



## Bonner Center for Character Education and Citizenship

### **2010 BONNER CENTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

**Centerville Elementary School (256 students; Pre-K -6)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA 93657**  
**559-787-2511**  
**Principal: Lisa Houston**

Centerville (CV) School community has agreed on the core ethical values it wishes to promote through participating in the district Community of Caring (CoC) program. CoC is a whole school approach to developing character with roles for staff, students, parents and the school community. It has a cohesive framework with components and five core values that provide a common language and a cohesive structure to serve as a foundation for all school activities.

A core group of students, staff, and community members was established to develop and annually modify the CoC action plan, which contains ideas for activities promoting the five core values. The group also contains a site facilitator who meets with students, staff, and families to ensure the plan is being implemented with fidelity. Additionally, our five core values are posted throughout the school in English and Spanish to reflect our school's cultural diversity.

The CoC program is evidenced based. Our students, teachers, and school community believe this program to be important for our students due to the positive outcome it has and continues to provide. Our students do well on state and district assessments; have high attendance rates and act with empathy. Bullying has been dramatically reduced. This level of influence on our students is why our teachers and school community members believe that it is important.

CV's character education program continues to achieve its goals every year. This is measured by using the following assessment tools:

1. Attendance - The attendance at CV currently is 97%.
2. Bully Prevention Surveys - Last year, we administered our first bully prevention survey. We have and hope to continue making substantial progress in the area of bully prevention.
3. Parent Surveys - At the end of each year, our parents are presented with a survey, which rates the school. CV always has a 100% return rate on the surveys. The results of the survey also reflect the parents' satisfaction with our school and our character education program.

4. STAR Results - CV has always strived for academic excellence. Our STAR scores continue to increase.
5. Staff Surveys - Yearly, our staff is presented with an anonymous survey. The survey reflects the staff's opinion on the school environment. This survey supports strong acknowledgement of the core values of CV.

CV's staff is intentional and proactive in addressing character education at all grade levels as we concentrate on one value for a two-month period. Each classroom has grade-level appropriate literature and videos that exemplify each of the five character traits. Each classroom teacher goes above and beyond the district-required activities to design and teach lessons that are appropriate for the needs of their individual classroom. Our Peer Mediators and Got Fun Squad plan activities for our weekly school meeting around the flagpole that unite our school as a CoC. The activities range from songs, to skits, and even famous quotes that inspire us to be better community members.

CV offers tutoring, crafts, sports, fieldtrips, opportunities to help beautify the campus, PTA functions, Toys for Tots, food drives, Coats for Kids, Toyland Parade, musical and drama productions, Harvest Festival, Carnival, Muffins with Mom, Doughnuts with Dad, Grandparent's Day, relief drives, ethnic dinners, and movie nights. CV has partnered with a local business to plant trees in the community, as well. Classrooms are responsible for choosing, planning and maintaining much of our landscaped and garden area.

CV makes it a priority for students to contribute in meaningful ways to the school, to others and to the community. Classes have adopted needy families in our community, which reinforces our CoC values. CV is very proud of our success story with at-risk students, including a small percentage of homeless that are living in tents and cars within our boundaries. We have collected money for our local children's hospital, fire, hurricane and tsunami victims. Other opportunities to give have come through holiday food drives, Toys for Tots, Coats for Kids, Kid's Day newspaper sales, and periodic cleanup and tree plantings at our local China Creek Park. Fundraising events become community affairs and are strongly supported by staff, parents and community members.

The quote ...and our district motto, "Every Child, Every Day! Whatever It Takes!" are proudly displayed in each of our classrooms and serve as our guiding vision. CV and the district set high standards for our staff, students and community that go beyond academic success and require everyone involved to set examples that the community can observe and respect. CoC values are posted alongside the State Content Standards.

Our monthly character assemblies recognize students who exemplify our CoC characteristics. These functions reinforce school policies and behavioral expectations. Assemblies, which develop self-esteem, are brought to CV; self-esteem development is part of our regular curriculum in the classroom through integration and teacher modeling. An example would be the concept of integrity. Acting with integrity is an essential component of successful interpersonal relationships on our site. Our staff must do this with students, parents and one another. Emphasis is provided through classroom rules and expectations, books, and quotes which are located in our

classrooms and throughout the school. Morning messages provided by our Peer Mediators further support this emphasis.

During the past school year, the CV staff has been trained and implemented the Quit It Program (grades K-2) and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (grades 3-6th). The programs focus on providing all students with tools to prevent bullying, whether they are directly or indirectly involved. The curriculum includes role-playing activities and classroom meetings, which develop skills needed in recognizing bullying and the roles and responsibilities all students have in dealing with various situations. The anti-bullying curriculum is the foundation to the CV Behavioral Intervention program and has proven to be very effective in decreasing classroom and playground discipline.

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**Mickey Cox Elementary School (571 students; K-6)**  
**Clovis Unified School District, Clovis, CA**  
**559-327-6400**  
**Principal: Cheryl Floth**

At the beginning of each school year, the administrative team and staff of Mickey Cox agree to prioritize Character Education and promote all of the character traits as an essential component to success inside and outside of the classroom. Students expect the staff to be role models of the six pillars of character. It is the goal of our school to emulate these characteristics within the activities involving the mind (academics), body (co-curricular activities), and spirit (character development and interpersonal relationships). We believe it is our responsibility to promote and encourage ethical values as the basis of good character and development of our children in becoming productive and engaged citizens.

Within the first days of school, we conduct a Character Counts! assembly at which our administrative team speaks to the student body. We review our school's rules and expectations, review all of the pillars of character, and model age appropriate examples of how to be great examples of character. This assembly is held also at the start of the second semester and is valuable in reviewing the type of behavior and character traits that we promote. Embedded in the Mickey Cox Elementary School curriculum is a focus on the significance of reasoned moral and ethical choices.

We believe in producing students with a broad perspective and appreciation of backgrounds and experiences unlike their own. Our multi-cultural CAFÉ (Children and Friends in Education) Club continues to promote diversity at our school and serves as a reminder to our students that our interdependence on each other binds us in respect and appreciation. The annual CAFÉ Club Potluck and Fashion Show is a wonderful example of students sharing the cultural flair of food and dress.

Our student government and CAFÉ Club elect students to their governing bodies twice a year and we find that our student body is well represented from students of all nationalities and ethnicities. The activities established for students serving as Student Body or CAFE Club officer are designed to teach leadership skills and provide a vehicle to develop positive character traits.

In conjunction with our student body officers, community service efforts included collection of canned foods and money to provide meals for our most needy families, collection and distribution of coats for our kids, and volunteering to sell local Kids' Day Newspapers. Student body officers made presentations to all classrooms seeking the support of the classroom teacher and students to donate various items as mentioned above. Earlier in the year, the student body officers also held a pumpkin-carving contest in which each classroom was encouraged to enter one carved or dressed pumpkin exhibiting a character trait related to Red Ribbon Week. Each pumpkin was proudly displayed in the cafeteria for all students to see and reflect on the Character Counts! traits.

This year's motto at Mickey Cox is "Carpe Diem". One of our school goals this year is for our students to apply the motto of "seizing the day" as it relates to the difficult encounters they are presented. We believe and wish to teach our students that character development is not always easy, but the reward of a lifetime of living as an ethical person displaying principles of character are priceless.

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**Del Rey Elementary School (279 students; K-6)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Del Rey, CA**  
**559-888-2056**  
**Principal: Susan Fitzgerald**

We have adopted two programs to support explicit teaching of core values and appropriate decision making for students: The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and The Second Step Character Education Program. These programs support The Community of Caring Program (CoC) that has been established since 1996 at Del Rey Elementary School. The Community of Caring Program is built upon the five core traits that indicate exemplary character: Respect, Responsibility, Trust, Caring, and Family. Through explicit instruction in the adopted programs, the five character traits, and real life volunteer projects, we have created a cohesive system where all staff teach, model and promote the core character values, and students learn, practice and internalize those values.

Each Monday morning is devoted to explicit teaching through the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Second Step Character Education Program. Weekly classroom meetings bring students and teacher together to create a community wherein each student's opinion, feelings, and thoughts are honored and real life situations are discussed, modeled, and practiced. Our school calendar highlights a monthly trait. Teachers emphasize the trait throughout the month, through lessons and examples. Monthly awards assemblies, honor students who exemplify the monthly

trait. These students then receive a certificate, a gift and their photo is displayed in the cafeteria where all students can see them as they enter for lunch.

Peer Mediators monitor and assist with student disputes on the playground empowering students to problem solve with peers. We have also implemented Knight Safety Officers this year. Each classroom participates on a rotating basis. The students patrol the campus during recess and look for any areas that might be a safety concern or cause disruption in exhibiting our traits. They then record their observations and turn them in to the principal. The thought process behind this is the internalization of making good choices in all aspects of school life.

Mr. DeAnda, our custodian, takes great pride in the school and constantly ensures the campus is maintained. Work orders are quickly fixed by the district to support our desire for a clean, well-kept campus. Students contribute to campus beautification through weekly litter removal, and campus beautification projects, such as planting flowers and making welcome banners.

Parent volunteers work as safety monitors and role models on campus to ensure the well being of students. Teachers at Del Rey believe in the potential of each child to be a contributing member of society, and to that end, model and teach the ethical and moral values inherent to success in society. Classroom Meetings bring a sense of community school wide. Our Learning and Educational Activities program (LEAP) provides a safe haven for students to attend after school. LEAP leaders coordinate educational enrichment activities building confidence and self-esteem.

Our teacher leader for The Kids Care Club, Mrs. Flores, keeps students actively involved in Acts of Kindness and in school and community projects. Graffiti removal downtown, leaf raking for neighbors, parades, food and clothing collections, are just some of the activities students participate in. The Kids Care Club has transformed the cafeteria into a display for Community of Caring. Our psychologist, Mr. Figueroa and counselor, Mrs. Rios also play a key role in student understanding of the core ethical values. Knowing that academic improvement and self-esteem go hand in hand, Mrs. Rios meets with student groups during Saturday school to promote peer assistance and improve student interactions as well as academics.

Our Blue Ribbon ceremony is an outstanding opportunity to build our character program as an outreach to students and the community. Each year, teachers are trained, and receive the "I Make A Difference" blue ribbons. During the classroom ceremony, teachers give each child a blue ribbon and tell the student how they have made a difference in their life. Each child is then given several blue ribbons, their task to go outside the school into the community and distribute the ribbons to people who have made a difference in their lives. Students then report back at the classroom meetings and describe their experiences. It is an incredible opportunity for recognition and giving.

Peer mediation has created a large group of leaders on campus who are role models for the other students. Student Council decision-making develops leadership and our school Knight Safety Patrol builds pride and confidence at all grade levels as students are empowered to make decisions about right and wrong.

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**Fairmont School (480 students; K-8)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**  
**559-292-0220**  
**Principal: Tim Lopez**

The school community adopted the district-wide Community of Caring character education program in 2003. Community of Caring is a character-building program founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. The Community of Caring core values of Respect, Responsibility, Family, Caring, and Trust are embedded in daily instruction, displayed in every classroom, and reinforced in the community. The Sanger City Council has adopted and reinforces the Community of Caring program through activities and the Community of Caring logo is present throughout the city.

