



Bonner Center for Character Education
and Citizenship

2013 BONNER CENTER MIDDLE SCHOOLS

ALTA SIERRA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Clovis Unified School District

380W. Teague Ave.

Clovis, CA 93619

Mr. Steve Pagani, Principal

In essence, character education is the core of what we teach and who we are as educators at Alta Sierra Intermediate (ASI). The core philosophy of ASI rests upon our motto “building unity, pride, and champions.” We, like many school districts, face the challenges of working with students who come from extremely different experiences and backgrounds. We overcome these challenges by understanding that in all of our differences, we must build unity and a collective identity as a school that holds fast “*A Team of Champions*” mindset. ASI teachers, support staff, and administrators work together with the intention to help all students develop and understand the importance and practice of the six pillars of character: *Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship*. Our vision for ASI students is that they have a positive impact on our school community and beyond.

We monitor this progress of developing character by continuously seeking feedback and insight from our students and community. In recent years, bullying has received national attention. At ASI, bullying has been a topic of concern for the administration and continues to be addressed by seeking proactive measures communicated through our school’s website, parent meetings, school wide events, banners on campus, weekly announcements, and quarterly anti-bullying and Human Relations Day assemblies.

Alta Sierra Intermediate schedules quarterly **Human Relations Days** within the school year to focus on specific ways to teach our students about character education, the principles, and ethical values. Our first Human Relations Day focused on how to exemplify the six pillars of character at school, identification of school rules and expectations, and modeling of age appropriate examples of how to demonstrate great examples of character. The second Human Relations Day focused specifically on bullying and the negative impact it has on a school campus and in life. Students left the assembly with a variety of tools and examples of what to do when responding to a bullying issue.

In addition to a thorough character education program, Alta Sierra offers comprehensive **co-curricular opportunities** for students that include participation in athletics, performing arts, school clubs, and service-based elective courses. We recognize that an essential ingredient to creating an atmosphere that promotes psychologically healthy students and staff is ensuring a safe, clean and secure learning environment. Although the appearance and cleanliness of our campus is important to us, the emotional and physical needs of our students and staff are paramount. We take pride in taking care of each other. Our school motto is emphasized each and every day in our announcements and is often used in counseling sessions between adults and students. The motto is simple: **“Take care of yourself; Take care of each other; Take care of Alta Sierra.”** We want our students to understand that the world awaiting them will benefit greatly if they put into practice our simple message of taking care of people.

Middle school students’ emotional and cognitive maturity offers many more opportunities to serve and employ collaborative efforts unlike the limited experiences available in their elementary years. As students’ social interactions become more complicated, opportunities to be misunderstood may result in increased conflict. Our job as educators is to help them resolve these conflicts. The **peer counselor program** is a fantastic intervention tool teaching students to resolve typical interpersonal conflict without the aid of an adult. Positive implications from the peer-counseling program include mitigated peer conflict and students learning how to appropriately express their feelings. It is vitally important we teach our students the communication skills necessary when expressing their feelings and how to access the appropriate help when needed. Over 30 students are now individually **trained with interpersonal skills** to not only help solve their social issues, but support the mental health and safety of others in the future.

Our Activities Director teaches two periods of a School Service class that positively impacts our campus. Students are heavily involved in planning and implementing campus-wide activities. They plan and implement service projects benefiting members of our community. These range from helping sell Kid’s Day newspapers to collecting household items, clothing, and groceries for families. Our **WEB (Where Everyone Belongs)** program is an onsite leadership development and peer mentoring group that helps incoming seventh graders become accustomed to middle school. Our eighth grade WEB leaders build relationships with new students and offer themselves as valuable resources to answer questions about school throughout the year. In addition to courses offered during the school day, we provide four **club days** during the school year allowing students to engage in a common interest. Club descriptions vary, but many students have come together to take action and be involved in the **Anti-Bullying Club and Environmental Club**. These clubs serve a purpose in supporting our school community by being models of ethical behavior. The Anti-Bullying Club posted fliers throughout campus encouraging students to take action against bullying by refusing to be a passive bystander. This demonstration of moral action by our students builds a positive school climate and encourages students to contribute in a meaningful way.

One of the interesting outcomes that we discovered through the process of writing for the Bonner Center’s Virtues and Character Recognition Award is the unintentional actions our staff displays on a daily basis teaching character and ethical decision making. Our community expects us to promote and model moral and ethical decisions by all staff members.

[Top](#)

CLARK INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
Clovis Unified School District
902 Fifth Street
Clovis, CA 93612
Mr. Scott Steele, Principal

Good character is more important than ever. Schools have become responsible for much more than the mandated academic subject areas. Along with creating safe, clean campuses, our goal is to help create good citizens. School environments provide various opportunities for students to experience, utilize, and promote good character skills. Teachers and staff can serve as role models by demonstrating the appropriate character skills that students can emulate. As an educational institution for America's future generations, we have an obligation to create lessons that introduce skills and provide opportunity for students to practice and hone those skills.

The character education goals for Clark Intermediate School are aligned with those of the Clovis Unified School District. Our students will display the six pillars of Character Counts: Trustworthiness, Caring, Respect, Citizenship, Fairness, and Responsibility. Clark has partnered with the Fresno County Office of Education to sponsor the Safe School Ambassador program on our campus. Students from all social cliques are responsible for keeping each other from making bad choices. Once a month, we have a special seminar schedule to allow our leadership students from WEB (Where Everybody Belongs), Peer Counseling, and School Service classes to lead all classrooms in character lessons. With two WEB classes, one Peer Counseling class, and two School Service classes, approximately 150 students are charged with teaching character lessons to other students.

Character education begins in each classroom at Clark Intermediate School as monthly character traits are part of class discussion. Specific lessons are taught by the various leadership classes during Seminar Schedule. Monthly character traits are displayed and announced in each classroom. Teachers reiterate these character traits on a daily basis to ensure they become routine for the students. When working in groups, teachers provide specific instruction on how students should behave. Students are given examples of how to conduct themselves and how not to conduct themselves. Our Academic Transitions class is based on character education.

The Clark Peer Counselors have a strong history of community service and volunteerism. The School Service classes have organized fundraisers for several emergencies around the world. WEB leaders conduct an initiation for all seventh graders before the school year starts. Each WEB leader has eight to twelve seventh graders that they contact and invite to the orientation. During a four-hour meeting with the entire incoming seventh grade class, the WEB leaders give school tours, advise new students how to get along at Clark, and provide a friendly face in a small group setting. Since our school is approaching 1,500 students, this is a crucial component for our incoming students. Members of the Safe School Ambassadors are chosen because they have "social capital" within their own peer groups. These student leaders are trained in

techniques to keep situations from escalating into bullying or worse. These techniques include distraction, balancing, supporting, reasoning, directing, and if all else fails, getting help. These students are not expected to tell on other students, but rather use their influence to keep students from making bad choices. The Student Voice Committee meets monthly with the principal to review the mood and current events on the Clark campus. This group represents the Clark student body and is able to speak honestly in a no-risk atmosphere.

