11 PRINCIPLES SCORING GUIDE

When determining the score for each Principle, consider the following four guiding questions. These align with the rubric and help ensure consistent, thoughtful evaluation:

1. Breadth of Evidence: How many examples related to the Key Indicators are clearly identified in the application?

2. Intentionality and Alignment: Are the school's practices guided by data, the *11 Principles* Key Indicators, or other relevant, research-based frameworks?

3. Evidence of Impact: Is there qualitative and/or quantitative evidence showing positive outcomes from the implementation of this principle?

4. Depth of Engagement: Are all stakeholders — including students, parents, and staff — meaningfully engaged or impacted by the activities described?

Implementation Rating	Implementation Rating Description	Implementation Rating Guidelines
4	**Exemplary** (Practices are embedded, have depth, & can be used as a model for other schools.)	● Multiple examples suggesting implementation of *11 Principles* Key Indicators ● Practice is guided by data analysis, *11 Principles* Key Indicators, &/or relevant literature ● Evidence (qualitative & quantitative) reveals positive outcomes associated with principle implementation ● Super majority of stakeholders (admin, teachers, students, parents) are impacted by or engaged in implementation
3	**Good** (Practices are implemented with some depth & regularity.)	● Some examples of programs or processes addressing *11 Principles* Key Indicators are provided ● Practice is guided by some or limited data analysis, *11 Principles* Key Indicators, &/or relevant literature ● Some evidence (qualitative & quantitative) supporting positive outcomes is provided ● Majority of stakeholders are impacted by or engaged in implementation
2	**Developing** (Practices are implemented, but with very little depth.)	● Few examples of programs or processes addressing *11 Principles* Key Indicators are provided ● Unclear if practice is being guided by data analysis, *11 Principles* Key Indicators &/or relevant literature ● Evidence (quantitative & qualitative) is lacking, is limited, or is unclear with no association to positive outcomes ● A minority of stakeholders is impacted by or engaged in implementation
1	**Lacking Evidence** (Practices are not in place or just beginning with very little growth.)	● Inadequate examples of programs or process addressing *11 Principles* Key Indicators ● Practice is not being guided by data analysis, *11 Principles* Key Indicators, &/or relevant literature ● No evidence (qualitative & quantitative) to support positive outcomes ● Limited number of stakeholders are impacted by or engaged in implementation

2026 *11 Principles* Self-Assessment Tool

Score each key indicator from 1-4, then average each row. When all 11 have been scored, average the far right column.

Principle	Key Indicator 1 + Examples	Key Indicator 2 + Examples	Key Indicator 3 + Examples	Key Indicator 4 + Examples	Ave
1. Core values are selected, defined, embedded, & modeled throughout your school culture.	**1.1 School stakeholders intentionally consider, select, & affirm (or reaffirm) your school's core values.** -Open & transparent, all involved in selecting. -Ensure relevance of core values. -A balance of moral/performance/civic/ intellectual character. -Defined in behavioral terms ("looks like"), character strengths, not an outcome.	**1.2 The core values inspire, guide, & inform every aspect of school life.** -Students, staff, & parents use & share a common language. -All staff feel responsible to model, teach (clarify through instruction), & embed the core values throughout the day. -Embedded in school policies & procedures. -Shape hiring practices, new staff training, new student/family orientation.	**1.3 Reminders & statements of your school's core values are visible throughout the school community.** -In mission statement, handbooks, discipline, school goals, everywhere. -Staff, students, parents can identify/ explain touchstone, mantras, school creed/pledge, etc. -Core values are communicated in observable behaviors. -Artifacts show that core values are the heartbeat of the school.		
2. The school develops & implements an intentional, proactive, & comprehensive approach that embeds character everywhere.	**2.1 The school has an intentional process to critically reflect & discuss how everything in school influences the culture.** -School leaders can explain in narrative form the school's character development strengths & challenges. -School leaders can explain how they identify & assess the "hidden curriculum." (see guidebook for more information).	**2.2 The school creates a written comprehensive plan that includes specific character development goals & expectations.** The core values have been infused into all aspects of the school day. Teachers can explain how core values/ character strengths are embedded into academic & non-academic areas. Annual goals for the school's character initiative have been established.	**2.3 The school looks for new practices & approaches to grow character initiative.** -School leaders can explain in narrative form how their character development plan is a proactive process of continuous improvement & growth. -Staff meets regularly to reflect on different ways to model the core values. -Time for staff to discuss core value integration. -Staff discuss reaching all students, whether all activities are developmentally appropriate, etc.	**2.4 The school is intentional & proactive in addressing social, emotional, & character development.** -A research-based approach is used to teach SEL skills to all students. -PD for staff re: SEL. -School stakeholders can show how SEL skills are embedded.	
3. Every student understands, cares about, & practices the core values embedded in the school community.	**3.1 Staff provide multiple opportunities for students to understands & apply the school's core values.** -Staff can explain how they teach/provide opportunities for students to understand the core values & how they are applied daily. -Students can explain each core value, its importance & application to their lives. -Students can explain how all stakeholders model core values.	**3.2 The school identifies ways to encourage students to reflect upon, internalize, & make a positive & sustained commitment to live their core values.** -Students take ownership of own character growth; staff/students can explain. -Time is provided for student reflection on character growth. (goal-setting, journaling, etc.) -Students explain which core values/character strength they want to improve & why.	**3.3 The school provides opportunities for students to practice the core values so they become consistent habits of mind, heart, & choices.** -Students can explain how they practice the core values in the context of classroom work, relationships, sports, real-life situations, etc. -Staff & students can explain how they provide positive & constructive feedback to each other.		
4. The school creates a caring community where everyone feels they belong.	**4.1 The school fosters caring relationships between students & staff.** -Intentional strategies & practices are used to promote positive relationships. -Students feel understood, heard, & valued. -Every student has an adult to go to for any reason (does not have to be a teacher). -Discipline prioritizes restoring positive relationships.	**4.2 The school helps students form caring relationships with each other.** -Intentional strategies & practices used to foster student connection, develop empathy & sense of responsibility for others. -Artifacts show all students perceive the student body as friendly, inclusive, & supportive. -Practices & strategies are used to foster caring/respect (ex. class meetings, cross-age groups, peer mentoring etc.)	**4.3 School leaders foster caring relationships between all staff members & between staff and parents.** -Intentional strategies & practices are used to promote positive relationships. -Parents report feeling welcomed & respected. -Staff report positive climate & colleagues who support each other. -School leaders model caring relationships -Artifacts show all staff feel valued. -PD is offered about building relationships.		

