. At the same time, teaching core values may not be done in such a way as to suggest that religious authority is unnecessary or unimportant. Nothing in a school's approach to character education should undermine the religious conviction of parents and students.

Sound character education programs will acknowledge that many people look to religious authority and revelation for moral guidance. Such programs will affirm the value of religious and philosophical commitments and avoid any suggestion that values are simply a matter of individual choice without reference to absolute truth. Students will be encouraged to consult their parents and religious leaders for a fuller understanding of how their tradition addresses moral questions.

Character education can be hollow and misleading when taught within a curriculum that is silent about religion. When religion is largely ignored, students get the false and dangerous message that religious ideas and practices are insignificant for human experience. A complete education must of necessity include study about religion, where appropriate, throughout the curriculum. Religion and religious perspectives are taken seriously in the curriculum if students are exposed to the great ethical systems of world history and to America's rich and diverse religious heritage. Mentioning religion is not enough. Students need to explore the place of religion in history, literature, art and music if they are to understand the ultimate beliefs and world views that provide the deepest and strongest sources of human meaning for much of humanity.

The Authors

CEP AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

What is the Character Education Partnership (CEP)?

CEP is a national advocate and leader for the character education movement. It is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian coalition of more than 1,200 organizations and individuals committed to fostering effective character education in our nation's K-12 schools. It is an umbrella organization for character education, serving as the leading resource for people and organizations that are integrating character education into their schools and communities. CEP focuses on defining and encouraging effective practices and approaches to quality character education and provides a forum for the exchange of ideas. CEP's membership includes the nation's leading education organizations, and its board of directors is made up of corporate leaders and leading experts in the field of character education.

What is CEP's mission?

CEP is dedicated to developing moral character and civic virtue in our young people as an essential way of promoting a more compassionate and responsible society.

How does CEP contribute to the character education movement?

CEP provides research and resources to policymakers, character educators, education leaders, the media and general public, while also setting high standards and recognizing quality initiatives nationwide.

CEP hosts the nation's largest and most comprehensive online Character Education Resource Center at www.character.org, connecting educators and communities with hundreds of organizations, curricula, videos, books, etc.

CEP has created the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education™, which provides quality standards and practical guidelines necessary to build comprehensive character education initiatives. The Eleven Principles will soon be brought to life through a new publication—the *Eleven Principles Sourcebook*—which will give educators the tools and support needed to implement effective character education.

The National Schools of Character™ Awards is CEP's flagship program which annually identifies and recognizes schools and districts nationwide that exemplify excellence in character education. The National Schools of Character Awards highlight character education's positive impact on school climate, academic excellence, and student success, and serve as exemplary models for schools and educators across the country. The winners' successful character education programs are promoted through a best practice publication, mentoring network and national media-outreach efforts.

CEP's **National Forum** provides teachers, principals, counselors, professors, parents and business and community leaders with a chance to learn what works from the nation's leading character education experts and on-the-ground practitioners. Attendance continues to grow, with last year's numbers reaching approximately 700.

CEP's website includes an **online database of assessment tools**, including a hands-on primer in character education evaluation techniques

CEP is working to make character education an integral part of undergraduate and graduate training of educators. With support from the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, CEP released a 1999 landmark report, *Teachers as Educators of Character: Are the Nation's Schools of Education Coming Up Short?*, showing strong support for teaching character education in the nation's schools, although only 13 percent of deans are satisfied with their school's efforts to prepare our nation's future teachers.

For more information, contact Character Education Partnership, 1025 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 1011, Washington, DC 20036, or by phone at (800) 988-8081. CEP's web site is at www.character.org.