The positive experiences that our entire school went through during the Schools To Watch and Distinguished School visitations still have an effect on our campus four years later. Our students are expected to continue the legacy of good character that was so prevalent during that time period. The Clark staff agrees that our school meets the criterion listed on this application and whole-heartedly agrees that our school should apply for this award.

A signature program that exemplifies our commitment to character and values is our Academic Transitions class. This class consists of students who have one or more of the following issues: habitually defiant/disruptive; habitually tardy; habitually unproductive; have been referred to Community Day School; group home transfers; students expelled from other districts. The Academic Transitions class moves away from the “holding tank” philosophy and is a comprehensive program that gives students a U-turn opportunity. The goals in this program are to prevent alternative education placements, address student character, and provide a renewed path towards success. These are our most at-risk students and this program keeps them on campus and gives them a chance to earn back their regular classes through hard work and *good behavior*. A progressive discipline plan is in place and students need to excel in character and behavior in order to succeed. A two-year look at the Academic Transitions class shows a 66% success rate in getting these students back to their regular educational setting

[Top](#)

DIVISADERO MIDDLE SCHOOL
Visalia Unified School District
1200 South Divisadero St.
Visalia, CA 93277
Mr. Matt Shin, Principal

Character education is an extremely important area for the public schools in our country to focus some of their limited time and resources on for several reasons. The first reason is that many students do not receive any type of character education at home; therefore, it becomes the schools responsibility to step in to fill the void. Secondly, the true goal of any complete education includes character development in addition to facts, figures and concepts. As Martin Luther King Jr. stated “Intelligence plus character – that is the true goal of education.” It is not enough to educate our students without supporting them to create good character which will serve as the compass for their lives. Finally, in education we need to be the change that we want to see. It does not take much looking, in our society, to see that many people lack the character

that we would wish them to have. If we as a society wish to change that, it will be in the schools where we will have our most success.

We want to involve students in the promotion of good character at school, in the home, and in the community. The Divisadero staff models and provides guidance for students in developing and maintaining good character.

During our Week of Welcome (WOW), time is spent where teachers go over the CHARACTER COUNTS! Program and what character means to the students. Divisadero greets each day with the morning announcements which include a quote about our pillar of the month and good character. This helps the Divisadero community start the day off right and begin to intrinsically think about their impact and the power of their actions. Character education plays a part with our physical education department and athletics as many of our P.E. teachers and coaches have been trained by the Josephson Institute of Ethics in "Pursuing Victory with Honor." In the classroom arena, History and Social Science Teachers were trained on how to incorporate character education into lessons. Divisadero Middle School delved deeper in strengthening their integration of character education in curriculum by being selected as one of the few schools in Tulare County to pilot ELA student lessons for the Tulare County Partnership in Character Education Program Federal grant.

Classroom rules were designed around the Six Pillars of Character and many teachers have adopted the "What Pillar Did I Break" a classroom infraction sheet. The afterschool detention "Behavior Intervention Room," each student is required to complete a sheet aimed at character education. Citizenship grades are part of the progress report and report card system of feedback to the parents to allow teachers another way to notify parents of their children's citizenship at school. The major disciplinary referral form at Divisadero has been changed to include the Six Pillars of Character and when they are brought to the office the assistant principal makes considerable effort to facilitate the conversation of how they broke that pillar and alternative actions they could take in the future to avoid these problems and be a true student of character. When teachers see a student that goes out of their way and truly demonstrates a pillar of character they write them up on a positive referral.

We feel that involvement in co-curricular activities is essential if students are to feel connected to school. Our goal is to have every student in at least one co-curricular program. To help meet this goal our staff sponsors a number of clubs and/or student activities. Six times a year we have a club day where they have their choice of 24 clubs to attend, many of these clubs meet on other days throughout the year in addition to these dates.

At Divisadero Middle School, there have been two signature highlights both impacting the community awareness in the arenas of Anti-Bullying and Citizenship on the Internet. In the spring of 2011, Divisadero Middle School Leadership students were invited by the Tulare County Superintendent of School to participate in the ABC30 Children's First "Campus/Cyber bullying" series. Divisadero Middle School had eight students who participated in the episode which highlighted three scenarios of campus bullying. The students created and acted out each scenario and they were videotaped. Each scenario provided the students the opportunity to address concerns about things that had occurred previously on campus. They were able to bring

these issues out through a video and then model the proper behavior for their peers to see when we played the video at a special assembly.

The culture changes are far beyond the lowering of suspension numbers, the civility of the campus has improved. Our campus has turned into a pleasant place to go to and learn. Our overall academic achievement has soared in the years since we've implemented CHARACTER COUNTS! As a school our API has grown 100 points in five years, we've seen an increase in the number of students who are qualifying for honor roll each semester, and the overall failure rate has decreased to single digits in percentage of students on campus. The transformation of our school culture is attributed to these changes.

[Top](#)

GREEN ACRES MIDDLE SCHOOL
Visalia Unified School District
1147 N, Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93291
Ms. Angela Ashford, Principal
Ms. Adriane Ashford, Character Counts! Coordinator

Green Acres Middle School has developed its' character education program through the establishment of a CHARACTER COUNTS! committee and a site coordinator, assistant principal Adriane Ashford. A site handbook has been developed to give background on the Six Pillars of Character, an in-depth description of each pillar, and suggestion on how teachers may incorporate the six pillars into curricular lessons. Our *program is reviewed and monitored for progress* by our staff committee and Student Leadership class, as well as our parent/teacher/student organization.

Green Acres character education program features a *teacher handbook which is used to develop lessons into the core curriculum*. Each of the Six Pillars of Character is developed and discussed throughout the year. While many lessons are given orally over the public address system, teachers use their CHARACTER COUNTS! handbook to expand and incorporate character traits into their daily lessons. Teachers may use the stories and situations found in weekly lessons as classroom free topics in their English classes. To promote and recognize good character, our school has created the "CHARACTER COUNTS! Pass". Every teacher each month is given these passes to catch students practicing the Six Pillars of Character. To reward students for this character behavior, students sign their name on the pass back and place it into the CHARACTER COUNTS! container in the library. At the end of month, recognized students have their names shown at lunch as "Students of Character" and receive a free ice cream bar.

Beyond the classroom and incentives, a school must be equipped with services that provide for a *safe and caring learning environment*. This effort at Green Acres stems from administration support and the various issues that arise during the course of a middle school day. Such topics as friendship problems, not getting along with parents, grieving, and violence are addressed through

daily contact with students. In addition to the administrative efforts, the entire Green Acres staff supports the anti-bullying program, Olweus, and participate in a program called W.E.B. – Where Everybody Belongs. These support systems result in a staff promoting equity and students practicing caring and respect for others.