	-Every student feels safe & connected to what the school stands for & believes.				
5. The school provides students with opportunities to shape & form their moral compass.	**5.1 Opportunities for all students to participate in Service Learning that's connected to the curriculum.** -Service Learning is used as an instructional/teaching strategy. -Projects connect service with curriculum & academic content standards. -Students assess community needs, take initiative, plan, reflect about project & character growth, share project with an audience.	**5.2 Opportunities for all students to participate in Community Service projects.** -The school has established expectations for community service both inside & outside of school. -Community Service projects are developmentally appropriate. -Students understand the meaning & purpose of the project.	**5.3 Each student is equipped with the skills to practice academic integrity.** -The school has implemented a comprehensive approach to academic integrity. -Developmentally appropriate strategies & practices used. -Students respond appropriately when faced with pressure to lie, steal, or cheat. -Students can explain how being honest & a person of integrity is important. -Students report honesty & integrity are promoted and modeled by staff.	**5.4 The school equips each student to stand up to peer mistreatment.** -The school has put in place intentional strategies, activities, & practices to promote respect, understanding, & peace among students. -Steps are taught to stop peer mistreatment. -Students report staff actively address peer mistreatment.	
6. The school offers a meaningful & challenging academic curriculum that encourages all students to develop their character strengths.	**6.1 The school develops a comprehensive plan to infuse character into the academic curriculum, across all subject areas.** -Artifacts show character is integrated into all aspects of teaching, learning, & content. -Teaching methods engage students (problem-solving, cooperative learning, project-based learning). -Teachers exchange ideas to infuse character, ethical dilemmas, etc. -Parents/students can give examples of character embedded in curriculum.	**6.2 Staff emphasizes & reinforces how all students can develop the strengths of performance character.** -Students understand/apply performance character strengths. -Teachers model & embed performance character strengths. -Students report staff emphasize & reinforce importance of performance character strengths. -Fosters social habits for working together.	**6.3 Staff emphasizes & reinforces how all students can develop the strengths of intellectual character.** -Students understand/apply intellectual character strengths by developing thinking habits (curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, etc.). -Teachers model & embed intellectual character. -Students report staff emphasize & reinforce importance of intellectual character strengths. -Promotes student autonomy; mastery goals.	**6.4 Appropriate content challenges that address all students' learning needs.** -Curriculum challenging/ engaging for all learners. -Teachers respect learners & differentiate instruction for needs. -Parents/students report appropriate challenge. -Help students reach potential.	
7. The school fosters character by encouraging students to "do the right thing" for intrinsic rather than extrinsic reasons.	**7.1 The staff exchange ideas to help students develop/internalize own moral compass.** -School leaders can explain in narrative form strategies & practices to help develop each students' moral compass. -Staff understand use of intrinsic motivators & why they use extrinsic ones. -Methods are inclusive of all and stress intrinsic motivation, help students to see behavior impact, & involve them explaining developing a moral compass.	**7.2 Student behaviors and mistakes serve as opportunities to teach and reinforce character development.** -PD in character-centered practices for discipline. -Discipline process and consequences are relevant, respectful, & resource-building. -Discipline tied to reflection on core values. -Practices protect student dignity. -Intentional focus on reflective & restorative practices.	**7.3 All students are empowered to have a voice in school's character initiative as well as character goals for personal growth.** -Behavioral norms, routines, & expectations are co-created, (teachers/students), age appropriate, & based on core values. -Time provided for students to discuss & find solutions to common problems. -Students have a voice in school improvement & character initiative.		

