



Rockaway Township School District

We Are Better Together

Rockaway Township School District Named State District of Character

Copeland Middle School, Birchwood Elementary School, and Katharine D. Malone Elementary School, All Named State Schools of Character!

Rockaway Township (January 28, 2021) — Character.org, a national advocate and leader for character development in schools and communities, recently certified Rockaway Township School District as a State District of Character and Copeland Middle School, Birchwood Elementary School, & Katharine D. Malone Elementary School as State Schools of Character. This prestigious certification was awarded to only 76 schools and only 1 district across the United States.

Each year, Character.org certifies schools and districts at the state level that demonstrate a dedicated focus on character development which has a positive effect on academic achievement, student behavior, and school climate. Schools and districts announced today will be considered for Character.org's highest distinction - National School of Character. "We are pleased to announce today the 2021 State Schools and Districts of Character," said Dr. Arthur Schwartz, Character.org's President. "We congratulate these schools on achieving State School of Character designation in a year filled with so many challenges. The educators and parents at these schools work together to ensure that every child understands, cares about, and consistently practice the core values that form the heart of each family and school.

We are honored to recognize their efforts and share their inspiring work with schools and school districts throughout the United States and internationally." The principal of Copeland Middle School, Alfonso Gonnella, commented, "Winning the State School of Character distinction is a tremendous honor for Copeland Middle School and Rockaway Township. This honor represents the relationships our staff has built with their students, families, and each other. Our monuments have and will always be the impact we leave on the people we come in contact with. I am so proud of our school community, for doing things for the right reason and building monuments that will endure for years to come." With these recent honors, all six of Rockaway Township's schools have now earned the distinction of being named as State Schools of Character. Stony Brook Elementary School, Catherine A Dwyer Elementary School, and Dennis B. O'Brien Elementary School were all named State Schools of Character as well as National Schools of Character in recent years which is the highest accreditation bestowed by Character.org.

Superintendent of Schools, Peter Turnamian, noted, "We could not be more proud of our schools for earning these honors. It is a true credit to the dedication and values of our educators who work together

each day to ensure our school communities nurture and support the development of all our students in service to the Rockaway Township community. Living through this pandemic has only served to heighten the importance of schools providing social and emotional supports for our students and families. These awards demonstrate how all Rockaway Township schools excel in this critical area and it has served our community well and even more so during these pandemic times.” The schools and school districts who apply must meet the rigorous standards articulated in Character.org’s 11 Principles Framework for Schools. Each school is evaluated by a team of trained educators who conduct a rigorous review of the schools’ character education program. Since its inception, the National Schools of Character program has impacted nearly 3 million students, staff, parents, and community members.

The schools and school districts who apply must meet the rigorous standards articulated in Character.org’s 11 Principles Framework for Schools. Each school is evaluated by a team of trained educators and includes a site visit to assess how a school’s “shared values” are motivating students to do the right thing. About Character.org: Founded in 1993, Character.org is a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to provide the voice, visibility, and resources for educators to build nurturing and supportive school cultures that focus on core values and character strengths vital to student and school success. Character.org is widely known for its 11 Principles, a comprehensive framework developed by school leaders and character development researchers. During the past 20 years, more than 900 schools and school districts – after an independent and rigorous evaluation process – have been certified a National School of Character. The vision for Character.org is to expand our work to families, sports, and the workplace. Visit www.character.org to learn more.