Our school has a very large leadership class and student government. These two groups provide weekly fun activities at lunch time. “Fun Friday’s” correspond with good citizenship for the week in the cafeteria and a willingness to keep their table areas clean. This is a big help to our custodial staff. “Fun Friday” activities are open to everyone, and many times require a teacher teammate. Besides our annual Christmas canned food drive, the students participate in a Thanksgiving food drive, and a gift exchange sponsored by one of our many clubs, Christians on Campus. Our students participate with and are recognized annually by our community service clubs for student achievement and service (Kiwans and Rotary). Each year an area veteran is asked to participate in our school wide Memorial Day assembly. This assembly helps students understand the personal meaning of Memorial Day, and the contributions our military throughout history.

Our character education program has been active for the last sixteen years and we believe we are reaping the benefits on a daily basis. During middle school, students become more aware of who they are and begin to identify specific values and interests that will be important to them for a lifetime. Green Acres staff has made it our goal to challenge all students to achieve, and to provide opportunities to grow in a positive direction both academically and through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities like clubs, leadership, athletics or drama. The entire staff at Green Acres takes this task very seriously and we are known as a school that engrains the importance of “Working Hard, Getting Involved and Doing the Right Thing”. We strive to form academically and personally sound individuals who are ready for high school because they *work hard, get involved* and *do the right thing*.

[Top](#)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Selma Unified School District
1239 Nelson Blvd.
Selma, CA 93662
Mr. Wayne Dixon, Principal
Ms. Janet Torosian, Character Education contact

A Cultural Survey given by the Culture and Media Institute found that 74 percent of all Americans believe that our nation is in a moral decline, and 64 percent of those surveyed felt the news and entertainment media are the major influence of that decline. In today’s world, there is a growing obsession with celebrities and technology. People are glued to their cell phones or computers as a constant, never ending stream of sound bites are delivered moment to moment. Through these media outlets, children are inundated with violence on a daily basis. Television

shows, movies, and video games are all becoming increasingly more violent, and depict a lifestyle free of consequences.

An article about morals and values in American society reported that today's family compared to the families of the 1950's, spends significantly less time together, the family meal is declining, and modern society does not value the family as it once did. Evening-the time of day when families talk and share their day has been replaced with time spent using media technology. The lack of family time has greatly contributed to the loss of teaching morals and values to one's children.

In 2002, the Report card on Ethics of American Youth conducted a sample study of over 12,000 high school students from all over the United States. The results showed that 74 percent of the students admitted to having cheated on an exam in the past year, 38% of the students admitted that in the last year they had stolen something from a store, and 43% of the students thought that they had to lie to get ahead in life. However, when asked if students believed that it was important to be trustworthy, 95 percent reported it was important (Britzman, 2005).

These statistics are sobering at best and raises the question whether students even know what trustworthy or honesty really means. It is a challenge for parents to instill these values in their children, so they grow up to become moral people with values, ethics, and contributing individuals which provide a positive influence on society.

In these challenging times, it is important that schools partner with parents and provide a Character Education Program, embedded in the curriculum and every day practices within the school site to bridge the gap of what the students might not be receiving at home. Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship are all Character Education traits which come to life when students are challenged and inspired to be positive forces in their society.

Selma Unified School District in support of Abraham Lincoln Middle School (ALMS) recognizes the importance of Character Education. The Character Counts! program has been a part of the school culture and curriculum for many years. The Character Education goals of Abraham Lincoln Middle School are as follows:

- (1) All students and staff will be treated with dignity and respect.
- (2) We will maintain a clean, safe campus at all times.
- (3) The District and School Vision and Mission statements encompass Character.
- (4) We will develop and continually improve upon a culture which supports a Professional Learning Community.
- (5) The Six Pillars of Character (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship) will be taught daily.
- (6) Our students will learn the importance of values, ethics, and developing their moral compass to give them the foundation they need to make good decisions in life.
- (7) Character Education is embedded in the curriculum.
- (8) Our students will learn to become responsible, productive citizens.
- (9) Our students will develop and use critical thinking skills to make well-informed decisions, understand consequences, and promote an atmosphere of caring, tolerance, and support of each other.
- (10) Our students will embrace diversity and encourage positive change.
- (11) Our students will develop their anger-management skills, learn self-control, and be accountable for their words,

actions, and attitudes. (12) Our students will learn the importance of volunteerism and giving back to their community and helping those in need. (13) Our students will understand the importance of an education, work to the best of their abilities, and continually challenge themselves to build character, determination, and a see-it-through attitude.

It is a school-wide teamwork approach which has brought success to ALMS by teaching Character Education daily and reducing incidents which require discipline through fairness, consistency, and a culture of respect. Weekly “plant manager” meetings are held with the administrative team to review the events calendar and discuss any issues or concerns. Teachers work with students within the classroom to promote positive behavior, and modeling the behavior which is expected from their students. Having regular reflection time at staff meetings helps staff work together to brainstorm strategies, support one another, and continue to improve on the school’s Character Education goals and celebrate our successes.

Abraham Lincoln Middle School has a commitment to Character Education and reinforces our goals daily. The Eagle Award awarded to students who are well rounded individuals, categories include – community service, Student of the Month, academic achievement, attendance, participation in student government, sports, etc. Students also participate in the Pennies for Patients program where students raise money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma societies. Each year we raise over \$1,200.00 for this charity. Change Bandits is an activity where students raise money for the Children’s Miracle Network (Children’s Hospitals of California). ALMS hold a Canned Food Drive and students donate non-perishable food items during our canned food drive. All cans are then donated to a local charity, Selma Cares, for distribution right before Christmas in our city. Community Service hours are in addition to the above listed community service projects organized by the Activities Director and the leadership class. The leadership students also put in over 40 hours (individually) of various types of community service as well as helping the elementary schools with their carnivals. The after school program visits the Bethel Home retirement village.

[Top](#)

JOHN MUIR MIDDLE SCHOOL
Corcoran Joint Unified School District
707 Letts Ave.
Corcoran, CA 93212
Mr. Ken Spencer, Principal
Mr. Keith Airheart, Vice-Principal

Character Counts and Anti-Bullying posters are in every room on campus. Teachers and support staff use the programs pillars, vocabulary and philosophy when ever possible. The staff infuses CE into the standards, topics, stories or problems being explored and solved.

We also instill these four beliefs within our students. This is done on a daily basis through morning announcements, notes home, in conversation, etc. These are used to encourage and engage the students in the curriculum at hand.

- 1) We are future high school graduates.
- 2) We are college bound.
- 3) We are life long learners.
- 4) We are kids of character.

We provide the students with many opportunities for moral action in improving their community, school and the way of life for others. On National Entrepreneur Day our students and staff head to down town Corcoran. They clean window fronts, pick up trash and anything else needing to be done. The next week they do the same thing on campus. During our local Cotton Parade and Christmas Parade both students and staff run booths, provide a float and help clean up afterwards. Kids in The Park Day, is fun for all and our students and staff are in every aspect of this event. The students and staff donate money and run the programs in order to raise donations for, March of Dimes, Pennies for Patients, Light the Night Walk and Breast Cancer Awareness Ribbons and Walk. Students write letters to soldiers and veterans throughout the year. An annual Can Food Drive provides food for needy families. Students donate their time at the local hospital.

