1.1 Stakeholders in the school community select or assent to a set of core values.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ A highly inclusive, representative group of stakeholders (professional and other staff, parents, students, and community members) has had input into, or at least assented to, the school's core ethical and performance values. If the district selected the values or if the values have been in place for a long time, current stakeholders have been involved in ongoing reflection on the values in order to ensure their continuing relevance to the present school community.

☐ Staff members understand how and why the school selected its core values and affirm the importance of core values in guiding the behavior of all those in the school community.

1.2 Core ethical and performance values actively guide every aspect of life in the school.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Students, staff, and parents use common language reflecting the school's core values (e.g., students, teachers, or parents might use the word "perseverance" when discussing homework or the word "respect" when discussing relationships).

☐ There is staff ownership for teaching, modeling, and integrating the core values into all aspects of school life (e.g., discussions in grade-level, subject-area, and full staff meetings).

☐ Core values guide hiring practices and the orientation of new teaching and non-teaching staff.

1.3 The school community articulates its character-related goals and expectations through visible statements of its core ethical and performance values.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Core values appear in the school building, in the school mission statement, on the school website, in the student handbook, in the discipline code, in newsletters sent home, and at school events.

☐ The school has defined what the core values "look like" and "sound like" in terms of observable behaviors.

☐ Staff, students, and parents can identify the core values and recognize their importance as a distinctive feature of the school.

(For districts):

☐ The district incorporates core values in its community and public relations efforts.

☐ The district establishes core values as part of its vision, mission, goals, objectives, regulations, and policies, and seeks to promote a community of adults and students based on a commitment to excellence and ethics.
2.1 The school helps students acquire a developmentally appropriate understanding of what the core values mean in everyday behavior and grasp the reasons why some behaviors (e.g., doing your best and respecting others) represent good character and their opposites do not.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Staff consistently explain to students how the core values can help them make choices that demonstrate good character.

☐ Staff can explain how they help students understand the core values (e.g., teachers can point to lessons they have taught).

☐ Students can explain why the core ethical and performance values are important, how various behaviors exemplify those values, and why some behaviors (e.g., treating others as you wish to be treated, giving your best effort) are right and others are wrong.

2.2 The school helps students reflect upon the core values, appreciate them, desire to demonstrate them, and become committed to them.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Staff help students to develop an appreciation for and a commitment to the core values (e.g., by developing empathy and a sense of responsibility for others, by supporting and challenging students to do their best work, and through character exemplars in literature, history, sports, the media, and everyday life).

☐ Staff provide opportunities for students to reflect on the core values through discussions of real-life problems and situations relevant to ethical and performance character.

☐ Staff meet students’ needs for safety, belonging, competence, and autonomy, since these form a foundation for developing a commitment to the core values.

2.3 The school helps students practice the core values so that they become habitual patterns of behavior.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Staff encourage students to examine their own behavior in light of the core values and challenge them to make their behavior consistent with the core values (e.g., through journal writing, discussion of events in the classroom, one-on-one adult-student conversations about past or present behavior).

☐ Students receive practice in and feedback on academic and behavioral skills (e.g., setting goals, monitoring their progress, listening attentively, using “I” messages, apologizing) through the ordinary conduct of the classroom (e.g., the normal flow of teaching and learning, procedures, role plays, class meetings, cooperative learning groups).

☐ Students have the opportunity to practice the core values in the context of relationships (e.g., through cross-age tutoring, mediating conflicts, and helping others) and in the context of classroom work (e.g., students demonstrate that they care about the quality of their work and incorporate feedback in order to improve their performance).
3.1 The school is intentional and proactive in addressing character at all grade levels.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Individual teachers, grade-level teams, and the staff as a whole participate in planning for character education.
- The school has created and can document a plan for character education, or the school follows the district’s plan.
- (For districts): The district defines character education clearly and comprehensively, emphasizing that it is a process that demands integration into all aspects of school life.