The Fairmont School Community of Caring program develops and reinforces, in students and school staff, character traits through adult modeling, and curriculum integration. In 2003, Fairmont established a Community of Caring coordinating committee to develop school goals, objectives and timelines related to the character education program. Stakeholders of the committee included faculty, staff and community members. The committee established the following goals:

- Increasing knowledge of the importance of the five core values of Respect, Trust, Caring, Family, and Responsibility
- Integrating the five core values throughout the school community
- Developing, increasing, and sustaining school activities and programs that build character, self-esteem and encourage positive behaviors which reflect the five core values
- Publicizing and increasing involvement of students, faculty, staff, administration, parents, and the community in the program

In 2007, Fairmont School established a Behavior Team to extend the character education program and develop a pyramid of behavioral interventions to support positive student behavior both inside and outside the classroom. The Behavior Team analyzed student discipline data and developed school-wide values that exemplify positive student character and behavior of a Fairmont Spartan. The school-wide values, known as the Spartan Code, are the following: Show Respect, Be Responsible, Do Your Personal Best, Always Learn, and Find a Victory. Each grade level developed criteria of student character and behavior that explained or demonstrated each Spartan Code value that was age appropriate.

Fairmont School employs several programs that promote positive student choices and reinforces character development. All teachers are trained and implement the Second Step curriculum, which is a federal and state approved program to meet the compliance requirement of Safe and Drug Free Schools (SFDS) to teach school wellness and healthy choices. In addition, The Fairmont school staff has been trained in and implement the Olweus Bullying prevention program. Through the program, Fairmont school has adopted an anti-bullying stance through clear definitions of bullying, parent meetings, student kick-off assembly and most importantly,

bi-monthly class meetings that promote student discussion and positive student choices. The Friendship Club and Special Friends programs address positive student social and behavior choices. Fairmont School implements a successful Peer Mediation program with 4th – 8th grade students. Staff and students received Peer Mediation training under the direction of Dr. Pam Lane-Garon at California State University, Fresno. Students provide appropriate identification and intervention of student conflict through the direction of staff to promote healthy student choices.

The school curriculum promotes healthy choices and physical activity. In addition, school health and wellness is reviewed yearly using the Center for Disease Control's School Health Index (CDCSHI). The CDCSHI is used to determine the climate of student and school safety, nutrition and wellness services, and physical activity on campus. The Harvest of the Month program incorporates nutrition in the classroom with fruit and vegetable sampling for all students. Each month a different fruit or vegetable is provided and literature is accompanied with the samples. FCOE is also an essential partner in many health and wellness activities at Fairmont School, but the most important is the nutrition curriculum, Five-a-Day Power Play. Students receive workbooks containing lessons on the food guide pyramid, nutrition guidelines, nutritional labels, and healthy eating habits. The Five-a-Day program provides fruit and vegetable visual cards with a variety of information, including season and area of production, texture, taste of food, and recipe ideas. Additionally, all Fairmont students participate in physical activity 180 minutes every 10 school days with fully credentialed PE staff.

Fairmont School promotes student participation in academic activities, collaborative projects, volunteering and service learning projects. School activities such as Young Author's Fair, Spelling Bee, Lip Sync, allow students to mix with students from other local schools to highlight their talents. Students at Fairmont participate in the Science Fair at the school, district regional and state levels. PTA-sponsored Reflections encourages students to look to their community as a means to express themselves through facets of fine arts such as photography and poetry. Our Peer Mediators and Pass It On students, CJSF, and Leadership Class students participate and plan many of our school activities and events in the community. Students from Fairmont participate in outside school activities through the 4-H, Girl Scout, and Boy Scout groups that promote hands-on experiences and community service.

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**Figarden Elementary School (734 students; K-6)**  
**Fresno Unified School District, Fresno, CA**  
**559-451-4480**  
**Principal: Larry Peterson**

Figarden involves students, families, community members and site staff in the development process of promoting core ethical values by utilizing several media. We rely on information obtained by the California Healthy Kids survey, as well as parent and staff surveys as a tool to collect relevant data. Figarden hosts several committees that meet monthly and include

community members, teaching staff, and administration. In these meetings, areas of concern and "brainstorming" sessions are held to address issues where needs or improvements to current programs can be mapped out.

The Figarden team deemed the study of character to be an integral part of our curriculum and paramount to teaching the whole child. Our staff has worked diligently over the past couple of years to lay an intervention framework to guide us as we implement our improvement actions. Our expectations for behavior are clearly defined and included in our handbook. Students exhibiting significant behavior difficulties are placed on an individualized behavior plan, which may include appointments with our Circle of Friends Group and or vice principal. Figarden Elementary School students know that "We treat everyone with courtesy and respect every day." One of our site goals is to instill in our students the belief that, Success is built by learning from challenges; we learn and grow from our mistakes. We have chosen to build upon a discipline philosophy that is not punitive, but instead an opportunity for our students to learn and grow both at school and home. Part of our discipline counseling involves talking about what the student could choose to do differently next time, based upon the pillars of character. When students walk away with tools, they are better equipped to make more responsible choices.

In brainstorming ideas with the teachers, we have asked them to reflect upon how they promote Character Counts! and give specific examples from the curriculum as to how character is tied into their daily lessons. Many of our teachers have a yearlong focus on celebrating diversity, which includes class projects and activities. For example, in February many of our classrooms will have a diversity focus on black history. Standards based classroom enrichment activities with a focus on African American History and lessons based on Respect, Caring and Fairness will be taught in classroom as we connect the principles from Character Counts! to leaders in African American History. As a site, we celebrate diversity by honoring the differences on our campus through various activities and events that allow our learning community to gain knowledge and understanding about each other. A prime example of our students honoring one another and embracing our differences is our Lego Club. Lego Club, run by one of our Special Day Class teachers allows students from outside Special Ed to come in to bond with and interact with students within the special education classroom

Figarden Elementary School now houses a Campus Culture Committee comprised of parent volunteers, teachers and administrative staff members. The Campus Culture Committee meets to generate ideas as well as to modify our working programs. It is the goal of the committee to provide a well-rounded quality program that works for and meets the needs of our students, staff and parents.

We reward our students and increase participation through our weekly recognition program. Figarden recognizes students each week who have demonstrated the individual pillars: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship, as well as additional areas, which include but are not limited to student leadership, teamwork, and good sportsmanship.

The Character Counts Tickets, which were new to Figarden in 2009, are proving to be a strong motivator on campus. All staff members have tickets displaying the character trait of the month to give to students demonstrating good character.

Student of the Month is a long time tradition. Each month six students, one from each grade level are acknowledged and honored by their teachers. Students are nominated by their teachers for the character trait of the month. Parents are then invited to join their student for an assembly in celebration of their success.

The Character Counts! Award will be presented at the end of the year to one sixth grade boy and girl who demonstrated exemplary character over the year. These students will be chosen based upon all six pillars: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. Students will be honored at the end of the year during the sixth grade promotion ceremony.

One of the programs we are most excited about is our growing Leadership Program. Leadership ties in Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Fairness and Respect and Caring as key components in taking on the role of peer leader. It is the goal of our Leadership Program to provide our students opportunities for students to participate in community service and be recognized and rewarded for doing so. Our leadership students believe that service learning is an important part of any student's growth and preparation to become conscientious, responsible adults who care about their communities and want to be active participants in making our community a better place. Our program involves seventy-seven students as leaders, who also serve as role models in the school of how to embody Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Fairness and Respect. The program has been very successful, contributing a great deal to improving the school culture. The Leadership students also take on a leadership role as Ambassadors for New Students. This aspect of our program teaches Responsibility, Caring and Citizenship to our students. The Ambassadors model these character traits to the incoming students and help guide them in how to also represent these traits here at Figarden.

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**Homan Elementary School (630 students; K-6)**  
**Fresno Unified School District, Fresno, CA**  
**559-457-2940**  
**Principal: Suzanne Jones**

Character Education has been supported by families at Homan for the last several years and Homan is proud to have received the Virtues and Character Recognition Award during the 2008-2009 school year. The program focuses on the six pillars of characters including the core values of Caring, Trustworthiness, Citizenships, Responsibility, Fairness and Respect. The staff beliefs that core values and beliefs are important to teach through a solid Character Education program. We continue to use GESA (Generating Expectations for Student Achievement) strategies to support equity for all students, and have begun to work on being Skillful Teachers through the professional development opportunities including core values and beliefs in education through

the map of pedagogical knowledge. Homan was selected two years ago to participate in STOIC (Structured, Teach, Observe, Interact, Correct) training to improve behaviors of staff and students.

Through the support of professional development through "Skillful Teacher" we are currently reflecting on core beliefs and values through a map of pedagogical knowledge to support student learning.

Through character education, STOIC training, and our peer mediation program we have decreased the amount of assaults on the playground by fifty percent during the 2008-2009 school year. We are striving to have less assaults this year.

This year Homan is also emphasizing the pillar of "Caring". Students and parents organized a clothes exchange drive for our community because many of our lower socio-economics students needed new clothes. Students are learning to be responsible for themselves and to care for others.

At Homan elementary School character education is promoted on campus throughout the entire day. Our morning announcements include our values and support specific examples of behaviors that are aligned with our character education of excellence program. Students are reminded that caring students help keep the school clean. Responsible students turn in their homework. We all respect others by keeping our hands and feet to ourselves. In addition to our character reminder we salute the flag to show respect for our country. We have a peer mediation program, where students work with other students to solve problems and differences. These students carry clipboards, wear special red shirts and keep a log of all conflict resolutions. We have drawings for good character and promote good citizenship through special recognition.

Students take pride in a clean campus and enjoy assisting the custodian in raking leaves, watering plants and picking up trash around the campus. Classrooms and students take an active role in these responsibilities ensuring that our campus is kept clean. We emphasize that is everyone's responsible to show respect. The East Fresno Kiwanis Club has taken an active role for the last twelve years to support good citizenship and they reward students with bicycles for great attendance. The North Fresno Rotary Club has donated a free dictionary for the last four years to every third grade in the school to support good character.

Every year our school has collected food for needy families within our own community, and then we donate to the Poverello House. Service on our campus includes landscape beautification and recycling when possible. All these examples help to model the importance of service and learning, and thus building a commitment between the community and the school. We make community connections and family relationships are strengthened by events, and activities such as; Muffins with Moms, Family/Science Night, our Multi-cultural Carnival and fun events. We encourage community volunteers and many parents whom English is not their primary language to help around our school.

In the past two years we have modified our program in the following ways:

- Two lead teachers have expanded their repertoire of curriculum to support peer mediation and conflict resolution through Fresno State trainings.
- Staff has been provided trainings on the "Skillful Teacher" that includes incorporating core values and beliefs to support the map of pedagogical knowledge.
- After school program and peer mediators have put on plays to support character education.
- Training was provided for our Noontime Assistants to support our peer mediation program, conflict resolution and character education.
- The staff participated in the STOIC – Structured, Teach, Observe, Interact, and Correct training provided by Dr. Randy Sprick to support Character Development and transitions in the classroom.
- Students and parents had two clothes drives to provide a service learning opportunity to provide assistance to families in need.

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**Jackson Elementary School (411 students; K=5)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**  
**559-875-5549**  
**Principal: Adela Jones**

Jackson School bases its core ethical values on those from a National program, Community of Caring. These core values serve as the backbone of the program and for character development. There are five main core ethical values: respect, responsibility, trust, family, and caring. Each of the five values is highlighted monthly as a focus for students and community members. The order in which the core values are highlighted throughout the year have been discussed and decided on by the staff and student representatives and is revisited yearly.

Responsibility starts off the school year as the highlighted core value. Our students and staff believe that each of us has a moral duty to each other to do "our part" in the world. Each of us has duties that impact others. Teaching responsibility helps to reinforce that each member of our team is depended on by others and must uphold his/her duties in order for all to be successful. This includes homework, behavior in class, and upholding school rules even when no one is looking. Respect is next as a featured core value. Kids learn the Golden Rule from the beginning of Kindergarten and it never ends. All of what is taught in character development has roots in respect.