We are currently working on a clothing drive. Students and parents will be given the first opportunity to select something from the drive if needed and then it will be donated to our Emergency Aid store or Salvation Army. On site the students volunteer as scorekeepers during sporting events. They help set up the field and indoors events, such as sports, tournaments, assemblies and dances. They tutor other students and help the teachers before, during and after school. John Muir students and staff are able to contribute in many ways, to many people.

We hold a Character Counts and Anti-Bullying Assembly every six weeks. Each of our teachers selects a student depending on the pillar for that time. We are always instilling the need of all six pillars in every day life. Our assemblies focus on one pillar every six weeks. The students selected are awarded with a certificate and a prize. They are acknowledged in front of peers, parents and staff.

The teachers at John Muir take turns selecting a student of the week. The “Wildcat Of the Week” otherwise known as our WOW student, is recognized in our daily bulletin. Their picture is displayed in our front office for the rest of that school year. The student is taken to lunch by our principal. The lunch takes place at a local Rotary meeting. The student is presented to the members of Rotary. Our WOW students’ pictures are placed in the Corcoran Journal with a description.

We at John Muir Middle School are dedicated to having a culture embedded with the traits of positive character. This school educates primarily students from low social-economic families.

There is a prison in our city limits. We have a large number of English language learners. Drug abuse and gangs are enticing our students on a daily basis. There are challenges here at John Muir Middle School.

We held an assembly to introduce and explain the Character Counts and Anti-Bullying Programs. Students were instructed on how to report bullies safely and effectively. Posters were placed in the rooms in order to remind the students and staff on a daily basis that we were not going to tolerate bullying any more. Future assemblies, announcements, etc. will and have been provided. Students that were being bullied and those doing the bullying were both going to get the help that they needed. Those being bullied would be protected and assisted in their needs. Those bullying would be disciplined, counseled and guided toward being a person of positive character. If needed, they would be placed on a probationary or restricted (Bullying) contract. We are making headway, bullies are being discovered and educated in changing their ways.

[Top](#)

ALICE G. MULCAHY MIDDLE SCHOOL
Tulare City School District
1001 W. Sonora
Tulare, CA 93274
Ms. Terri Martindale, Principal

Mulcahy Middle School is dedicated to strengthening young people through an educational program, the foundation of which is based on a blend of academics and *moral and ethical development*. The school community has embraced the core ethical values of **responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, caring, fairness, and citizenship** for our character education goals. These ethical values are infused on our campus through the **TEAM** strategy. Achieving intended character education goals takes place through the four-step process of **teaching, enforcing, advocating** and **modeling**. Mulcahy is currently in its 14th year of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Program with continued support provided by the Tulare County Office of Education, CHARACTER COUNTS! Office.

The **teaching** of character development begins prior to the first day of school where members of the school community including parents, students and the staff participate in an orientation assembly. School policies, student behaviors, and responsibilities are discussed. In addition, all students participate in Advisory held once a month. The major goals of our advisory program are to enhance student –teacher relationships, develop interpersonal skills, discuss school related issues, build group cohesiveness and school spirit, foster affective growth and development, and present positive adult role models. **Enforcing** core ethical values can be found throughout the campus in the form of a variety of visuals. Posters are displayed in every classroom depicting the Six Pillars of Character with descriptive phrases reinforcing behaviors. All rooms display signage that further supports strong ethical development through the “Big Three” (Proud, Tough, Determined) and The “Fantastic Four” (Dignity, Class, Poise, and Respect). **Advocating** for the character development of our students and informing the school community about the superior

work being accomplished takes place through positive school-community activities, which occur each trimester. Activities include: Academic Awards, and Athletic Award. Additional annual activities include College Awareness Week, College: Making It Happen Night, and Cool Night. We believe however, the most powerful method in which to foster the true meaning of the Pillars is to provide students with the opportunity to observe and **model** ethical behavior on a daily basis. Our teacher-based, advisor/advisee program, has allowed for students and staff to develop a stronger relationship with each other. Teachers have become mentors and, as such, powerful models of strong ethical behavior.

Teachers are encouraged to integrate the CHARACTER COUNTS! philosophy into their lessons and **teaching** to further encourage and promote the progression of ethical decision-making. In addition to classroom instruction, we take advantage of every opportunity to recognize and **enforce** the behaviors of students that are consistent with the pillars of character.

Students actively participate in a number of valuable community service projects designed to promote social development while fostering the principles of character development and strengthening community partnerships. Since 1994, Mulcahy has become a major contributor to Children's Hospital of Central California, having sold over 50,000 special edition "Kid's Day" newspapers.

Mulcahy students routinely *volunteer to participate in civic service activities* and make charitable contributions. Students and staff work together organizing and collecting food items to be donated to local aid agencies. Students also participate in "bell-ringing" for the Salvation Army during the Christmas season. Staff and students are proud of the fact that Mulcahy has been recognized as the top K-8 school participant in "bell-ringing" city-wide for the past seven years. Mulcahy's student council is also collecting and donating pop-tops for the Ronald McDonald house.

The hallmarks of hard work, honesty, and community service the Mulcahy family emphasized will be put into practice for the grand opening of the new Mulcahy Park. This is truly a signature project this year for Mulcahy. The project will be developed and facilitated *by our students* utilizing their community service goals towards extraordinary citizenship. The project is focused on celebrating the new park, as well as, educating the local neighborhood on the importance of taking care of the park and making it a safe place for families.

Character development continues to be the cornerstone of the educational philosophy of Mulcahy Middle School. Our staff teaches, enforces, advocates and models character education daily for our students. Whether it is a topic on our staff meeting agenda, classroom lesson or student recognition we seek to maintain an environment that fosters freedom of expression, a strong sense of belonging, and a sense of ownership in maintaining a safe school.

[Top](#)

SCANDINAVIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Fresno Unified School District
3216 N. Sierra Vista
Fresno, CA 93726
Ms. Julie Goorabian-Ellis, Principal
Ms. Sara Bauer, Character Education Coordinator

The mission of Scandinavian Middle School is to prepare ALL students socially, emotionally, and academically to be College and Career Ready Graduates. We are committed to the Fresno Unified District Goals: all students will excel in reading, writing, and math; all students will engage in arts, activities, and athletics; all students will demonstrate the character and competencies for workplace success; and all students will stay in school on target to graduate. As a 2009 and 2011 Virtues and Character Award recipient, Scandinavian Middle School is cognizant of ethical values and strives to promote the six character pillars.

As a school site, we recognize that it is critical in America's public schools to ensure that all students become equipped with the academic and social skills to become contributing members of our community and society. These concepts are a constant, embedded in our school culture.