3.2 Character education is integrated into academic content and instruction.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Teachers teach core ethical and performance values through their academic subjects. The school is able to point to examples of lessons from teachers in diverse subject areas that explicitly include the integration of character into academic content and the consideration of academic integrity issues (e.g., use of sources, moral implications of academic dishonesty).
- Teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their moral reasoning through discussions of ethical issues in their content areas (e.g., how lessons of history guide moral choices, how scientific discoveries have ethical implications).
- (For districts): The district includes character education in its academic curriculum frameworks and seeks to apply the vocabulary of character to develop higher level student thinking (e.g., evaluation of lessons in history, literature, or school life where character traits provide a guide to behavior).

3.3 Character education is a priority in how teachers conduct their classes.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Classroom routines and procedures address students’ need for belonging, autonomy, and competence.
- Classroom routines and procedures are respectful of students and engage them in ways that develop core values such as responsibility, fairness, caring, diligence, and perseverance. Teachers explain to students how the core values underlie classroom routines and procedures.
- Teachers and students can point to and explain the policies and procedures that support academic integrity (e.g., lessons on proper citation of sources and plagiarism, testing strategies to resist cheating, honor pledges or honor codes, and honor committees or courts).

3.4 Character education is infused throughout the school day in classes, sports, meetings, and co-curricular activities.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school communicates clear and consistent expectations of good character throughout the total school program (e.g., sports, clubs) and in all areas of the school (e.g., cafeteria, halls, playground, sports fields, library, buses).
- Both students and staff are able to point to artifacts reflecting the core values that guide class, team, or club goals and procedures (e.g., sportsmanship codes, publication codes of ethics, club bylaws).
4.1 The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments between students and staff.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:
- Students perceive staff as caring and report that they could go to an adult in the school with a problem.
- Staff frequently attend school events; students and parents report that they do.
- The school encourages and makes provisions and time for students and teachers to meet in small group settings such as class meetings or advisor-advisee periods.
- Staff provide extra help in academic work and counsel or mentor students when needed.

4.2 The school makes it a high priority to help students form caring attachments to each other.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:
- Students perceive the student body as friendly and inclusive.
- The school uses educational strategies (e.g., cooperative learning, cross-age mentoring, class meetings) to encourage mutual respect and a feeling of responsibility for one another.

4.3 The school takes steps to prevent peer cruelty and violence and deals with it effectively when it occurs.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:
- Students report that bullying (including cyber-bullying), teasing, and acts of cruelty or intolerance are infrequent and are not tolerated by staff.
- All students participate in activities, programs, and processes that promote tolerance, understanding, respect, and peace among students (e.g., conflict resolution, anti-bullying programs, peer mediation, class meetings).

4.4 The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments among adults within the school community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:
- Parents, community members, and guests report feeling welcome in the school.
- Staff perceive the work environment as positive and their colleagues as supportive and caring. Artifacts demonstrate ways their relationships are nurtured (e.g., invitations for social gatherings or agendas from helping those in need, working collaboratively, celebrating successes and accomplishments).
- Staff make efforts to form positive relationships with students’ parents and guardians. Parents and teachers both report feeling respected by one another.
- Staff report that the administration fosters a collegial atmosphere.
- (For districts): Staff at the district level make efforts to develop caring and respectful relationships among themselves, with staff at the school level, and in the broader community.
5.1 The school sets clear expectations for students to engage in actions that develop and demonstrate good character.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school can point to artifacts that demonstrate how the school’s expectations for peaceful conflict resolution, academic integrity, good sportsmanship, and service to others are taught; students can describe how these things have been taught by their teachers and what they have learned.
- The school establishes and communicates clear expectations regarding service learning. The school can point to schoolwide expectations of personal and social responsibility. Relevant stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) know the school’s expectations regarding action that develops and demonstrates good character. Students and staff readily acknowledge their responsibility for these expectations.
- (For districts): The district encourages and sets clear guidelines and expectations for service to others, academic integrity, and good sportsmanship and makes explicit that service learning includes student voice and choice, integration into the curriculum, and a reflection component.

5.2 The school provides all students with varied opportunities for engaging in positive, responsible action within the school, and students engage in these opportunities and reflect on them.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school effectively provides all students with opportunities for service within the school (e.g., peer or cross-age tutoring, classroom or student body governance, and service projects related to the care of the school or school grounds), and students take advantage of these opportunities and benefit from them.
- Teachers connect service within the school with the curriculum and core ethical and performance values (service learning).
- Teachers provide instruction and students engage in projects to practice and/or advance conflict resolution, ethical decision-making, and academic integrity.