In order for students to be successful in demonstrating character traits in the five core values, teachers and staff have weekly discussions with students about targeted behaviors and actions that positively demonstrate the core values. Bulletin boards are created in classrooms displaying outcomes of class discussions. The Principal interviews students in the cafeteria at lunch frequently about what the core value of the month looks like on campus and discuss opportunities to display said values. Kids are given a chance to respond on how they see the core value and what it means to them. Tips to parents for promoting core values at home are included

in monthly newsletters sent home from the school. Small skits (5-10 minutes) are organized throughout the year by students and staff highlighting the core values and positive behavior and are shown school wide.

Keeping our campus free from negative influences, such as drugs, crime, and violence is also a critical part of character education and development. Sanger Unified works in coordination with Sanger Police Department to employ two full-time School Resource Officers, who deal only with Sanger students. In years past, these officers would teach the D.A.R.E. curriculum to every student in the District. The curriculum is now taught by classroom teachers with support from the officers. Sanger Unified Board of Education supports a zero tolerance policy for behaviors that jeopardize student safety. The campus is free from any graffiti and vandalism.

Jackson promotes positive social development and group cohesion through school policies and classroom instruction. Second step curriculum is used in every classroom and promotes positive social interaction and choices. Teachers incorporate the five core values into this curriculum, increasing overall infusion of these values into everyday actions. For students requiring additional intervention, small group and one-on-one programs are offered. Friendship Club is a small group atmosphere that uses state-approved curriculum to promote positive choices and behavior in social situations through role-playing and group discussions. Special Friends is a one-on-one program that targets student self-esteem and concept by providing structured time with an adult playing games and activities. These two programs serve students in grades K-3 and see over 70 students per year. Counseling services are provided for students in grades 4 and 5 as necessary with parent consent.

Jackson organizes opportunities for students to give back to their community. During the Fall, students rake leaves in the community at houses that are selected based on need. Groups of carolers are organized to tour the neighborhoods of Jackson spreading holiday cheer and good will. In the Spring, students have an opportunity to plant flowers on campus and in the community. Primary grade students go to an Alzheimer's Home to share poetry and writing with patients.

One of the biggest changes has been the implementation of a school-wide system to promote positive character education. Every adult on campus was extensively trained in teaching students how to identify bullying behavior, what to do if you witness bullying, and how to prevent this behavior in oneself and others. The nationally recognized curriculum, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, is implemented in every classroom. Teachers hold bi-weekly meetings to discuss the rules and actions to prevent and address bullying. Students who do the right thing when it comes to bullying are recognized. A committee comprised of teachers, support staff, and a parent, meet monthly to ensure that our positive behavior program is being implemented successfully. School-wide rules were developed and are posted in every classroom and throughout the school to foster a safe environment. As part of measuring our progress, incidents are recorded in our data system, SWIS, and the data is reviewed by the committee to determine the best way to reduce incidences. Parents and community members were part of a school-wide

community kick-off rally/family night. We work as a team to ensure that staff and students are in a safe and secure learning environment.

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**Jefferson Elementary School (367 students; K-5)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**  
**559-875-4591**  
**Principal: Cathy Padilla**

Jefferson Elementary has been a "Community of Caring" school since the 1996 school year. This program, sponsored by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, was implemented as part of a grant award that targeted Jefferson and our district's middle school. Our site facilitator, Annette Husak, kindergarten teacher, has coordinated a group of staff members to function as our coordinating committee to meet and develop activities and an action plan for the school year. Membership of the coordinating committee includes teachers, parents, students and the principal. The coordinating committee meets once a month to plan monthly activities and discuss awards for students and ways to implement the core values in our school programs.

At Jefferson Elementary, initial implementation of the Community of Caring was facilitated by the staff's willingness to implement and model these core values. From the beginning, staff members have worked to continue on going, in spite of lack of funding support, school awards for students who model core values, family night events and other activities to promote values not only with our students, but with their families and community. The five values are displayed in both English and Spanish in each classroom and office at Jefferson and our value banners are displayed in the cafeteria to remind everyone of our focus on character education.

With the development of an action plan each year, the coordinating committee has been able to integrate character education through the school year. "Caught Caring" pencils and "Caught with Character" tickets are given to students who demonstrate positive character traits. Once a month we have a Monday morning flag pole announcement with the entire school. We recite the flag salute, and students are reminded of the value we are focusing on and informed of any upcoming Community of Caring or fun works activities. Trimester award assemblies are a time where reading, math, and Community of Caring awards are given recognizing outstanding character and academic achievements of our students. We have a peer mediation program, where students work with other students to solve problems and differences. We also have a special club that was initiated by a group of students that wanted to make a contribution to keeping the campus clean. They rake leaves, pick up trash, and sweep the sidewalks. The club grew from four students to twenty-five.

The staff at Jefferson uses several activities to promote positive social development, group cohesion, caring and respect for others. We have a "Golden Broom" program where classrooms take turns being responsible ensuring that our campus is kept clean. Classrooms and students take an active role in this responsibility, and take their responsibility quite seriously. For the

sixth year our local Rotary Club is partnered with our school to educate our students about various career and educational opportunities for our students future. This program has been critical in broadening our students' awareness of career possibilities and opportunities.

For the past several years we have had our fourth and fifth grade students participate in a series of Etiquette Classes provided by Cynthia Merrill's School of Performing Arts. Cynthia Merrill teaches our students how to appropriately introduce themselves, how to behave in a job interview, the importance of manners, and how to interact appropriately with others in a dance situation. After a series of four etiquette classes parents and students then participate in a Cotillion where they dress up and demonstrate all that they have learned. Parents and community members are invited to attend the Cotillion, and many have been impressed by what students accomplish.

Every year our student body raises money and collects cans for the needy during the Christmas Holiday. During the first year of implementation of our program, our students painted holiday decorations on the windows of a local grocery store. Our younger students passed out flowers to the store's customers. Every year our community benefits from the Jefferson Family Christmas Caroling, one of our many family night events. Jefferson families and students meet at the school, have dinner, play bingo and sing Christmas Carols. Parents and students ride on a horse drawn carriage through and around the neighborhoods singing and drinking hot chocolate. Around 225 students and parents participate in this great event. All of these examples help to model the importance of service learning and build commitment between the community and the school.

This year Jefferson students are getting first hand experience in community involvement. They have been active in expressing the need to repair a bridge that is across the street from the school. The bridge has been fenced off due to damages over the years. Those who live very close to the school have to walk several blocks around the fenced off bridge to get to the school. Through the efforts of many, the bridge is in the process of being repaired. Jefferson student council members have been given the privilege of naming the new bridge. The student council read through the bylaws for naming the bridge and came up with 3 possibilities and asked the student body to vote to declare the winner. Through this process, students did research and learned many interesting facts about their community. Jefferson student body officers will be attending a city council meeting to give their recommendation for the new bridge. The recommendation is "Jefferson Path". The first part of the name, "Jefferson," refers to the school in the area. The second part, "Path," refers to a pathway that leads to education. The naming of the bridge, "Jefferson Path", would honor both our school and community.

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**Lincoln Elementary School (389 students; K-5)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**  
**559-875-5541**  
**Principal: Ketti Davis**

In order to ensure that we are making substantial progress towards our Character Education goals, we have created a positive Behavior Intervention Team. This team is comprised of representatives from primary and intermediate grades, support services, and a parent. This group meets monthly to determine our progress in the area of character education and to ensure that our positive behavior programs are being implemented and supported adequately. A new component to our school wide system and one that ensures an intentional and comprehensive approach to our core values is the introduction of the Olweus Bully prevention Program. We have identified the key rules to reducing incidents of bullying and teachers conduct bi-weekly class meetings with their students to support positive behavior and to teach the ways to identify a bully, what to do if being bullied, as well as what to do if you are a bystander that observes another student being bullied. Adults and community members have been included in this program through training and a Family Night Kick-Off Rally. Behavior offenses are tracked in a data system, SWIS, and this system allows our PBIS team to review behavior trends in specific locations and times of the day. We believe these new additions to our school wide comprehensive character program help o ensure a safe and secure learning environment.

"Be kind. Be responsible. Be the best that you can be. The choice is yours." Each day at Lincoln Elementary, students start their day with these words of wisdom. Student council members join the principal to conduct the daily announcements. After the student council leaders welcome the students to the day and highlight upcoming events, the principal shares with the students her words of wisdom.

Students begin the school year learning about the behaviors associated with being a caring, respectful and trustworthy student. Students sign up to be members of the Community of Caring Club and get involved right away with planning events for the school year. Some events involve only the Lincoln community, whereas others are cit, county or nation wide. Family, the 5th value, is also taught by way of the activities and events that are pt on to promote family time at school. Parent and community volunteers provide input and support for the Community of Caring event calendar at Lincoln.

On the last Friday of each month, the Lincoln students, staff and many parents meet out front of the school for a celebration. These "flag pole" celebrations allow students to be recognized for being "caught with character" by their teachers, support staff or the principal. All Lincoln staff are provided with character tickets and it is not uncommon that someone other than their classroom teacher recognizes a student. Everyone at Lincoln is looking for good character! Classrooms and individual students are also recognized for their attendance and reminded that being at school each day is an important responsibility that each Lincoln Ram must take seriously. We expect great academic progress of our students and recognize that in order to achieve this, each child must e ready to learn and able to recognize school as a safe environment full of caring people.

Crime and violence prevention is addressed for both Lincoln students and parents. Anti-bullying pledges are introduced by the principal during lunchtime, supported by the classroom teacher and signed by each student in every grade level. Officer Palomo, a respected member of the Sanger Police Department, leads a safety meeting for parents each year. Our cafeteria is packed and parents know they can get a great deal of information on keeping their child away from gangs

and violence. Additionally, when students make bad choices, the teacher and administrator use the event to promote healthy student behaviors. Students are expected to write details pertaining to an event that occurs and to identify which of the 5 core values the student needs to think about. A discussion is held with both the administrator and parent about how the student can improve his/her choices. Morning announcements, weekly notes home and phone calls to parents are used to celebrate great decisions as well as to allow a child time to explain to his/her parent how the choices he made are affecting his time at school to learn. Kids understand that being kind, responsible and trustworthy is a choice they make each day.

The core ethical values of the "Community of Caring" program at Lincoln elementary are visible in the fairness, equity, respect and care shown by staff to students, students to other students, and students to staff. This respect doesn't end when the bell rings at 2:25. The same values and expectations are held with the leaders of Lincoln's after-school program. Lessons on caring, family, respect, trust and responsibility are included in the enrichment time and students continue to be held to the same standards of conduct as during the school day.

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**Lone Star Elementary School (564 students; K-6)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**  
**559-268-8064**  
**Principal: Dick Larimer**

We became a "Community of Caring School" during the 2003 school year. Community of Caring is a character-building program founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. This program is centered on the five core values of Caring, Family, Respect, Responsibility, and Trust; all of which our staff and students exhibit on a daily basis. As a staff, we understand the importance of modeling these core values not only for ourselves, but also for students, families, and community members as well.

Our school continually sponsors events that value the importance of families being involved in our school's efforts to develop students of good character. Our big kick-off event to set the stage for the school year is an ice cream social that is free to all families in our school "community". The staff, teachers, and PTA all work together to provide an inclusive environment for all at the kick-off assembly. The purpose of the event is to develop our sense of community and to promote the idea that we all have a part in our children's development as citizens. We continue this idea of community throughout the year with activities such as family nights, community service projects, campus beautification, rallies, and assemblies.

We set high standards for our staff, students and community that goes beyond academic success, and standards which requires everyone be involved to set examples that can be observed and respected. We are a community of caring! With the loving guidance of dedicated staff, our children make cross-curricular connections and develop persistence and personal responsibility,

which are the foundation of academic excellence. This is evidenced in the classrooms and throughout the school where the Community of Caring values are proudly displayed.