8. The school embraces shared leadership as a critical path to deepening its character initiative.	**8.1 Leadership demonstrates a sustained commitment to the school's character initiative.** -The principal is a visible & supportive character champion. -Models the core values. -Actions & decisions align with core values & school mission.	**8.2 A leadership team of teachers, staff, students, & parents is empowered to design, implement, & assess the school's character initiative.** -In narrative form, explain selection of character team and reflect school diversity. -Evidence of shared ownership with all. -Leadership explains how prospective leaders are nurtured.	**8.3 Students assume leadership roles that contribute to the school's character initiative.** -Students have opportunities to voice concerns/ideas & encouraged to serve as leaders in character initiative. -Students empowered to implement student-led practices & have leadership training. -All staff/admin. can explain how students are equipped to be leaders.		
9. All staff share the responsibility to implement and reinforce the school's character initiative.	**9.1 All staff members are encouraged to be involved in planning, designing, & implementing the school's character initiative.** -Staff report their active involvement. -PD for **all** staff to learn, discuss & exchange ideas. -Staff have opportunities to voice concern/ideas in character initiative.	**9.2 The staff commits to finding ways to intentionally reinforce & model the four domains of character.** -Students/parents say staff model core values. -Artifacts show how **all** staff are actively involved in the character initiative. -Staff demonstrate ways they hold each other accountable to living as a person of character.	**9.3 Staff members intentionally reflect on their own character strengths & growth.** -PD offered to collaborate & learn best practices for character initiative appropriate for each staff role. -Staff can explain how they reflect on their character strengths & grow as a character educator, & artifacts support this.		
10. Families & the community are integral partners in the school's character initiative.	**10.1 Families are involved in the character initiative.** -Parents assume active leadership roles in creating practices to support the character initiative. -Parent rep(s) on character committee. -Parents are aware & supportive of the character initiative & work to model character/core values. -Parents actively volunteer.	**10.2 The school communicates with parents & caregivers about the character initiative & regularly seeks their input & feedback.** -The school can demonstrate how they communicate with parents. -Part of new family orientation -Parent workshops offered -Parents have opportunities to voice concerns/ideas about the character initiative.	**10.3 The school strives to develop a "community of character" by involving different community stakeholders.** -Evidence that wider community is actively involved in character initiative. -Community members aware, supportive, updated about the character initiative. -There are community partnerships with school. -Community members volunteer in the school.		
11. The school annually assesses the progress of its character initiative & makes changes based on data.	**11.1 Core values are reviewed on an annual basis so each core value can be reaffirmed or revised as needed.** -All stakeholders review each core value for relevancy & vitality. -Values are understood, modeled, & woven into school culture. -Core values are embedded in all aspects of school life.	**11.2 The school uses a variety of methods to measure & assess its character initiative.** -Examples of different assessment tools. -Data gathered on character-related behaviors & how data impacts character goals. -Time for staff to discuss & review initiative and how data gathered informs change. -School leaders can explain data & need for change/new practices in narrative form.	**11.3 The school has an action plan for each academic year that includes specific year-long goals & objectives.** -Artifacts show there is an annual review of the character initiative & data is used to develop new practices, strengthen current efforts, & determine goals. -Data/goals are communicated to stakeholders. -Explain process to assess new practices.	**11.4 Assesses aligning actions & choices with core values & other character strengths.** -Variety of approaches (interviews, reflections, etc.) -Staff and students set character goals & self-assess progress. -Surveys & data collection on student behavior demonstrates growth.	
				AVERAGE:	

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Instructions for Scoring and Averaging:

1. Score each Key Indicator using whole numbers on the 1–4 scale provided.

2. After completing all scores within a Principle, calculate the average for that row. This gives you the average score for each Principle.

3. Once you've completed and averaged all *11 Principles*, look at the far-right column where your row averages are listed.

4. Calculate the average of that column to determine your overall average score for the application.

Scoring Guidelines for Schools of Character Designation:
This scoring rubric is used by official Schools of Character evaluators.

• To be recognized as a State School of Character, a school must earn an overall average score of 3.3 or higher.

• To be recognized as a National School of Character, the school must earn an overall average of 3.3 or higher and have no individual scores of 1 or 2 on any Key Indicator.

Optional Staff-Wide Assessment Tool:
Character.org offers an electronic version of this self-assessment designed for whole-staff participation. Staff members can complete it anonymously, and once all responses are submitted, a comprehensive report is generated showing the collective results.

The cost is $50 per assessment.

To request access or learn more, contact Nicole Diehl, Executive Director of Schools of Character, nicole@character.org.