5.3 The school provides all students with repeated and varied opportunities for making contributions to the larger community, and students engage in these opportunities and reflect on them.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school effectively provides all students with opportunities for participation in service learning (e.g., working with the elderly; helping the homeless, those in need, or animals; or caring for the environment) and students take advantage of these opportunities and benefit from them.
- Teachers connect community service with the curriculum and core values, creating service learning experiences.
- The school sets aside time for students to assess community needs, create ideas for meeting those needs, plan and coordinate service learning projects, and reflect on the positive consequences of community service.
6.1 The academic curriculum provides meaningful and appropriate challenges to all students.

Key indicators of exemplary practice:

- Teachers provide all students with opportunities to interact with academic content in engaging, hands-on, appropriate ways (e.g., cooperative learning, problem solving, and experience-based projects). Students report feeling challenged by and excited about what they are learning in school. Parents report that their children are appropriately challenged and that teachers have high expectations.
- The school community encourages students to seek mastery of content and skills.
- Instruction increases students’ sense of competence and emphasizes student autonomy (e.g., by providing them with opportunities to think creatively and test their ideas, by giving them a voice in classroom decisions and plans that affect them).

6.2 The school staff identifies, understands, and accommodates the diverse interests, cultures, and learning needs of all students.

Key indicators of exemplary practice:

- Staff members engage in ongoing identification of students’ learning needs. Differentiated instruction appears organic—a natural part of the school day for all students (e.g., students move easily into reading or math groups that provide activities that have been differentiated by content, process, or product yet are designed to meet the same objectives).
- Staff members challenge and help all students do high-quality work and strive for continuous improvement.
- Parents and students report that teachers know their students well and understand and respond to their learning needs and cultural differences.
- Schools recognize existing achievement gaps between diverse student subgroups and take active steps to eliminate such gaps.

6.3 Teachers promote the development of performance character traits that support students’ intellectual growth, academic performance, and capacity for both self-direction and teamwork.

Key indicators of exemplary practice:

- Teachers promote thinking habits (e.g., curiosity, truth-seeking, critical thinking, and open-mindedness) that lead to intellectual growth in students. Students set goals and are aware of their growth as learners.
- Teachers promote work-related habits (e.g., perseverance, responsible decision-making, self-management, and challenge-seeking) that help students do their best work.
- Teachers promote social habits (e.g., honesty, responsibility, collaboration) that help students work together harmoniously (e.g., through cooperative learning).
- Teachers promote, and students report, the importance of academic integrity in the completion of work.
7.1 Staff and students recognize and celebrate the natural, beneficial consequences of acts of character rather than rewarding students with material recognition or rewards.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students are able to articulate on a personal level what it means to be self-motivated and why it is important (e.g., students can cite personal goals, achievements, and challenges).
- Staff can explain how they have specifically addressed the question of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. They reflect on whether their practices develop self-motivation and seek agreement on a shared philosophy and associated practices (e.g., how all members of the school community will articulate and act upon the concepts of praise, rewards, and punishment).
- Recognition is inclusive of members of the school community (e.g., recognizing the character strengths and unique qualities of each student in a classroom rather than having students earn the title “student of the month”). The school may recognize students or classrooms for outstanding behavior or service but refrains from excessive singling out of students or competition among classrooms.
- Staff use methods of classroom management that foster intrinsic motivation (doing the right thing because it’s the right thing to do) and avoid adopting programs that are rewards-based. Schools and districts that integrate PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support) with character education limit their use of behavior modification techniques and help students develop the desire to do what is right even when there is no external reward.
- Teachers use methods of academic instruction—including the opportunity for revision based on feedback—that enable students to produce quality products, work of which they are proud and which is worthy of pride.

- Staff and students recognize and express positive comments to each other in natural settings (e.g., hallways, classrooms, playing fields, meetings) as part of the everyday life of the school.
- (For districts): Districts use their public relations programs to focus attention on outstanding acts of good character.