Each classroom has grade-level appropriate literature and videos that exemplify each of the five character traits. Each classroom teacher goes above and beyond the district-required activities to design and teach lessons that are appropriate for the needs of their individual classroom. Student Council activities are announced to all students during the morning announcements made by members of our student council. They also remind students of the core value of the month. Lone Star has been involved in several community service projects this year which include "Blankets for Soldiers" stationed in Afghanistan, "Coins for Canines" in which our students raised money to help pay for major oral surgery for a Sherriff canine and Holiday food baskets for Lone Star families in need.

Recently, a fire caused major damage to the second floor of a rural home occupied by several Lone Star family members. They were without electricity, phone service and had little means of support. The Lone Star principal notified the local Red Cross of their situation. Our PTA also helped support the family by providing them with, food, clothing and blankets. These actions by the school staff and PTA truly exemplify the core values we live by and model for students every day at Lone Star School.

Student safety and health is always a priority. In collaboration with our local law enforcement and parents, our school promotes a drug-free, safe, and clean environment. Lone Star models healthy choices by providing quality school sports programs for both boys and girls. Additionally members of our community frequently enjoy our playgrounds, courts for basketball and open fields for soccer, football and baseball in the evenings and on the weekends. Our campus is in the country and we have no vandalism or graffiti. We show support for the people that need our facilities and they show respect for the school site. It is part of our community team concept.

Other programs that also instill solid character elements are Second Step, Friendship Club and Special Friends. Students in these programs are given opportunities to work through situations prompting positive behavior and responsible decision-making. Students are provided safe environments to self evaluate and peer problem solve. The Lone Star 4-H is very active and allows students hands-on experience while making them more aware of their community surroundings. Activities such as Peach Blossom and Young Author's Fair allow students to mix with students from other local schools to highlight their talents.

All of the Lone Star staff has been trained and implement the Quit It Program (grades K-2) and the Olweus Bulling Prevention Program (grades 3-6th). The program focus is to provide all students with tools to prevent bullying at Lone Star, whether they are directly or indirectly involved. The curriculum includes role-playing activities and classroom meetings which develop skills students need to recognize bullying and the roles and responsibilities all students have in dealing with various situations. The anti-bullying curriculum is the foundation to the Lone Star Behavior Intervention program and has proven to be very effective in decreasing classroom and playground discipline.

Selected students in 4th-6th are trained in the Peer Mediation Program to learn skill to help the resolve minor conflicts between students during recess. Peer Mediators can be found at recess time, wearing their bright colored vests and clipboards modeling our Community of Caring values as they assist students in resolving minor conflicts.

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**Madison Elementary School (460 students; K-5)**

**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**

**559-875-4539**

**Principal: Karl Kesterke**

Activities designed to promote character development on the Madison site begin early in the school year. The first involves having our Back to School Night prior to the start of the school year. This ensures both an informed start to the year for our students, and immediately establishes the basis for behavioral and academic expectations as soon as the student steps foot on our campus. Once the year gets underway, our core values are communicated regularly via our weekly newsletter and through a series of PTA, School Site Council, and English Language Advisory Committee meetings, involving parents and staff invested in our success.

Communication among our shareholders also plays a vital role in reinforcing our core values. Madison has developed a school site web page, which facilitates parent interaction. Each of our teachers also maintains a web page for family communication on an ongoing basis. Each semester, Madison hosts a "Principal's Forum" to promote open lines of communication and a spontaneous exchange of ideas. In addition, staff members have begun to give of their time to support our Mustang Connections. The goal of our Mustang Connections is to provide all students with additional opportunities to be become connected to the Madison experience. One activity that has proven to be very popular with selected students is the Principal's Academic Partnership, which provides an ongoing direct line of communication with the principal via journals. Students are nominated by their teacher, based on the belief that they could benefit from specific intervention and focused mentoring. They respond to a written prompt regarding their academic experience at Madison, and are then engaged in a written "conversation" directly with the principal, further enhancing their self-esteem and value. Other activities include athletics and Fun Club.

Student responsibility is also reinforced through our attendance incentive program. Each month, the names of six students (three primary, three intermediate) are drawn from a pool of all students with perfect attendance for the reporting period. The winners of this drawing receive a Wal Mart gift card. At the end of the year, all students with perfect attendance attend a reward luncheon at John's Incredible Pizza, to which they arrive in a chauffeured limousine. The positive reinforcement of attendance responsibility continues with our attendance banner program, wherein the class with the best overall attendance has their teacher's name posted on a large banner in the cafeteria.

Madison Elementary promotes core values, positive social interaction, and healthy decision-making through a variety of programs and practices. We begin each day with the morning bulletin announcements, which consist of pertinent information, student birthdays, and a reading from Project Wisdom, to reinforce the message that character counts. We have also participated in the Fresno County Health and Nutrition wellness program for the last 3 years. Each month, local farmers provide the "Harvest of the Month" to our students, further reinforcing good decision making as it relates to health and nutrition. A high percentage of students and parents participate in the annual Sanger Unified "Walk to School" event to promote a healthy lifestyle.

In addition to student health, providing a safe, clean environment that promotes student success is paramount to the Madison community. Our campus is monitored daily for cleanliness and potential hazards, and all adults, while assigned to supervision, wear fluorescent vests so that they are easily recognized.

Madison Elementary prides itself on being an integral part of our local community. The life lessons gained by our students while taking an active role in the civic arena will follow them throughout their educational careers and into adulthood. In an effort to expand our student's horizons beyond their own backyards, our school participates in a variety of community fundraisers including our Thanksgiving and holiday food drive for needy families and the "Pennies for Patients" campaign for children with leukemia. Our staff models civic minded behaviors regularly, recognizing that it is the combined efforts our community and staff that help to foster the positive social development of our children.

Peer mediators at recess now support our school-wide behavior plan by mediating student disputes during recess. Students have the opportunity to express themselves and work collaboratively to resolve their conflicts. Our peer mediators participated in rigorous training sessions and, in the spring, will have the opportunity to attend a peer mediator follow-up training at Fresno State. The college campus experience was exciting for the kids and the training further enhanced their desire to bring about positive change at Madison. Different peer mediator teams are scheduled throughout the week to support positive student interaction.

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**Monte Vista Elementary School (520 students; K-6)**  
**Porterville Unified School District, Porterville, CA**  
**559-782-7350**  
**Principal: Carol Woodley**

A sense of family welcomes you to the Home of the Grizzlies. Our school marquee proudly displays our monthly pillar provided by the CHARACTER COUNTS! program. Our school is full of friendly chatter among children, friends, and staff. When you first enter the Monte Vista campus, you will immediately notice that our school promotes good character. The school marquee, numerous banners and the outside columns of our school buildings both promote the Six Pillars of Character upon which our character education goals are based: Trustworthiness,

Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. In order to ensure we are continually moving forward on our quest to provide the best character training for our students, we developed the following goals:

- Student Awareness/Education
- Parent Awareness/Education
- Whole Staff Training/Development
- Curriculum Integration
- Physical School Environment

Student Awareness/Education: At Monte Vista, we feel that promoting and teaching the Six Pillars of Character sets the mood and expectations for student behavior for the entire school year, so we have chosen to begin the school year with a "CHARACTER COUNTS! Kick Off Week". At the assembly, students learn what good behavior looks like at Monte Vista School, and are recognized for being nominated as a CHARACTER COUNTS! Kid of Character by their teachers.

Each day when school starts, children are greeted for morning announcements via our television broadcasting system. Our student body president, vice president, class representatives, and principal, join together with a Grizzly-of-the-Month student who proudly leads the school in the morning Pledge of Allegiance. This team of cheerful voices announces the monthly pillar and encourages their fellow Grizzly students to act as a "People of Good Character." Quotes written by Monte Vista students are read each morning and focus on the monthly pillar. An additional weekly inspirational quote is presented to the students and a final reminder tells the students, "Remember, you come to school to learn! Have a great Grizzly day!"

At Monte Vista every Tuesday is CHARACTER COUNTS! Day. Staff and students are encouraged to wear their CHARACTER COUNTS! t-shirts to promote that good character is something they should strive for each and every day. All students have been provided a t-shirt via the Tulare County Office of Education's CHARACTER COUNTS! Office. Each classroom teacher filled out a CHARACTER COUNTS! nomination form and provided a description of what each child has done to become a student of good character.

Parent Awareness/Education: Monte Vista hosts quarterly parent meetings/workshops. It is the goal of these meetings/workshops to help parents become more effective in working with their children and in teaching core ethical values at home. Character education is combined with general parenting and health-related topics to provide parents with a "package" of information. The parent workshops work in conjunction with the Latino Literacy Club, Monte Vista Recycling Program, Student Council and Kinder Care Health Plan which is supported by the Family Healthcare Network. Twice each year, we recognize our parent volunteers at the parent workshops. They are presented with a certificate, pencil and a gold pillar pen as well as a CHARACTER COUNTS! t-shirt. We feel it is important to recognize the good character of parents who serve at our school as role models for our students.

Whole Staff Training/Development: Training an entire staff in character education is an ongoing process. This year Monte Vista has been able to provide off-site character education training

opportunities to classified, administrative, and certificated personnel (including coaches). These trainings were provided through the Josephson Institute of Ethics. We have also conducted on site training in curriculum integration.

**Curriculum Integration:** Our teachers strive to be positive and uplifting. The student's job at Monte Vista is to come to school every day to learn. The teacher's job is to make sure that the students have a positive, comforting atmosphere in which to learn and socialize. Teachers post materials around the classroom to promote self-worth, good character, and positive attitudes. Our Character Counts! Pillars are posted in classrooms and are discussed whenever the occasion arises. Teachers strive to enhance each child's attitude towards their fellow student and themselves.

The Monte Vista teachers also take part in the field-testing of CHARACTER COUNTS! lessons created from the Tulare County CHARACTER COUNTS! Office. You might find a teacher analyzing the behavior and attitudes of a character in a literature selection, or discussing the choices of an historical figure during social studies instruction. It is our goal that teachers incorporate these opportunities to discuss the core ethical values in their everyday lessons.

**Physical School Environment:** The goal at Monte Vista is to have physical setting which promotes good character and instills pride in school grounds. Monte Vista has a recently painted roll-up door which was completed as a collaborative effort with the local high school. Our outdoor columns were painted by students and PTO members in the six pillar colors. The six pillar words were added by a local artist to these columns to reinforce and promote CHARACTER COUNTS!

At Monte Vista, we believe that learning must occur in a positive, disciplined, and secure learning environment. Students are guided by specific rules (be safe, be respectful, be responsible) and classroom expectations (we come to learn) that promote respect, cooperation, courtesy, and acceptance of others.

Each classroom on this campus has time dedicated to Book Buddies with another cross-age class each week. Students learn to work together and help each other read. Book Buddies provides a positive model for younger children and demonstrates that education, especially reading, is important.

Peer mediation is a program that the student council offers all students on campus if the student feels that they have a problem with another student on campus. Students encourage each other to have good character and to peacefully solve their problem through conflict resolution. Peer mediation is supported by all students, parents, and staff.

Monte Vista participates in a recycling program to encourage students to care for and protect their environment. Student council is in charge of collecting all plastics and cans and reporting this information to the "Trash for Cash" program. Money raised by this program goes directly to students. Students decide how this fund is spent such as student activities and school-wide assemblies.

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**Oak Grove Elementary School (510 students; K-4)**  
**Burton School District, Porterville, CA**  
**559-781-8020**  
**Principal: Treasure Weisenberger**

Today, the Oak Grove community is rooted in its commitment to instilling core values within our students so good citizenship and responsible behavior is emulated in all situations. We believe as a public education entity, it is our ethical and moral responsibility to provide not only the best possible curricular education that is aligned with state and Federal guidelines, but to participate in the ongoing development of the whole child: body, mind, and spirit. In promoting and fostering good character among students and staff, we affirm our belief in maintaining the dignity of self and others. It is through this belief system we seek to fulfill our obligation to help develop citizens who are honest, caring and productive members of our society as a whole. Oak Grove adopted a new slogan this school year. Oak Grove Elementary School: Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow - A Galaxy of Possibilities. We believe with teaching, modeling, and guiding students to a better tomorrow, they truly have a galaxy of possibilities before them.