In 2007 Scandinavian Middle School opened our doors to incoming 7th grade students with the ***WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) Program*** for the first time in FUSD. On the opening day of school each year 60-80 eighth grade student WEB Leaders facilitate a half-day retreat and take charge with all activities for 7th grade students that culminates with a Rally and BBQ. WEB makes the transition to middle school a very positive experience for our incoming 7th grade students. WEB Leaders are charged with planning and facilitating lunch time activities, school/community cultural events and traditions. WEB Leaders also follow up monthly with their group of 7th grade "mentee" students to build relationships, model core ethical values, and promote good decision making skills with their peers.

The Peer Mediation Program has emerged as a focal point in providing a secure and caring environment for students at Scandinavian Middle School. Students involved in a dispute agree to sit down with trained student peer mediators and work through the process of reconciliation, in a systematic, calm matter. During the 2010-2011 school year, there were forty-one successful mediations. Through the high level of mediation skills, students learn many core values, such as being considerate of others, using self control, being tolerant of differences, and forgiving others. With daily access to peer mediation, students are choosing to find resolution to their relationship difficulties through the help of their peers. They learn specific skills that can be used as they face future challenges, thus promoting opportunity for independent problem solving throughout the campus.

The goals of the Million Word Readers Club are to read one million words and to encourage students to read. All students are invited to join the Million Word Club and students may check out books before school, during lunch, after school and when they come in with their ELA class. Motivation to join comes from the school-wide recognition when names are read during morning announcements, emails are sent to notify staff, pictures are posted in the library on the Million

Word Club wall, and students who meet their quarterly reading goals are recognized with certificates and pizza.

The Scandinavian Middle School sports program follows the concept of TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More). The coaches are dedicated to facilitating the development of mind, body, and spirit for all student athletes who pass through the Warrior Sports Program. Students are encouraged to become involved from the moment they are escorted around campus as sixth graders. They quickly feel the enthusiasm and pride that is generated by the coaches, student athletes and the entire Scandinavian staff. Through their athletic experience, students gain valuable lessons, which build their character. They also come to understand that perseverance, self-discipline and accepting responsibility are essential for success.

Advancement Via Independent Determination (AVID) was designed for implementation at the middle school level to support students who have the potential to attend college. The AVID program reinforces the six pillars of character through direct instruction, group interaction, and extension activities. Scandinavian Middle School has been recognized in the top two middle schools across the entire Fresno Unified School District. The program has now earned the status of being a certified AVID Program.

Six years ago Scandinavian Middle School had approximately seven teachers and three administrators who had been trained at an AVID Summer Institute. Currently, eighteen teachers and three administrators have attended at least one AVID Summer Institute. Using this knowledge and experience as a base, AVID strategies are implemented in all content area classes

At the end of the 2011-12 school year, Scandinavian Middle School was selected (the only middle school in FUSD) to receive services from the program called "Just for Kidz". "Just 4 Kidz, Inc." is a community resource that provides support in a variety of mental and behavioral health venues. On our school campus, "Just 4 Kidz" counselors deliver curriculum and provide ongoing support to students who have been referred by school staff. Students may be referred for different reasons, but the primary focus of the J4K program is the support of students and families who are experiencing stressors related to substance abuse, domestic violence, single-parent homes, living in poverty and family separation due to incarceration.

Over the past five years since the WEB program was established, we have continued to expand and provide new opportunities for students. An event the students have become a part of is the Hinds Hospice Angel Babies Run. WEB students were able to reach out to those who have experienced the loss of their child.

We have expanded the WEB program by adding Afterschool Leadership Meetings. Students can access critical concepts and ideas that stretch themselves as people. Students have opportunities to make personal challenges each week and they are expected to rise to the challenge.

As a 2009 and 2011 Virtues and Character Award recipient, Scandinavian Middle School continues to develop and implement new programs with the pillars of character woven throughout. We strive every year to offer new and expanded opportunities for our students. Our students in WEB, Interact Club and Student Council continue sponsoring and organizing new

events such as Angel Babies Run for Hinds Hospice, Pennies for Leukemia, and Cancer Research Awareness. Life experience field trips that have positively affected students' character include Scout Island and Wonder Valley.

The mission of Scandinavian Middle School is to prepare ALL students socially, emotionally, and academically to be College and Career Ready Graduates. Scandinavian Middle School staff and students accept the challenge every day to make our campus safe, secure, and tranquil. We will continue on this mission because we have made the pledge to our students and to ourselves.

[Top](#)

SEQUOIA MIDDLE SCHOOL
Fresno Unified School District
4050 E. Hamilton
Fresno, CA 93702
Mr. Matt Ward, Principal
Ms. Nancy Witherow, Character Education Coordinator

Every day counts at Sequoia Middle School. Every administrator, teacher, office staff, custodian, cook, parent volunteer, and student contributes and advances the character of our campus. Sequoia has worked diligently over the years to develop an intensive, well-rounded character education program. Our Peer Mediation Program's foundation is student empowerment and connects Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Fairness, Respect, Caring and Citizenship. It is the goal of our Peer Mediation Program to provide our students with tools to solve their own conflicts. Our program involves twenty to thirty students trained as mediators who also serve as role models to all Lumberjacks on how to embody the Pillars of Character. Peer Mediators participate and star in videos shown throughout the school during advisory on Sequoia's Anti-Bullying program. Disputants gain practice in demonstrating Respect and Caring for themselves and others. The program has been very successful and Sequoia is proud to have completed the most mediations in Fresno Unified as well as being a demonstration and training school for others interested in starting or improving their Peer Mediation program. We are proud that this program has contributed so much to our school climate, safety, and connectedness among Sequoia students.

Sequoia's Young Men's Alliance Program strives to teach students the characters and virtues needed to be the most successful in middle school, high school, college and in their chosen careers. Currently, eighteen young men have accepted the challenge of the Young Men's Alliance. Academically, the class focuses on learning strategies such as note taking, graphic organizers, reading comprehension, writing skills, and test taking strategies. As students learn to use these strategies more effectively, they begin to take more Responsibility for their own learning. Behaviorally, YMA incorporates a peer counseling and mentoring component. These components address skill building in communication, problem solving and decision making.

[Top](#)

JOHN SUTTER MIDDLE SCHOOL
Fowler Unified School District
701 E. Walter Ave.
Fowler, CA 93625
Mr. Gary Geringer, Principal
Ms. Trisha Hirschorn, Character Education Coordinator

The staff of Fowler Unified, including the staff at Sutter Middle School, feel that the character development of our students is essential to their success, the success of our community and our society. It is important that we play an essential role in this development as we are often the strongest support system our students encounter.