7.2 The school’s approach to student conduct uses all aspects of behavior management—including rule-setting and rule-enforcement—as opportunities to foster students’ character development, especially their understanding of and commitment to core values.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school provides staff training in developmentally appropriate forms of classroom management, which includes a focus on developing clear character-based expectations for behavior throughout the school and is supported by the publication, instruction, and practice of procedures to support school expectations.
- The school’s discipline code uses explanation, discussion, and natural and logical consequences in ways that help students learn from their mistakes, repair relationships, and implement a plan for behavior improvement.
- Students have a developmentally appropriate role in classroom management and school governance (e.g., participating in the creation of behavioral norms and rules, class meetings, conflict resolution programs, and student governance bodies such as student court).
- Teachers discuss academic integrity with students in terms of fairness and personal honor, establishing clear guidelines about what constitutes doing one’s own work and acceptable collaboration compared to what constitutes plagiarism and cheating.
8.1 Staff model the core values in their interactions with students and each other, and students and parents perceive that they do.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Staff are courteous to students and each other and demonstrate respectful and supportive behavior toward students.
- When asked how they can best help students understand and act on the core values, staff members will specifically cite their role as a model for student work and behavior.
- Students and parents report that staff are courteous and model the core values.

8.2 The school includes all staff in planning, receiving staff development for, and carrying out the schoolwide character education initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- All professional and support staff receive training and information on their role in the character education initiative and understand the part they play in its success. Administrators, teachers, and counselors receive ongoing staff development. There are artifacts or summaries of these professional development activities and faculty note how these activities affected teaching or classroom practices.
- The school has created a sustained “ethical learning community” through professional development and opportunities for sharing and input. Staff value the sharing of ideas and being a learning and moral community.
- All staff have opportunities to be involved in character education planning and implementation. Teachers, administrators, and counselors are substantially involved.
- (For districts): The district trains teachers, principals, and other school personnel in character education and social-emotional learning on a recurring basis; trains new teachers; and provides funding for staff planning, training, and attending conferences on character education.

8.3 The school makes time available for staff planning and reflection in regard to character education.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Aspects of the character education initiative appear regularly on the agendas of faculty meetings and in-service days.
- The administration provides staff release time for development of promising ideas, planning of events, and reflection.
- Teachers use core values to reflect on their own behaviors and procedures.
- (For districts): The district encourages sharing information by providing venues for collaboration among schools; establishing a centralized source of materials, curricula, and other tools; and sponsoring regular conferences or meetings on character education.
9.1 The school’s character education initiative has leaders, including the school principal, who champion character education efforts, share leadership, and provide long-range support.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Stakeholders (i.e., faculty, parents, students, community members) report that the principal is a visible and supportive champion of the effort, who values and trusts their input, but that if the principal left the school, character education efforts would continue at full strength as a result of shared leadership and school culture.

☐ Actions and statements of the principal and other key leaders (e.g., articulation of goals and principles; modeling and personal example; and decisions regarding policies, personnel, staff development, and allocation of time and other resources) are clearly supportive of character education and the long-range survival and growth of the initiative.

(For districts):

☐ Character education is a shared priority of the district board and district superintendent.

☐ The district hires school principals and central office personnel committed to character education and encourages them to incorporate character education into their work and evaluation of staff.

☐ The district requires central office personnel (e.g., superintendents, athletic directors, directors of guidance and other student and administrative services) to incorporate character education into their work.

9.2 A leadership group or structure (several linked groups) inclusive of staff, students, and parents guides the ongoing planning and implementation of the character education initiative and encourages the involvement of the whole school in character-related activities.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ An inclusive leadership group or structure (e.g., character education committee or task force, standing school committee(s), committee of the whole) guides character education strategic planning and implementation. Artifacts such as minutes, strategic plans, and/or project portfolios describe this group’s activities. Stakeholders can identify the groups or structures that guide character education planning and ways they can have input into decisions that affect them. They report shared ownership of the decision-making process.

☐ The school’s regular governing mechanisms assume responsibility for management of character-related policies and plans.

☐ (For districts): An on-going district-community character education committee guides the planning and implementation of districtwide character education efforts. The committee includes representatives of local government agencies, business partners, religious organizations, youth organizations, parents, students, and staff representatives from the schools.