Each month, our school focuses on a particular pillar of character and holds an awards assembly in which two students from each class, pre-school through fourth grade, receive a certificate and a medal provided by our school principal, vice principal, and PTA members.

In addition, Oak Grove has implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention program. This program is designed to prevent and reduce bullying incidents. Students learn about the definition of bullying, how to respond to bullying situations and to share information with adults.

...we believe that character education is an on-going process in which diligence and consistency is vital. Developing character is something one can achieve and continue to grow and improve throughout one's lifetime. It is a never-ending refinement of excellence. In part, we monitor our success by the observable increase in student acceptance and respect of others and the observable decrease in bullying incidents and office behavior referrals.

In order to support classroom curriculum that addresses the Character Counts attributes, books in both the fiction and non-fiction genres are provided in the library and readily accessible for classroom use. Videos that address values and good decision-making skills are also available for checkout in the school library. Teachers are supplied with materials that include ideas for journal writing, quick writes, activities that connect to the core curriculum, as well as books for read-alouds and independent reading that addresses the pillar for each month. Character Counts trait posters are displayed in the cafeteria and group photos of students selected to represent each trait are displayed for all to see.

Students are constantly reminded by both classroom teachers and site administrators to demonstrate good character and to make good choices. We encourage students to follow the six

pillars of character during daily lessons and school wide assemblies. Students have the opportunity to earn various rewards, such as recognition at a spirit assembly or Character Counts assembly, lunch with the principal for Principal's Pizza, perfect attendance pencils, etc.

In partnership with our PTA, our students participate in service through food drives, weekly recycling, fundraisers for field trips for all Oak Grove students, supplies for our local women's crisis center, and a yearly walk-a-thon for school equipment that benefits all students on campus. Students also bring in "Box tops for Education" in order to create funds for assemblies and character curriculum. Our annual "Pennies for Patients" drive will be kicking off next month where students bring pennies to school and our total sum collected is donated to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Through these responsibilities, students are provided opportunities to be role models and leaders where they can learn a sense of civic pride and a deep sense of community at Oak Grove School.

In the last two years, Oak Grove has continued to strive toward character education excellence. We have continued to grow and develop our understanding and implementation of the Character Counts and Olweus Bullying Prevention program curriculum. In addition, we continue to create opportunities to tie students, parents, and the local community to our school.

The implementation of "Two O'Clock Treats for Parents" which is held in our school library the first Friday of each month, is another opportunity for parents to share their vision for not only character education at Oak Grove, but to participate and share their thoughts and ideas about our students, school, and community in a friendly, welcoming environment.

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**John J. Pershing Elementary School (816 students; K-6)**  
**Madera Unified School District, Madera, CA**  
**559-664-9741**  
**Principal: Sandon Schwartz**

The mission of John J. Pershing Elementary School is to provide an exemplary education in a secure, positive and challenging environment fostered by a cooperative effort between school, community and home. Our students will become responsible life-long learners and productive members of society through a commitment to being the best they can be in mind, body and spirit.

Less than three years ago, when Pershing first opened, the Leadership Team created these statements, and our entire staff has chosen to hold tightly to them. Because of these strongly held beliefs, we have chosen to spend a tremendous amount of time and energy in creating our very own Character Education program at Pershing Elementary School. We truly believe this to be the backbone to all that we do here at our school.

Within our character education program our desire is for students of Pershing to learn the true meaning of character. We have chosen to teach a different character trait each month, which also

includes a coordinating color that is easily identifiable for all of the related materials involved with that month's trait. Even our monthly take-home calendar is coordinated to match our monthly materials, and prominently displays the trait of the month. Based on the chosen character trait, we also carefully decide on a children's picture book to be read aloud in each classroom (preschool – 6th grade). We do our best to find a piece of literature that both entertains and persuades our students regarding the importance of personifying that particular trait.

Due to our deep-seated desire to create students of character at Pershing Elementary School, we choose to reward our students who exemplify these character traits in fun and exciting ways. Teachers are allowed to choose one, two or three students each month, based on classroom size (i.e., 1-2 students for grades K-3; 2-3 students for grades 4-6). The chosen students receive a Character Certificate, which is awarded in front of their friends and family at each of our Quarterly Awards Assemblies.

We also include preschool classes in our program, but they choose to have their own student recognition and activities within their classroom, since they are technically a separate entity—just sharing our campus. We read the monthly stories to them and go over the character concepts, but mostly allow the teachers to handle the program as they see fit for the needs of their little ones during the a.m. and p.m. classes. We are starting to see the benefits of running a consistent character education program, especially at the preschool and primary levels. As these students filter up through our grade levels, we expect to see more and more consistent behavior, as our students will begin to truly "live" the messages we are portraying as a consistent part of their daily lives.

We are able to measure the success of our program in various ways. We have noticed a change in the behavior of our overall student body, as well as a decline in the number of referrals sent to the office. Our sports teams have enjoyed compliments from opposing teams and coaches regarding our student-athletes' behavior, positive attitude, and sportsmanship of our athletes. Best of all, we have received accolades from our middle school, of which we are a feeder school. They consistently inform us that our feeder students (6th grade going to 7th grade) are very well behaved, well-mannered students.

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**James K. Polk Elementary School (692 students; K-6)**  
**Central Unified School District, Fresno, CA**  
**559-274-9780**  
**Principal: Karen Garlick**

In naming the school after the 11th President, James Knox Polk, we hoped to tap into the American spirit and use our rich history to teach the core ethical values of our pioneering ancestors; ethical values that have made our country great! Our school is themed on the westward movement and California history, and we take every opportunity to directly teach the character traits embedded in the American West; from the Spanish and Mexican culture and

values inherent in California and the Southwest, to the heroism present on the frontier, and the risk-taking of President Polk.

In order to lay a strong foundation upon which to build our school, we began a process in the summer of 2004 which included all stakeholders. These stakeholders met and developed a mission statement that embodied the vision of this new school honed from the passion of people setting out together to develop a school that would meet the needs of every one of its students. We researched the concept of a professional learning community developed by Rick DuFour and let his work guide us in developing our mission statement. We were also influenced by the intense desire to create a school that would serve the needs of the students, not only academically, but develop in our students, leadership skills, a strong character, and civic responsibility.

In order to live our mission statement, Polk Elementary set about to establish a forward-thinking relationship with our Special Education Department. We implemented full inclusion at our school and currently include SDC students in grades 1-6 in our regular education classes with support from the SDC staff. The benefits from full inclusion for our students, both regular education and SDC are truly amazing. A greater awareness has developed for the entire Polk community as we demonstrate daily that we all learn from each other, and that we all have positive contributions to make.

Polk's core ethical values are clearly set forth from the very beginning of the school year and articulated to students, parents, staff, and the school community at Back to School Night during the assembly for parents, at the Polk Parent Academies using the Parenting partners curriculum based on the 40 Developmental Assets, and at our Kinder registration and orientation for parents. School wide discipline assemblies are held during the first week of school for every class in order to review our positive discipline system.

Our students are taught to fail-forward when they make a mistake. Therefore, our philosophy of discipline is not punitive, but instead an opportunity for our students to learn. This discipline policy is published in our Parent-Student Handbook and in our Staff handbook as well. At the end of each school year, our staff meets to review these policies and make changes as needed.

Progress toward our character education goals are measured by several surveys. Each year we survey our parent community, our teachers, and our students. Results of these surveys indicate a school where students feel safe to be here. There is a good relationship between students and staff. Ninety-two percent of our parents responded that Polk is the best school for students and parents in the district.

In addition to providing much needed help to the school community such as folding programs and decorating for events, the students spearheaded the annual Holiday Joy canned food drive and coat collection, wrote letters and sent gifts to our servicemen in Iraq for Christmas, and participate in the annual Kids Day fund-raiser for Children's Hospital of Central California. ...two of our teachers...proposed to our district to hold a district-wide Hug-O-Gram for \$1.00 with proceeds to benefit the Haitian relief effort.

Polk has been very interested in the CSUF Peer Mediation Program under the leadership of Dr. Pamela Lane-Garon. This year the program is again being implemented at Polk in grades 4-6. Students from Fresno State come to our campus weekly to facilitate and role-model for our peer mediators.

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### **Quail Lake Environmental Charter School (548 students; K-8)**

**Sanger Unified School District, Clovis, CA**

**559-292-1273**

**Principal: Brad Huebert**

QL takes pride in giving out the "Block QL" award to any and all students that are well-rounded and demonstrate a philosophy of being their best in "Mind, Body, and Spirit" at all times. Our school is extremely high performing, but teachers and students know that academics are not the only ingredient to make them productive citizens later in life. They must become life-long learners, mentally and physically. Respect between students and staff is reflected in school policies and behavioral expectations at QL. Student behavior expectations are first articulated when students enroll. The principal meets with every student and their family prior to enrolling. The Student/Parent Compact is reviewed which includes expected academic behavior and relationships with fellow students, staff, and community members. All students and parents must sign the Compact Agreement as part of the entrance requirements. The Compact Agreement clearly lays out expected behaviors for the student, the parents, and the school. It is a "contract" that is signed off by all viable stakeholders responsible for every child's education, including the student themselves. Students are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning. Every student at QL "re-signs" the compact at the beginning of each school year to remind and reinforce the expectations of everyone involved.

QL implements a 1st-8th Personal Responsibility Program. Students are expected to behave properly at all times, complete all schoolwork as assigned, and earn a "reward activity," such as roller-skating or bowling. Students allowed to participate in the reward activity are those that exhibit appropriate character, behavior, and effort throughout the trimester as measured by classroom accountability reports. QL believes students should be rewarded not for doing what is expected of them, but for doing it well. Expectations and rigor are high at QL and students push themselves to succeed. While QL encourage high academic standards, it also clearly promotes specific moral and behavioral guidelines for its students. This is evidenced through the Character Education and Personal Responsibility (PR) Programs.

Each student is valued and appreciated. One of the many programs that make QL distinguished is the "Falcon Buddy" Program. This program focuses attention to those that need it and facilitates each student's path to success. As an example, at one of our staff meetings, all teachers were asked to make a list of any and all students in the grade level that could use some guidance, much like the "Big Brother/Sister" concept. Each team created a list with an explanation of what issues each child might benefit from if addressed. The list included students from single-parent

homes, foster students, those with parents in Iraq, those exposed to traumatic situations, as well as those with a lack of motivation or defiant attitudes, and so on. On the referral sheet, the directions read as follows: "As teachers, we have many students that have difficulties at home, at school, or in social settings. We would love to reach them all and assist them with good choices. Students that would benefit greatly from an adult's input and attention are: \_\_\_\_" Each child was considered and valued for their individual needs. After the lists were composed, every staff member in the school was assigned three students to become their "Falcon Buddy" for the remainder of the year. This included the principal, the secretaries, the custodian, every teacher on staff, the lunch ladies... everyone! Each adult was given a "contract" that had their three assigned students listed on it and the following statement of agreement preceded their signature: "I agree to be a positive influence in the following students' lives. I promise not to critique or pass judgment when situations arise. I also promise to "make contact" with each of these students once a week and will make sure it is done in a positive manner." The directions on how to be a Falcon Buddy were simple: be a positive role model, let your student buddy know they are valued as a member of this school, and that the choices they make are important. The Falcon Buddy Program is just another way QL ensures students stay connected to the school, create a culture of acceptance, and make sure nobody gets left behind.