Character Education goals are developed from various sources at Sutter. The goals are often guided by the district goals created by the district Character Education Committee. Character education goals are also created by the staff at Sutter as it is a top priority at our site. Discussions may be prompted by looking at discipline data or simply noticing changes in behaviors or expectations that we feel need greater focus. These goals are recommended by teachers or site leadership and discussed at staff meetings. One goal this year was to strengthen our “Student of the Month” program. Although we had this recognition of students in the past, a teacher proposed that we recognize more students and include all staff members in the process, not only teachers. Therefore, we now distribute a certificate to each staff member on campus, teachers, maintenance personnel, library technician, cafeteria staff, office staff, and site leadership. Each staff member chooses a student that they feel exemplifies the character trait for the month and writes specifically why they chose that student.

In the revision of this program we felt it was crucial for the students who were nominated to hear why they were nominated so that they could recognize and repeat this behavior. We realized that although we have always emphasized the character standards, students may not really grasp what those standards look like, sound like, etc. We have seen a great impact in not only the number of students being recognized for their character but also involvement of staff members in the process which encourages everyone on campus! We want each student to find the intrinsic motivation to serve others and their community. However, we recognize that often we must encourage and provide that opportunity in order for students to understand the importance and impact of serving others. These opportunities are provided in various ways through grade level and After School Program projects.

One example is our 6th Grade Math Class’s pajama project that challenged the school to collect pajamas for the Craycroft Center. The teacher then utilized the collection to teach and demonstrate percentages. The 8th Grade Language Arts Department when they read *The Treasure of Lemon Brown*, a story about a homeless man. After reading the story they collected items to donate to the Poverello House. In both cases select students were chosen to deliver the items so that they could experience the reality of their efforts.

We also have teachers working cross-curricular to develop service projects. Currently, the Leadership Class and Special Day Class are working together to collect pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. The Leadership Class also created a bookmark for breast cancer awareness which they provide for each student and staff member on campus each year during our breast cancer awareness week.

A clean, secure learning environment is evident when you enter Sutter's campus. This is achieved by the modeling of our staff, especially our principal! When your site leader is the first one to pick up any trash or clean up anything that he sees may need attention, it sends a clear message as to the expectation on our campus. Leading by example and modeling the behavior is a powerful tool. From maintenance and cafeteria staff, to classroom aides and teachers, to office staff and administration, everyone works to communicate and have meaningful conversations with our students. We want all students to make connections on campus and know that we are here to support them.

The staff on our campus promote and model the character traits and behaviors daily by treating each other and their students with respect, caring, and fairness. We have transitioned as a team into celebrating our successes and the successes of our students. The entire Sutter staff promotes these behaviors by their expectations in the classrooms, in the cafeteria, office and throughout campus. The values and expectations are also supported by communicating with parents regarding positive feedback as well as concerns. Creating a team with the parents of our students is very important at Sutter. Last year we developed a PTO to further strengthen the relationship with parents. The Sutter staff often spends time outside of school hours, on weekends and evenings, supporting our students in their activities and helping them organize and supervise service projects.

Sutter makes it a priority for our students to contribute to the community in meaningful ways by making it a promotion requirement for 8th grade students to complete 5 hours of community service. We also participate in the Presidential Service Awards program where students at all grade levels are recognized at an awards ceremony at the end of the year and 8th graders are additionally recognized at the promotion ceremony for their efforts to complete multiple hours of community service.

Overall, through our discussions about values and character education at Sutter, we recognized that we intentionally do a wide variety of activities that promote and encourage our character expectations. Some of these things are well planned events, but what impacts our students the most are the day to day happenings that we address in what we call "The Wildcat Way". Students are also reminded daily to "Stride with Wildcat Pride". These mottos and their meaning are embedded in Sutter students. It is the constant striving to infuse the importance of service to others which develops character in our students. This together with the district's guiding principles, the "Fowler Big 10" character pillars fuels our character education efforts.

[Top](#)

TEHIPITE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Fresno Unified School District
630 N. Augusta St.
Fresno, CA 93701
Ms. Yvonne Zysling, Principal

America's noble experiment...universal education for all citizens...is a cornerstone of our democracy. Idealized, criticized, and re-invented many times over, public education continues to play a critical role in how we see our nation and our future.

Despite the evolution of the public school system, parents of all socioeconomic levels and ethnicities continue to place a high value on education and hold onto the American dream, the goal and hope of providing for their children and offering them a life that exceeds the current reality of the parent. Integral to education in the twenty-first century is the teaching of “**good manners**”, or as we know it today, “**Character Education**”. The teaching of virtues and character and the work of enhancing moral thinking and the positive behavior of students must be a priority on the public school campus. Tehipite Middle School is dedicated to involving students in worthwhile school activities, allowing students to test themselves and their belief system. Tehipite Middle School teachers believe that an articulated, intentional, and proactive system of character education and the teaching of character expectations will ultimately lead to fewer discipline problems, less student to student conflict, and more productive interactions between students and between students and teachers.

Tehipite Middle School utilizes the vehicle of the Tehipite Civility Committee (TCC) to work proactively to assist students in making the transition from elementary school into grades 7 and 8. The TCC is made up of teachers, the Campus Culture Director, and administrative staff. The TCC and other members of the teaching staff have attended trainings by Dr. Randy Sprick, specific to *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom* and all teachers have been trained in the *Olweus Bullying Prevention* curriculum. The TCC meets monthly to plan events, examine and review school systems, and coordinate responsibilities. The goal of the TCC is to promote a positive cultural environment in all aspects of school life. The TCC and the school Leadership class support the character education goals that have been established for Tehipite Middle School.

The academic content areas and elective areas are the ideal setting for students to learn the intrinsic curriculum necessary to become positive members of Tehipite Middle School and ultimately the global society. Some examples of lessons that incorporate core values include:

- The Social Science Department organizes a school-wide Veteran's Day Assembly to honor our country's veterans;
- Mock elections and political debates in Social Studies classes familiarize students with the democratic process; student body elections & campaigns done via Social Studies class
- Science teachers emphasize integrity within the scientific process and the responsibility to perform accurate research; also teach the students to respect the research and findings of ALL scientists

- A.V.I.D. (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students plant a community garden each season to learn about the different foods that are a part of the diverse student population; the garden harvest benefits the Tehipite community;

- English teachers use literary selections and writing assignments to support moral decision making and character analysis; analysis of multiple text, novels, and short stories include character studies and the assessment of ethical choices that impact the theme.

- The Leadership class promotes the character traits with quotes and explanations for daily bulletin announcements; they organize Friday activities for students of all capabilities;

- Quarterly “Expectation Assemblies” are conducted each quarter to review and affirm the systems we have in place; this event is positive and supports the goal of a safe and secure campus.

Tehipite’s diverse and socioeconomically challenged student population requires teachers and staff to focus on building relationships with their students. As a staff, we have spent time sharing our “why”...why we became educators. Each persons ‘why’ is at the core of what drives them each day.