9.3 Students are explicitly involved in creating and maintaining a sense of community and in other leadership roles that contribute to the character education effort.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Students create and maintain standards of behavior (e.g., classroom rules, honor code) and have responsible roles within the classroom and school community (e.g., character ambassadors, safety patrols, student government, honor councils, peer mediators, school newspaper editors) and opportunities for leadership at various levels (e.g., learning groups, classrooms, the school, extracurricular activities).

☐ Students value the leadership roles available to them and identify themselves as members of wider communities (e.g., state, nation, world) in which they can play positive and contributory roles.

☐ Multiple artifacts recognize the recruitment, training, and activities involved in student-led projects.
10.1 The school engages families in the character education initiative.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Parents serve in character education leadership roles and are actively involved in carrying the character initiative to the parent-teacher organization and parent community.
- Families report being aware and supportive of the initiative.
- The school offers workshops and resources on character education and general parenting skills.
- Parents are recruited, trained, and frequently volunteer and are active contributors to and participants in school and classroom events that go beyond fundraising.
- The school office is welcoming to parents, and staff prioritize inclusive outreach to parents.

10.2 The administration and faculty regularly communicate with parents and guardians, providing suggestions and activities that help them reinforce the core values, and they survey parents, both formally and informally, on the effectiveness of the school's character education efforts.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- The school communicates with families about its character education efforts using a variety of techniques (e.g., report cards, notes, e-mails, phone calls, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, group meetings, workshops, websites).
- The school can provide evidence of strong two-way communication regarding the character education initiative. Parents do not just receive information from the school, they also provide input, guidance, and evaluation data to the school regarding the effectiveness of the initiative and how it might be improved.
- Strategies are in place to welcome new families to school and orient them to the school's character education mission.

10.3 The school recruits the help of the wider community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Community members (e.g., representatives of local government agencies, business partners, religious organizations, youth organizations, other schools) serve in character education leadership roles and are actively involved in carrying the character initiative into the larger community.
- Members of the larger community report being aware and supportive of the initiative, and elements of the initiative may be integrated into community activities (e.g., youth sports programs, after-school activities, youth-serving organizations such as 4-H or scouts, businesses or other organizations that promote core values or help with service projects).
- Community members volunteer in the school and are active contributors to and participants in school and classroom events (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, support of learning experiences).
- (For districts): The district engages a broad spectrum of the community in its character education initiative with particular focus on involvement of appropriate local government agencies, youth-serving organizations, and the business community.
11.1 The school sets goals and regularly assesses (both quantitatively and qualitatively) its culture, climate, and functioning as an ethical learning community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ The school can provide artifacts demonstrating character education assessment results and conclusions drawn from these results (e.g., data on school climate and academic integrity gathered from students, staff, and parents).

☐ The school uses qualitative and quantitative data in an ongoing manner to make changes and improvements to the character education initiative (e.g., data on academic achievement shows positive results since the implementation and growth of the character education initiative).

☐ (For districts): The district arranges for and finances assessment of the district’s character education initiative.

11.2 Staff members reflect upon and report on their efforts to implement character education, as well as on their growth as character educators.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ Teachers periodically gather feedback from their students on their perceptions of character-related activities and the extent to which teachers are modeling the core values.

☐ The school requires all staff to report on their efforts to meet character education goals (e.g., through staff surveys).

☐ Staff examine and reflect on data through structured and informal opportunities (e.g., focus groups, faculty discussions, and committee meetings).

☐ The school staff reports to stakeholders on efforts to implement character education.

☐ (For districts): The district builds implementation of character education into the assessment of school principals and in turn asks principals to evaluate integration of character education into their assessments of school staff.

11.3 The school assesses student progress in developing an understanding of and a commitment to good character and the degree to which students act upon the core values.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

☐ The school uses a variety of approaches (e.g., report cards, student-led parent/teacher conferences, goal-setting rubrics) to assess student progress in the area of character development.

☐ In questionnaires and reflections on character-related behaviors and core values, students rate the importance of core values in their lives as high (e.g., on a survey question such as “Students in the school (classroom) respect and care about each other,” more than 80 percent of students would agree or highly agree).

☐ Data collected on student behavior (e.g., attendance, suspensions, vandalism, service hours, drug incidents, and cheating) demonstrate growth in the understanding of and commitment to good character.

☐ Program development and modifications can be attributed to evaluation.