One unique model of QL is its "no cut" policy for sports. Rather than field just one team, teachers coach the "practice team" as adjunct duties to make sure that ALL students who wish to participate are given the chance to do so. This policy also extends to our student with a desire for civic education. All 4th-8th-grade students who want to participate in service to our school and community are invited to be part of the Service Learning Club. Rather than exclude an individual with the desire to serve, we include everyone who wants to participate. Our Service Learning Club made over 100 "pine cone turkeys" and delivered them to the Sanger Convalescent Home for Thanksgiving. They plan one service-learning project every month. These include knitting stocking hats for the homeless, care packages to Iraq, and so on. We are proud that our service club is a strong group of individuals working on the skills that will make them responsible and productive citizens in the community.

In 2002, a group of parents organized a chess club on campus, and have ever since fielded a competitive team. Due to parent volunteers, the club now teaches phrases in Spanish, Russian, German, Armenian, and continues to grow. A parent with an artistic touch may be seen spending hours painting and decorating murals in our MPR for drama productions and winter programs. These are just a few examples of how parents offer their time, talents and treasures for the benefit of QL.

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**Ronald Reagan Elementary School (327 students; K-5)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA**  
**559-875-5098**  
**Principal: John Hannigan**

Reagan Elementary opened its doors for the first time as a brand new Sanger elementary school during the 2007/2008 school year, and simultaneously opened as a strong "Community of Caring" school. The Community of Caring program, sponsored by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, was originally implemented as part of a grant award that targeted all elementary schools and our district's middle school. The program focuses on the five core values of Caring, Family, Respect, Trust and Responsibility, and integrates these values throughout the core curriculum and alongside school-wide support programs.

There are several components to the Reagan Community of Caring program that separate it from other similar programs and make it a valid character education program. The components are as follows: values across the curriculum, support for staff, student forums, family and community involvement, and service learning, all of which are driven by the coordinating committee's action plan and site facilitator.

Each classroom displays a Community of Caring Chart, which displays the students who have demonstrated each of the five values for each trimester. Monthly award assemblies and Trimester award assemblies are a time where reading, math, and Community of Caring awards are given recognizing outstanding character and academic achievements of our students. Students have the opportunity to earn a movie reward during lunch, an ice cream party, and a gold medallion for demonstrating the five values throughout each trimester. Each trimester, the "Crystal Award" is awarded to the student who demonstrates exceptional character, excels academically, and encompasses all five Community of Caring core values.

This year, we have implemented the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. It was launched early in the school year with an evening kick-off rally including staff, parents, and students. Anti-bullying rules have been clearly articulated and are posted throughout the Reagan campus. We also followed up with a school-wide kick-off rally during the school day where peer mediators role-played scenarios to teach students how to include others and prevent bullying. Our peer mediation program is a team of students who work with other students to solve

Teachers have often given feedback as to the ease with which they are able to integrate a particular value into a story or class literature. For example, one popular story is *The Empty Pot* by Demi. After reading this book each teacher discusses its meaning and the importance of how the character trait of honesty exhibited in the book relates to our Community of Caring Values.

The staff at Reagan uses several activities to promote positive social development, group cohesion, caring and respect for others. We have a Clean Campus Responsibility Program where classrooms take turns being responsible ensuring that our campus is kept clean and beautiful. Classrooms and students take an active role in this responsibility, and take their responsibility quite seriously. Good News Club, which meets every Monday, gives students an opportunity to work together and strengthen positive behaviors and making good choices.

Our school-wide discipline policies reinforce that each student must treat one another with dignity and respect. Our vision which includes "Taking responsibility for the academic and personal achievement of all students" is the backbone of our school wide community of caring efforts.

Each month our school joins with the school district in focusing on a theme that contributes to the needs of our Sanger Community. We jump-started our school year with our Back-to-School Backpack and School Supplies Collection. During our Happy Feet collection month we gathered socks and shoes for needy students. In November, our caring Reagan community held a very successful food drive in which we provided four needy families the supplies for a Thanksgiving meal: two huge boxes of food with a frozen turkey for each family. We had such a positive response from the community, we were able to sponsor an additional family in need from another school in our district with a high percentage of poverty.

In our annual December tradition, we adopted three needy families for our Caring Hands Christmas Tree in which "hands" with "wishes" of family members were displayed. Reagan students, parents, and staff chose "hands" and bought Christmas gifts for 33 needy family members. A total of 66 gifts were given to make the holidays brighter for those families.

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**Red Bank Elementary School (706 students; K-6)**  
**Clovis Unified School District, Clovis, CA**  
**559-327-7800**  
**Principal: Alison Johns**

The philosophy that all students may become productive, contributing members of society is one that is adhered to by the Red Bank team through Clovis Unified School District's Character Counts program and implementation of an interactive leadership system. This concept and expectation is continually and consistently promoted at Red Bank through verbal and written communication, awards presentations, teachers, staff and administrative role models and an extensive co-curricular program. The goals for Red Bank Elementary School in Character Education are to promote character and educate students in order to help mold them into caring, contributing members of society that hold the well being of their community as a high priority. Core ethical values are defined in terms of behaviors that can be observed through the Six Pillars of Character (Character Counts!): Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. These character traits can be observed in the classrooms through student interactions with their teachers and their peers.

Additionally, character development activities include multi-cultural promotion and awareness through Red Bank's PAWS (Promoting Awareness Within our School) Committees, both a parent and school group are active within our school. PAWS activities include such things as monthly meetings, student lunch meetings and a school wide multi-cultural food faire.

Embedded in the Red Bank Elementary School curriculum is a focus on the significance of reasoned oral and ethical choices which promote fairness, equity, caring and respect for others. This is evident in daily lessons and curriculum in each classroom. Students learn to evaluate situations and make positive and constructive decisions as they examine events. A greater understanding and tolerance of student diversity is manifested throughout the school language

arts, writing, and social science curriculum. The integration of character education with district and California State Standards is a fun combination at Red Bank.

A clean, safe, secure learning environment is provided for all students at Red Bank. This is ensured through monthly safety drills, clean campus inspections and consistent enforcement of Zero Tolerance discipline. Students are reminded of behavior expectations and positive character traits at all school assemblies and rallies as well as within their classroom setting. Classroom teachers and staff members are a daily model of the Character Counts Pillars of Character through their own actions and expectations of fairness, caring and respect for others.

Positive social development and group cohesion is fostered through partnerships across grade levels in support of the school mission: Red Bank Elementary is committed to teach reading comprehension, to meet the needs of every student. Reading buddies meet weekly providing students with the opportunity to work on social as well as core academic skills.

Red Bank Elementary School provides students the opportunities for moral action and character development through total curriculum integration of character education. Red Bank Elementary promotes pro-social competencies and behaviors by providing students opportunities to be involved in community service efforts with such activities as: Adopting soldiers in Iraq and writing them letters as well as filling shoe boxes with items such as razors, beef jerky, soap, gum, candy, shaving cream and other items from home. These shoeboxes are then shipped to service men and women in Iraq.

Annually, Red Bank staff and students participate in the Fresno Bee sponsored Kid's Day. Staff members start selling papers at 6:45 in the morning and sell at corners around the Red Bank community until the school day starts. Our third grade classes organize a community service project that raises funds for the Burn Foundation.

Another community service project organized by a sixth grade class is Pennies for Scholarship. This community service project collects pennies during the school year to provide a Clovis High School student, who is a former Red Bank student, with a scholarship. A school-wide community service project benefits the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society – Pennies for Patients. Each classroom had a box to collect coins in. The collection last approximately one month. Red Bank teachers, staff, administration, students and community help to raise funds and support the American Cancer Society Clovis Relay For Life. The Relay raises money for the American Cancer Society for community awareness, research and patient outreach.

A final example of community service/out reach efforts is the partnership Red Bank holds with the Clovis High Leadership Classes. Leadership students attend Red Bank rallies to promote Clovis High School spirit by teaching Red Bank students the Clovis High spell-out and distributing Clovis High spirit items such as: sport bottles, T-shirts, pom-poms, stadium seat cushions and plastic cups. Red Bank Student Council and PAWS students attend a Clovis High rally and a Mosaic Assembly during the year in order to build community between the schools.

Since last receiving this award in April 2008, Red Bank Elementary School has continued to implemented a Character Development Program; however, the strength in the overall school

value and character education is total curriculum integration. The entire mission and goals of the school is to create an embodiment of the principle that it is the responsibility of the school to establish an educational direction that focuses on the development of positive character and values. The approach to character development at Red Bank Elementary School involves the ambiance created by the total of all programs, activities, and interactions with students.

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**Sanger Academy Charter School (K-8; 542 students)**

**Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA.**

**559-875-5562**

**Principal: Ken Garcia**

Sanger Academy Charter School's (SACS) charter is based on the philosophy of educating the whole child by promoting core values of honesty, integrity, trust, and the pursuit of academic excellence. As establishing a Community of Caring is important to Sanger Unified School District and members of the community, the SACS staff has worked to integrate character education into their academic curriculum as well as athletic and co-curricular activities.

Visitors can observe the SACS staff actively integrating character values into our daily practices. Community of Caring and Project Wisdom are programs utilized to specifically and intentionally define values and behaviors and outline observable behaviors for students. Also, the weekly newsletter, school website, and posters and banners located around the campus display our Olweus anti-bullying rules. Several projects highlight the positive character and community mindedness of SACS' students. Some examples completed recently were: a donation of clothing to a local doctor who distributes them to those in need, a canned food drive to benefit families in the local community, for which we partnered with the Sanger Rotary; and "Pennies for Patients" to raise money for cancer patients. Most recently, the SACS student council has decided to organize the "Hearts for Haiti" Valentine dance, with the proceeds being donated to relief organizations that support the earthquake victims.

In addition, SACS' students visit and perform at the local convalescent hospital and support the Central California Blood Center through local activities. Fresno County Office of Education operates a site for the students with severe handicaps on the campus of SACS and our students play an integral role in the mainstreaming and social interaction of these peers. Students at SACS are respectful, committed, and civic minded. These traits are not only coveted, but also awarded at SACS.

Classrooms and students participate in service learning projects as well as fundraisers for charities throughout the year. The Community of Caring core values are integral at SACS and visible throughout the city of Sanger. SACS promotes these values through visual reminders such as postings in classrooms, murals in hallways, and information and photographs on the cafeteria's Community of Caring board.

Project Wisdom is utilized daily at SACS, and consists of the principal using a scripted morning announcement to teach key values through the words of significant historical figures. Each morning the principal reads a historical account of a significant figure that exemplifies a chosen character trait. These readings are used to stimulate thought and foster communication about the kind of citizens SACS' students are expected to be.

When walking onto SACS campus, the feeling is one of professionalism, structure, and a feeling of safety. Classes are orderly and focused on academic state standards. Teachers are professionally dressed, friendly, and welcoming. Students are uniformly dressed, polite, and happy. Parents are welcomed and feel comfortable on campus. SACS is clean and well maintained. Murals representing Community of Caring values and SACS logos are visible throughout the campus. Students proudly wear SACS logos on clothing and backpacks. There is a sense of pride among students and staff. Awards are prominently displayed in the office, and banners hang from aloft in the cafeteria proclaiming SACS' rich history of achievement.

Our Olweus "no bullying policy" is in place ensuring an atmosphere of respect for self and others. Parents were invited to a "kick-off" night, where the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was explained to parents and the need for parental support of the program was addressed. All SACS staff has participated in staff development and meetings to plan procedures and topics for Olweus class meetings that are held every other week in all classrooms. The principal works with teachers and students on presentations of literature, personal anecdotes, and good decision making to eliminate bullying and ensure that students feel comfortable in the learning environment. Respect and empathy are highly coveted personal qualities at SACS.

Physical Education (PE) is a part of daily life as well as a subject taught at SACS. Our campus is ahead of the health guidelines, having eliminated sugary snacks and soda from vending machines. "Los Tenis" is a physical education program developed by the SACS physical education teacher as a fun way to promote a healthy lifestyle and show that physical fitness is a way of life. Through the club, students come to school 40 minutes early for jump rope, walking, and friendship.