Tehipite teachers promote and model **fairness, caring, and respect** in the following ways:

- Build meaningful relationships and rapport with students and their families
- Lead a thirty minute ‘Class Meeting’ weekly using the ‘*Class Meetings that Matter*’ curriculum
- Acknowledge the needs of the students and their families and assist students and families outside of classroom time with social-emotional issues
- Give each student the time and attention required to learn
- Identify student weaknesses and re-teach for mastery of a concept; allow students to succeed academically in a variety of ways
- Treat all students with patience and understanding; utilize the CHAMP’s structure
- Listen to students with peer conflicts and serve as a mediator to defuse student conflicts; refer students to Peer Mediation or to the Restorative Justice/Peacemaking process, as needed
- Acknowledge and validate the cultures, religions, and languages of ALL students
- Celebrate student progress on a daily basis throughout the entire school year
- Create CCSS’s lessons that reflect the lives and experiences of the students and their families

Tehipite Middle School makes it a priority to engage students in service learning through a variety of volunteer, after-school and during-school related events. Opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Leadership students serve food at breakfast and lunch in the school cafeteria on a daily basis
- Campus beautification by the Functional Skills Class

- Steve’s Scholars meet the requirement of school/community service each semester
- Intramural activities offered Monday through Thursday during lunch
- Leadership students complete a minimum of 50 volunteer hours per year
- Students do event set-up and clean-up for campus and community events during the school day and after school
- Students plan, implement, and participate in Friday activities that are held weekly
- Students participate in monthly student council meetings, special events, monthly School Site Council meetings, and spirit rallies and dances that are held each quarter

The middle school years are challenging for every student. Peer pressure is always present! Middle school students are experiencing many changes, physically, socially, and emotionally. Students are out of their comfort zone when we involve them in class meetings and character building activities. Teachers must skillfully lead the class as students consider participating... “Is this the cool thing to do”? “Will others think I’m a nerd for participating”? It requires courage and risk-taking for our students to participate in the “real life” experiences that are essential to equip them with 21st Century Skills. It is the role of our teachers and staff to institutionalize character development practices that allow students to safely participate – we must continue to hold character development as a PRIORITY on our campus and in the development of our students.

The signature program that has been implemented this school year is the “Class Meeting”. The first day of every school week begins with a Class Meeting. The school is on a Class Meeting schedule which means we have shaved 5 minutes off of each class period of instruction and have reserved 30 minutes that are dedicated to relationship building and practicing and applying the social, emotional, and behavioral skills that 21st Century learners must be equipped with.

The teachers follow the *Olweus Bullying Prevention* curriculum and utilize the *Class Meetings that Matter* curriculum which includes lessons within the categories of Building a Positive Classroom Climate, Identifying Feelings, Communication, Hot Spots, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences and Promoting Acceptance, Serving the Community/Reaching Outward, and Using Current Events.

[Top](#)

WASHINGTON ACADEMIC MIDDLE SCHOOL
Sanger Unified School District
1705 10th St.
Sanger, CA 93657
Mr. Jamie Nino, Principal

At Washington Academic Middle School (WAMS), our motto this year is “WAMS....Where Learning Matters!”. We believe that every child should be linked to a caring adult on campus. Every teacher has about 25 students that they monitor throughout the year. Within Advisory, goal setting, reviewing and explicitly teaching our school rules, organization, career readiness,

and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program are taught to all of our students. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program calls for visuals that are displayed as “No Bullying Zones” for all the major hot spots. Class meetings are mandatory every Friday in every advisory to talk about new topics. Teachers will seat students in a circle and pose a common situation to our students. Our students then talk it through to come up with solutions on how to be a bystander and to intervene when bullying is occurring. Our 5 Community of Caring values are linked to these lessons and are explicitly taught.

[Top](#)

WAWONA MIDDLE SCHOOL
Fresno Unified School District
4524 N. Thorne
Fresno, CA 93704
Mr. Mike Darling, Principal
Ms. Kathleen Lundberg, Character Education Coordinator

In our American schools we must involve ourselves in the development of character because our students must be prepared to show responsibility, trust and integrity. In America there are more single-family homes than ever before. We need to partner with our school families to provide for the needs of our students. At Wawona we give our students the chances to prove their acceptance of those challenges through service learning, modeling of acceptable social behaviors and taking appropriate risks.

Bullying prevention, respect of other cultures, and character development are priorities. Our students need to see and hear from us, that responsible and caring behavior must become the norm. Each of us must do our part to protect our future and the future of the next generations. Respect for others, communication skills, and ethical behavior are important aspects of being a human being. The core values of character help student instruction in essential social behaviors such as manners, service learning, and tolerance.

The character education goals for Wawona were developed by the entire Wawona staff under the guidance of our Safe and Civil School Team and School Site Council. These groups include certificated and classified staff, parents, students and administrators. Our guidelines for success are called the “W6” and are referenced every morning during announcements and are posted for student review in every classroom.

The “W6”: 1. Be on time every day for every class. 2. Be courteous respectful and cooperative. 3. Adhere to the FUSD dress and grooming policy. 4. Be prepared with supplies and to fully participate in the learning environment. 5. Don’t be a bully and don’t tolerate bullying. 6. If you know about a problem, see an adult.

We traditionally (2003) start our school year, with a school wide program called Mission: Possible. All students are given the opportunity to learn and understand our school norms and

expectations. Special workshops are held for routine things like how to properly line up for the buses, and how to walk on the right side of the hallway. Knowing these expectations help our students to be respectful and courteous. Students are provided “passports” where they can reflection on their learning and take notes about the norms and expectations.

During Mission: Possible we encourage the advisory teachers to share about themselves and help the students to get to know each other. We provide mixers and related activities that teach respect and tolerance. We continue to reinforce the character education expectations throughout the year with quarterly reminder assemblies.

In Physical Education the California State Standard #5, in both 7th and 8th grade is a focus of our teaching and included in all assessments. Students must “show responsibility” (5.6) in a physical education setting as well as, “express encouragement”, (5.4) and “demonstrate an acceptance of differences.”(5.3) The Physical Education Department models and teaches these standards consistently.

Language Arts teachers use core literature and writing to encourage students to discover their inner character and character traits that authors want to portray in their stories. The teachers involve the students in discovering how to be better people and to be better members of our society through role-playing, scenarios and logic. Esperanza Rising, Maniac Magee, Raymond’s Run, and Nothing But the Truth are some of the examples of core literature that our teachers are using. They all have specific character education themes and are tied to the Character Counts! Pillars.

Social Studies Classes regularly provide forums for students to discuss matters of ethics, current events and social justice. We encourage our students to be open-minded, balanced and reflective. The social studies classes apply ethics and morality to each empire and/or culture they study. They discuss community and personal sacrifice and standing up for what is right even when it is not popular and you may get hurt.

Science classes focus on the world as a place we must respect and protect. The environment is important and how we take care of it and each other is a lens through which our Science Department looks. They ask the students to discover and think about what is above and beyond the California State science requirements. Recycling, community gardens, and our use of energy and resources is researched and shared, so we can all do our part.

Our Elective Program, consisting of Music, Art and Technology had many comments on their part in character development. In Music, discussions take place about teamwork, helping one another, and taking responsibility for your part, for the “good of the group.”

