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Press Release

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Illinois Schools of Character: Assets to Communities

Champaign, IL – At the Illinois Leadership Conference this past week, **Franklin Elementary School**, Belleville; **Lewis & Clark Elementary**, Wood River; and **Parkside Primary School**, Bethalto were recognized as **2009 Illinois State Schools of Character**. These awards recognize schools or districts that demonstrate outstanding character education initiatives that yield positive results in student behavior, school climate and academic performance. According to Judy Taylor, chair of the Illinois State Schools of Character program, “The 2009 Illinois State Schools of Character are assets to their communities.”

Parkside Primary has also been named a 2009 national finalist, and Franklin Elementary and Lewis and Clark Elementary are 2009 national honorable mention schools in the national Schools of Character competition. The schools will be recognized for these honors at the Character Education Partnership national conference in Washington, D.C. this fall.

Parkside Primary Center’s vision for staff and students is “Working Together...To Be the Best We Can Be!” This vision is not only displayed proudly but, according to the school, also “serves as a catalyst to guide the school’s improvement academically, socially, emotionally, and morally.” A few activities unique to Parkside’s character development program include: Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) pep rally to encourage students preparing for that important exam, a volunteer orientation and handbook for community members involved with the school, adopt a soldier and a student-created CD of frequently sung character songs. Parkside has also been named an Illinois Honor Roll School.

“Building our Community with Character” is the motto at Franklin Elementary School. Faculty welcome new and returning students with home visits as they begin each school year. Though the school

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population includes 85 percent free and reduced lunches, Franklin students' ISAT scores were above other schools meeting the same demographic criteria. After many years of character education efforts, their application stated they have learned that, "Promoting core values within our building and throughout the neighboring community cannot be taught simply through a canned program or merely through extrinsic rewards; rather it is embedded in our everyday lives at Franklin School."

Lewis and Clark Elementary started its path to becoming a school of character by joining CHARACTERplus and by making the decision to adopt the Ten Essentials in their character process. After receiving their first formal set of data, they determined to focus on helping students increase a sense of belonging as members of the school community. Lewis and Clark believe that relationships should be the core of the educational process. They received a Partner in Character Education federal grant that began in 2006, which has allowed the school to be more intentional in integrating character education into the culture and in making their students feel like they are part of a family while at school.

Also recognized in Illinois as Aspiring Schools of Character are: Illinois Valley Central School District, Chillicothe; Joslin Campus/Perspectives Charter School, Chicago; and Namaste Charter School, Chicago.

Illinois State Schools of Character is a partnership between Character Education Partnership, Washington, D.C. (www.character.org) and University of Illinois Extension, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. For more information about the Illinois State Schools of Character, visit the University of Illinois Extension Character Development website at <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/character>.

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