Professionalism is an expectation at SACS. Teachers are expected to approach their position with respect and students are expected to participate fully in their education. The grounds at SACS are always clean and is inviting to students, community members, and staff. Graffiti is not tolerated and removal is a top priority. The principal and staff members, leading by example, promptly remove trash and litter. All members of the SACS family embrace a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Each trimester, SACS hosts awards with the SAC Bear (top student) Award, Math Award, Reading Award, and Writing Award for each classroom. In addition, students receive Honor Roll Awards and Principal's Honor Roll Awards for report card results. Principal's Honor Roll Award students are further recognized with a formal breakfast celebration with their parents and SACS staff. ACE (Academy Character and Excellence) is a coveted award which is given only twice a year to students who exemplify the character and hard work that is promoted school wide. SACS is committed to fostering a sense of belonging and tradition among students.

The Peer Mediation Program is another student organization where students are trained in conflict management and mediation. Peer Mediators receive training in the specific skills needed to solve problems and learn how to work with fellow students who are engaged in a dispute. Teachers coordinate both programs as an adjunct duty.

Diversity is fostered and celebrated at SACS. During Music and Art instruction students learn the cultural implications of Art and Music through projects such as "El Dia de los Muertos." In preparation for "El Dia de los Muertos," art students create lifelike paper mache' calacas dolls with death masks to display in the cafeteria, the art studio, and on campus. They eat pan dulce, special sweet bread made to commemorate the day, and learn about the Mexican culture. SACS' artists display work throughout the community, and our musicians perform in various venues.

Numerous participatory activities supporting the academic program are offered. Students learn teamwork, respect, and perseverance. All students at SACS are expected to participate in at least one activity either during the school day, or before or after school. This level of participation and representation is due to the support of both teachers and parents who devote their time to co-curricular programs, as well as to the students who do the work to be successful. Annually, SACS teachers compete in Mud Volleyball to support the March of Dimes charity, and SACS hosts blood drives with the Central California Blood Bank. Last year, SACS staff participated in the local "Race for the Cure" breast cancer walk. As further evidence of the commitment to the community and service, SACS' principal is a member of the Sanger Rotary Club. Sanger Rotary works in conjunction with SACS to enhance student learning, and recently made a significant donation of dictionaries to SACS students. Local UPS employees have adopted SACS as a partner school and provided supervision and resources for the Red Ribbon Festival, and are currently working with SACS administration on acquiring funds to improve school facilities.

In addition, SACS offers numerous co-curricular activities to inspire students in the practical application of what they learn: History Day, Science Fair, PTA Reflections, Science Olympiad, the JASON Project, Math-a-Thon, Los Tennis, Peach Blossom, Honor Band, Chess Club, Art Club, Spelling Bee, Talent Show, Young Author's Faire and Student Government are available for student participation. PTA Reflections participation is very high, with 305 participants in 2009 competing in Art, Music Composition, Photography, Video, and Literature. Ongoing co-curricular programs also supporting classroom instruction include Jog-a-Thon and Reading Incentives.

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**Sierra View Elementary School (338 students; K-6)**  
**Golden Valley Unified School District, Madera, CA**  
**559-645-1122**  
**Principal: Scott Tefft**

At Sierra View the culture of Character and enthusiasm permeates all we do and supports the school wide vision of "Making the World a Better Place One Child at a Time." In line with the

district-adopted CHARACTER COUNTS program, the staff and students of Sierra View Elementary School are dedicated to recognizing and promoting the character traits of Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship.

Kindergarten students are treated to a Character Counts Awards assembly each Wednesday where students having displayed Sierra View core values are enthusiastically recognized before their family and peers! During the assembly a Character Counts kindness drawing is completed and one child from each class earns a special pencil. Kindergarten also makes a "Character Counts in Kindergarten" book each year. Kindergarten students discuss each core value in depth and write about what they do that is fair, trustworthy, responsible, etc. These are shared with parents at Open House. Ultimately, all of our Kindergarten students have a clear understanding of what it means to be responsible, respectful, etc., when they move on to first grade!

Sierra View also has weekly Character Counts electives each Friday. The electives include instruction in Ceramics/Pottery, Music, Science, Art, Leather Working, Puppetry, and Fossils. Students earn this privilege by exemplifying all the pillars of Character by turning in all homework on time, getting to school each day on time, and by receiving no behavior referrals or office referrals during the week.

Under the guidance of a dedicated, caring staff, Sierra View students experience daily that goals are achievable through proper preparation and good character. Sierra View's Goals for this program include increasing student academic achievement, decreasing the number of referrals and suspensions, improving attendance, and decreasing the number of students at risk for retention. These goals are monitored closely to ascertain whether or not these school-wide goals are being met in the area of character education and show us that we have made progress and are achieving our goals. These goals were established by way of a collaborative effort including teachers, students, parents, and the principal. They were defined based on areas of need that existed at Sierra View. To date the data, including state API results, attendance numbers, and numbers of referrals and suspensions suggest that the program is very successful. Informal data including student and parent feedback shows us that the program is highly successful.

Respect for everyone is emphasized daily starting with morning announcements where students are encouraged to "make the world a better place with their positive choices" and "do what's right not because it's convenient or popular but because it's the right thing to do." Each morning the site principal utilizes readings from Character Building Day by Day, Making Every Day Count, and Project Wisdom. Every classroom has a poster stating Ridicule Free Zone. Teachers greet children at the door each morning, consistently use positive/proactive reinforcement, and the principal learns all students' names which send the message that all kids are valued and appreciated. Each week teachers utilize the 2nd Step Anti-Bullying Curriculum to proactively define bullying, define loving behavioral expectations, and communicate that bullying will not be tolerated. Sierra View is indeed a ridicule free zone! Student discipline is handled consistently throughout the school and minimal disruptions are visible on the school campus.

Sierra View's Student Council has helped coordinate community events on site such as Toys for Tots, collection of significant amounts of money for emergency situations, Coats for Kids, and food drives. Character Bucks which can be spent in the Character Counts Store each Friday

morning, Character Tickets which are handed out daily, Random Acts of Character drawings which are held weekly for students caught in the act of positive Character, Weekly and Trimester Character Awards, Character Counts Rallies, and Character Counts electives are all proactive efforts to embed Character Counts core values into our Sierra View culture.

Everywhere you go on campus, you see how our Sierra View family works together to promote its nurturing culture. Our library welcomes everyone to embrace the diversity of our community, inviting all to come and explore its offerings. The technology lab is decorated to reflect how "Technology brings the world to our fingertips." Community members, Kiwanis, and the SVPC have planted numerous trees, have purchased and installed play structures, have laid sod, planted grass, donated flowers and benches all in an effort to beautify our campus so our wonderful community can enjoy its park-like setting. All of these touches create a community that reflects the benefits of working together to support learning for all children in an effort to Make the World a Better Place Once Child at a Time.

Concerted efforts are made to give all Sierra View students a sense of belonging, school pride, and self-worth. Student diversity is celebrated and is an asset. Classroom curricula, in addition to the Character Counts curriculum, encompass disability awareness and multicultural diversity as showcased by our Countries Around the World event, Martin Luther King Week activities, and how we treat each other on a daily basis. Additionally, Sierra View's Psychologist has Student Assistance training and is available to assist students with special problems.

The classroom is the ideal setting for students to learn the intrinsic curriculum necessary to become positive members of society. Some examples of lessons that incorporate core values include:

1. Student Council elections and speeches to familiarize students with the democratic process
2. Moral decisions and character evaluation are strong components of the literary selections and writing assignments. Analysis of novels and short stories often include character studies and the assessment of ethical choices that impact the theme of the literature. Students are encouraged to relate the lessons being studied to their own life experiences. Examples include Holes, Hatchet, Tuck Everlasting, The Outsiders, Where the Red Fern Grows.

Since receiving the prestigious Bonner Virtues and Character Recognition Award in 2008, Sierra View has made some key minor changes and has some exciting updates. Immediately following Sierra View receiving this award, our school was honored with the California Distinguished School Award. Sierra View had to live, learn, grow, and improve a great deal in order to become eligible for and then earn this award. A key component of Sierra View's success in recent years both behaviorally and academically is its comprehensive Character Education Program. We are also excited to mention our Character Education Program won the 2008 CSBA Golden Bell Award. Character Education is something we are passionate about at Sierra View and these awards are affirming and encouraging.

One key change we have made to our Character Education Program is adding the teaching of the 2nd Step Anti-Bullying Curriculum. This is another proactive effort to perpetuate our Ridicule Free Zone culture at Sierra View. Each week teachers use the 2nd Step Anti-Bullying Curriculum to teach kids what bullying is, how to deal with it, and to send a clear message that bullying is not an option at Sierra View.

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**Sundale Elementary School**  
**Sundale School District, Tulare CA**  
**559-688-7451**  
**Principal: Cindy Gist**

Sundale is a single school district located in the southern portion of the San Joaquin Valley. The school is located five miles from the city of Tulare and serves a rural population of K-8th grade students. The total attendance area covers approximately 24 square miles. The community is largely a farming and dairy community.

As part of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Framework, the Six Pillars of Character have defined Sundale School's character education goals to center around: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. These character education goals include:

- Parent Education/Awareness
- Whole Staff Training/Development
- Curriculum Integration
- Student Leadership/Recognition
- School Environment

While it is important to conduct awards assemblies, hang good character posters and welcome guests to your campus as part of your character education goals, the process is not complete or effective unless monitoring and measurement take place. Sundale takes pride in the ability to propose a plan to further good character, and then be honest enough to put the efforts to the test. Current measurement of such efforts is provided by the participation in the Federal Partnership in Character Education Program through the Tulare County Office of Education. As a result, an implementation plan is in place that monitors attendance of trainings, field-testing of student curriculum products, collection of student samples, parent feedback, student recognitions, discipline rates, and API scores. Measurement includes pre and post surveys, focus group interviews, and school-based behavior and academic records. Focus areas for the remainder of the year include conducting a students' leadership camp where select student leaders on campus receive direct CHARACTER COUNTS! Training and learn how to apply the Six Pillars of Character as leaders at Sundale School.

As part of the current character education implementation plan the following activities are evident on campus and are aligned with goals described above:

- Parent Education/Awareness (Teach/Enforce): Our PTA calendar offers parent awareness trainings for CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character. Other character education related topics scheduled include; wellness and nutrition, healthy choices, and child development information. All sessions provide free babysitting and lunch.
- Whole Staff Training/Development (Teach): Sundale participates in trainings both on and off campus. On campus sessions included the curriculum alignment workshop, certificated whole staff awareness training, classified awareness training. In-depth off campus training sessions included the three day "Train the Trainer" seminar, The Principal's Institute, and Pursuing Victory with Honor.
- Curriculum Integration (Enforce): Curriculum integration is evidenced through various resources at Sundale School. The CHARACTER COUNTS! Committee presents a lesson each month which aligns with the pillar focus for all staff to utilize. These lessons have been collected and are now included in the library resource materials. As CHARACTER COUNTS! resources are aligned with the California Content Standards via the Tulare County Office of Education, teachers on campus field test the products with their students and provide feedback for final production.
- Student Leadership/Recognition (Advocate): Monthly student recognitions are now aligned with our Pillar of the Month focus. In addition, Kudos, a recognition for daily good deeds from students or staff, are appreciated during morning announcements. Another form of affirmation occurs as teachers observe students throughout the month. Teachers write a Shining Star moment about one of their students and submit the good character effort to the Principal. The Principal then in turn contacts the parents with good news about their Shining Star Student. These students become role models for their peers and leaders on the Mustang campus.
- School Environment (Enforce): A commitment to moral integrity and academic excellence requires a sound environment to learn and grow. Sundale School provides this environment through a thorough discipline plan that utilizes the Six Pillar common language.