The Athletic Department promotes character education at every practice and game. The students and coaches sign a “Code of Conduct” and are taught that “Pursuing Victory with Honor” will be the Wawona Code. A Character Award medal is presented to someone on the opposing team at every home game. At the end of each sport’s season, each coach presents several students with awards for integrity and sportsmanship on the playing field.

We understand that Middle School Students have a great capacity to give, but do not yet have the skills to do so on their own. We provide opportunities for students to donate volunteer hours by helping at school and in the community. Students may volunteer in the library, the intramural equipment shack, the cafeteria, the school office or the After School Program. Those volunteers support needed services at school and learn valuable skills for growing up and having empathy for others. When we read their Reflections on Service, we realize that they are learning to think about others and it feels good. We hope to nurture life-long givers.

We have donated time, money, and goods to Community Food Bank of Fresno, Dakota House, Valley Children's Hospital Kid's Day Newspaper sale, American Heart Association and the Red Cross. We encourage our staff and students to join forces in Pennies for Patients (Leukemia Foundation) and the Special Olympics. We have made and donated over 100 blankets to the Fresno County Sheriff's Department to provide for victims as needed, and 120 Valentine's headbands for aging "grandparents" in a nearby rest home.

A program that Wawona Middle School should be known for is our Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. (MLK holiday). It has become an annual event and each year has been a little different. We provide transportation, t-shirts, and lunch to the students and parents who volunteer 4 hours of service. In 2013 we had the following activities: Blood Mobile (12 pints donated), Food Drive for the Dakota House Neighborhood Pantry, Blanket making for the Fresno County Sheriff's Department, school beautification (raking, weeding, planting and painting), and "Hands Only CPR" lesson provided by the American Red Cross.

What we would like others to know about Wawona Middle School is that we believe in ourselves. Our school district has deemed it necessary to move our International Baccalaureate Program to another campus this year and it has caused some changes. However our staff and teachers are resilient and working harder than ever to provide a successful environment for all of us. We have worked hard to be a model school in the Fresno Unified School District in the areas of values and character education. We are proud to say we are from Wawona Middle School.

[Top](#)

YOSEMITE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Fresno Unified School District
1292 North Ninth
Fresno, CA 93703
Mr. Ed Gomes, Principal
Ms. Kristi Jackson, Character Education Coordinator

What, as educators, can we offer that student that will forever affect their place in society? How about the opportunity to be an upstanding citizen, a friendly neighbor, a caring smile, and a role model for those around them? We have the opportunity, and responsibility, to instill and produce character in each and every one of our students that walks through the gates each morning. Students enter our classrooms with the weight of the world on their backs and we cannot have

the expectations that they have received the character development necessary to be and live a successful life. Therefore, our classrooms are the perfect place and setting for students to receive that training, even if they already receive it at home. What greater opportunity do we have than to not only educate our students in academic subject matter but also to embed character and responsibility in them through our everyday instruction.

Here at Yosemite our goal is to prepare our students for advancement to high school by offering a challenging curriculum. We strive to provide an educational program with high expectations for all to learn academic, social, and emotional skills needed to become life-long learners. We have developed a learning environment that inspires in our students and families the passion and the power to make positive life choices by becoming architects of their future. Our school is one of the only school wide CHAMPS schools in the District. We provide through this program, clear and continuous guidelines for behavior through out all school areas and functions. Our students develop a social contract together in their classrooms that make them accountable for the way they function and treat each other. Social responsibility is huge at our school, when character traits are taught and modeled daily you create a safe learning community.

At the beginning of the year we define what good character traits are. We take each character trait and every day we define it by providing example of what it sounds and looks like. We watch videos of what the particular character trait of the day looks and sounds like and then we discuss how we can make sure we are showing those traits in and out of class. We talk to students about how we all make mistakes and won't always show those character traits but that doesn't mean we give up. By the end of the conversation we reflect on what character we saw in class and how it was being modeled by both students and teachers. Reflection is a big component when teaching students about character traits because they need to learn how to reflect and how this can help them in improving their character. We reflect about character traits seen in class for the first couple months of school the last 2 minutes of class time.

Then as the year goes on we infuse character traits into our lessons. When we read fiction or nonfiction stories as a class we always analyze a characters actions, words, and thoughts and we talk about the character traits the character showed. We talk about what motivates a character. We then talk about, "what could the character have done differently?"

Our world history classes incorporate character building daily by showing the students how to be a well-rounded person using the stories of the past. Examples of historical figures exemplifying quality character such as social, political, and religious leaders show the students how to conduct themselves in a positive manor. In the Social science department we have the opportunity to not only practice civil behavior but we can show the students examples from history of correct civil behavior.

Yosemite takes pride in incorporating *Safe and Civil School* guidelines to establish structural procedures of the school. Some examples include: having one entrance and exit into the school, having a staff member greet all guests and students at the entrance every morning, having staff supervision at all blind spots during student breaks or leisure times, and having hallways marked for walking directions.

The adults at Yosemite Middle School, including teachers and classified staff, promote and model fairness, equity, caring, and respect by implementing excellent programs on our campus.

Capturing Kids Hearts is one of these programs that have educated our staff members to build positive, productive and trusting relationships among themselves and with students. Students feel cared for and safe at our school. This process has transformed our campus environment and has helped lead the way to high performance.

Another system in place at Yosemite which promotes equity and fairness on our campus is CHAMPS. CHAMPS is a proactive and positive program of classroom management system that is used in every classroom on our campus.

Our students have opportunities on a daily bases to show and participate in positive acts of character. During lunchtime, the students are accountable to keeping to the lunch Social Contract and keep each other on track. This allows for students to not only monitor their own behavior but keep each other accountable as well. Students in our leadership class have the opportunity to go and read to our feeder elementary schools throughout the year. The students learn what it means to be a positive role model and have that opportunity to practice and show it.

Our students have learned through service learning projects how to beautify our school by planting a rose garden, planting trees donated by local community nurseries, created ceramic mosaics in our schools hallways, and participated in hosting visitations from feeder elementary schools. We have had fund raising projects such as “candy grahams sales” with the intent of using the monies to give to needy families during the holiday season.

Our partnership with California State University Fresno allows us to take students to the college campus for Peer Mediator trainings. Yosemite students learn conflict resolution skills and then are put “on-duty” back on campus to help mediate conflict that may arise with their peer group. These students are recognized by their purple peer mediator shirt and are available to help others at lunch, before and after school. Students in conflict have the option of talking with the peer mediator team first before they end up in the office with further consequences due to peer problems. This is a great example of Fairness and Responsibility in action at Yosemite!

We believe that teaching these values such as character and integrity can prepare a child for a future that will bring about success not only for themselves but also for their families and their community. Traits can sometimes become words devoid of meaning, but when students transcend meaning and live the collaborative spirit reflected in the school’s purpose, the results leave everlasting impressions.

[Top](#)