Ensuring a secure, safe and caring learning environment involves all staff, students and parents of the Sundale School community. Modeling the pillar of citizenship is evident when you see that the classrooms are clean, orderly and provide a safe learning environment reflective of student work and current curriculum. The school grounds are kept clean and well maintained for student play, recreation, and athletic activities. Our school community takes pride in our well-maintained buildings and landscaping. The students, staff, and parents are committed to keeping our campus clean and safe through respecting the facilities, cooperating with others and doing their part to improve the livelihood at Sundale School.

Contributions to the school: Parents, school board members, staff and students work long hours to make their campus a better learning environment. From family work days on the weekends with the school board hosting the dinner, to the farm show food booth fundraiser for both the 8th grade trip and the fine arts department, these activities work to help make Sundale what it is. In addition our Dad's Club hosts an annual car show. The money raised is used to put on the Annual Daddy/Daughter Dance and to provide extra activities at the Harvest Carnival. Sundale's PTA also plays a vital role in providing for our students. The annual Walk-A-Thon is their only

fundraiser that contributes to grade level field trips, enrichment activities, projects which keep the campus environment looking nice.

Contributions to the community: In supporting Sundale School's mission that students should participate in community service, all seventh grade students must enroll in a one-trimester Service Learning Class. This class supports the local Light House Rescue Mission through donating toiletries to the moms and children and by making blankets for them during the winter. Additionally this Christmas these students visited our local Convalescent Home, Twin Oaks, and sang Christmas carols. A school wide effort providing opportunity for moral action was the adoption of families during the holiday season.

Contributions outside the community: Sundale students also collect pull tabs for the Ronald McDonald House and fundraise for Children's Hospital of Central California by selling "Kids Day" newspapers and Valentine Balloons on our school campus. Our most recent effort is dedicated to the devastation in Haiti. We have joined "Shoes for Haiti". A collection of gently worn shoes are collected on campus and then delivered to a shipping site in Hanford, California.

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**John S. Wash Elementary School (410 students; K-6)**  
**Sanger Unified School District, Fresno, CA.**  
**559-251-7543**  
**Principal: Wesley R. Sever**

John S. Wash Elementary became a "Community of Caring" school during the 2003-04 school year. Activities are adjusted or added, as needed through discussion with stakeholders and staff. Staff and parents are informed of Community of Caring activities through discussions at PTA monthly meetings, weekly school newsletters, assemblies, and weekly staff meetings.

Many of the activities sponsored by Community of Caring at John Wash target the families of our students. We have conducted family nights such as Meet the Principal night at our local pizza parlor and at Blackbeards to celebrate family and friendship. Families are also included at Grandparents Day, Movie Nights, Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, and a Family Talent Show Night with dinner. Family Math Night, Internet Safety, and Gang Awareness are an example of our Parent Education Nights held four times per year. A Drama Club Production and a staff, student and parent softball game are held on an annual basis. These events promote family, fun and educational events such as our Drug Awareness Night where we had a detective speak to parents about drugs and the dangers they hold. Children were also invited to attend with their parents.

"Caught With Character" tickets are given to those children who exemplify and promote one of the core values. These tickets are put into a weekly drawing for various Community of Caring prizes, i.e. pens, CD holders, folders, water bottles, books, backpack character values tags, t-shirts, frisbees, etc. We are fortunate, even though we have increased our enrollment to 410

students, to have an all school opening every morning on our blacktop. At these openings, the students are reminded of all 5 of our Community of Caring values. We also come together at this time as a family when the principal asks, "Who's a Tiger?" and the students respond, "I'm a Tiger!" or when the principal states, "Community of Caring is..." and the students respond, "Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trust and Family." We have adopted the Project Wisdom program where a character value story is read every Monday. Monthly award assemblies are a time when reading, writing, and math awards are given. Each teacher gives a Student of the Month award where a student is recognized for embodying the selected value of the month in an outstanding fashion.

Each teacher firmly believes that John Wash students are not "my" students. Instead, we strongly believe that we are responsible for all of "our" students. John Wash is indeed a family of caring. Our fourth, fifth, and sixth graders participate in a Peer Mediation program. Groups of four students roam the playground during recesses wearing yellow vests with value badges to try to solve any problems that students may have. In order to aid in solving problems, they often utilize the five core values with students.

Our upper grade students buddy up with younger students to help them read. This also fosters responsibility in the older peers and creates a caring playground situation where older students play with the younger students with little or no problems. This Big Buddy/Little Buddy system creates a sense of family within our school.

Community of Caring encourages service learning as an important component of character education. For the past six years, our students have adopted a Make a Wish child and have exceeded their expected goals. This year we adopted one of our own students through the Make a Wish Foundation. We were able to send the student and his family to Disney World.

We have been honored to receive the Bonner Character Education Award twice in the past. We are excited to have some new ideas and changes this year. First, we include Ron Clark's Essential 55 on all of our newsletters. Project Wisdom continues to be a major part of our character education program. These messages put forth a few words of wisdom from which we can all benefit. This year our fifth grade class is performing another Shakespeare play for our Family Night Dinner demonstrating the value of caring. We also are continuing with our Family Talent Show. We reflected on volunteers and decided that moms were a large part of our school, but dads were not. So our WatchDOG program was implemented. DOG stands for Dads of Great Students. These dads come to our school opening and are introduced to our school family by their own children. They then visit each classroom and are on the playground at recess interacting with not only their own children, but also all students. Pictures of dads and their kids are on our WatchDOG bulletin board in the cafeteria.

[Top](#)

**Wilson Elementary School  
Sanger Unified School District, Sanger, CA.**

**559-875-4501**

**Principal: David Paliughi**

At Wilson Elementary, 100% of our students receive free lunch and breakfast due to the economic challenges that beset our community. The issues that face families have increased at an alarming rate to include single parenting households, substance abuse, homelessness, gangs, violence, and child abuse. The greater the economic challenges plague the community we serve, the greater the opportunity our students and families will experience sociological issues. It is this reasoning regarding the times as well as our driven pursuit to leave none of our children behind that Wilson Elementary has chosen to not only continue the promotion of core ethical values as the basis of moral character but to enhance our programs such that students we serve not only exhibit gains in core academic areas but that they leave our school as ambassadors of good character.

The specific character goal for Wilson students is to create a sense of family/community and in turn a broader sense of responsibility to one's family/community. The staff at Wilson takes this goal and puts it into action in terms of instruction on a daily basis as serious as the instruction of the state standards in mathematics and language arts. Wilson Elementary uses Sanger Unified School District's (SUSD) adopted character education program, Community of Caring (CC). The CC program has a rich history and was founded and chaired by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. The core values addressed by the program are caring, responsibility, trust, respect, and family. These values are taught using not only formal lessons but also interwoven into lessons that cover state standards such as social studies and/or English language arts. Furthermore, these values are woven into the weekly community meetings that are held in every classroom K – 5th. The Wilson staff believes that our character goal of fostering a sense of family/community within our students coupled with responsibility to both is critical to the success of the students we serve.

Each value from the CC program is targeted on a monthly basis. The monthly character traits are visible throughout our school as well as on any home – school communications. Furthermore, our principal along with our elected ASB students address the monthly value on the morning announcements known to our student body as Bulldog Radio. Students are reinforced to not only learn the focus value but to live it in a variety of techniques. First, students who exhibit the value of the month anywhere on the campus are offered a Bulldog Buck, which enables them to purchase items in our student store. These bucks are sought after regardless of grade. A response cost system is also in place so that if students are observed to exhibit behavior that is discordant with any of the values we have covered, they could not only have traditional disciplinary consequences such as detention or parent conferences, they could also pay a fine in the way of bulldog bucks. Students are also reinforced daily in the form of the opportunity to achieve Bulldog Blue on our systematic progressive behavioral card system that is in place throughout the school. Students who are observed within their classrooms demonstrating a value or students who are caught with character can be asked to pull a card, traditionally a negative consequence however at Wilson, when asked to pull your card to Bulldog Blue students receive special classroom privileges, parents are notified their child achieved Bulldog Blue for the day and every student that pulled a blue card during the week is entered in a weekly drawing that is announced by the principal and/or ASB officers every Friday morning.

To provide students with a safe, secure and bully-free environment the entire staff along with parents decided implement the Olweus anti-bullying program. The current year began with every adult along with many parents participating in trainings that strengthened the school's response to bullying behavior. Teachers agreed, and it was decided that each teacher in grades Kindergarten through fifth grade would spend 30 minutes per week holding a community meeting within their classes. Within these community meetings, teachers would not only cover issues related to our core values, they would provide students instruction on social skills using Second Step, they would unfold and create a foundation within their classrooms for eradicating bullying using the Olweus program, and teachers would also use real life examples either through their adopted social skills curriculum or tie in current events in which an individual or group represented one of the to be learned values.

Prior to the implementation of the community meetings an anti-bullying kickoff assembly was held in September in which parents were explained the results of the previous years data and the plans to add the Olweus program. Our student body, which consists of an elected representative from each classroom, also visited each classroom and further explained the Wilson progressive discipline policy which included for the first time a positive card that students could be asked to pull if they were demonstrating one of our core values, namely that of Bulldog Blue.

Teachers not only instruct our students on the value of keeping a clean campus, the teachers are often the ones during a recess or prep period walking the campus and picking up trash. Many of our teachers have adopted some of our neediest families and include them in events outside of the school such as church. A partnership was developed with the neighborhood Boys & Girls Club with the idea to increase the values espoused in the CC program. Lastly, all coaches, after school staff, student body coordinator, and or any adult that works in a mentor program at Wilson spends time addressing the core values within the respective extra curricular activity that they provide leadership to.

In order to contribute to not only Wilson but also the community at large the Wilson staff has created a unique student government. Students have the opportunity to run for traditional positions such as President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Athletics Commissioner, as well as non-traditional positions such as Grounds Commissioner, Student Store Manager, and Community of Caring officer. Furthermore, in order to provide everyone a voice, a classroom representative is elected from each room. Student body meetings are run by the students with the support of the student body coordinator and the Wilson school psychologist. Within these meetings the students seek ways to further the implementation of our core values. The students have decided to recognize adults who exhibit core values and celebrate these adults with a recognition plaque. Most recently, our student body has elected to participate in a fundraising activity for Haiti. The students decided that the recent crisis in Haiti not only deserved our attention but rather our support. Students have taken to the Bulldog radio on a daily basis encouraging each other to bring in Pennies for Haiti. This year our student body has also begun a campaign to make the Wilson campus Green. Students from many grade levels have begun meeting with various local recycling companies as well as discussing ways that students and staff can reduce waste as well as recycle what we use during the academic day.

In order to support our students decision making process in a real life setting peer mediators from fourth and fifth grades are trained to use conflict resolution skills both on the playground as well as disputes that occur within our classrooms. Our peer mediators are identifiable at lunch recesses by wearing peer mediation vests. Moreover, every year peer mediators provide in classroom training both on conflict resolution as well as how to use their services in order to resolve a situation involving conflict between students. In terms of referrals to the peer mediation program, the staff and students have noticed a tremendous decrease in referrals this year. Many believe that a concentrated focus on our core values coupled with weekly community meetings as well as our efforts to eradicate bullying on our campus has resulted in less of a need for students to seek out peer mediators to help them resolve conflict.

While Wilson has received numerous acknowledgements over the past two years for our students' academic successes, it is the firm belief of our staff that our time invested in character education, whether it be the CC program, our weekly community meetings, the development of an anti-bullying program, or the attention and time we spend recognizing students who exhibit our core values have all contributed directly to our students' overall academic successes. Teachers believe that as they spend time educating their students on the importance of caring, responsibility, trust, respect, and family, students in turn take their job as students more seriously.