

# What criteria do recognized schools meet?

## What is CSEE's recognition program?

Formal recognition from CSEE attests to a school's ongoing work to meet, at a high level, criteria widely recognized as hallmarks of excellence in moral development / character education.

## Why a recognition program like this?

To an increasing degree, comprehensive programs for ethical or character education are becoming standard practice in schools. We owe excellence to our students, and to our world. CSEE's recognition criteria are widely seen as best practices among character education professionals.

## A word about vocabulary

Independent schools with good programs for the development of ethical life refer to their programs in a variety of ways: character education, moral development, human development or even leadership. The specific terminology schools use is less important than the fact that programs and their goals are clearly aimed at the development of values, virtues, character traits or standards of behavior that are beyond the normal academic goals of the institution.

### Mission/Objectives

1. Ethical growth, as well as academic growth, is explicit in the school's mission, or prominently placed on the school's website and in promotional literature.
2. The school has a planned approach to foster ethical/moral life, including goals it aims to achieve. Ideally, this approach is woven into both curricular and extra-curricular life.
3. The school has in place a plan to evaluate and fine tune levels of success in its program. The evaluation need not be extensive or scientifically sophisticated, but should provide more information than anecdotal data on areas of progress and areas that need revision and improvement.

### Trustees/Governance

4. School trustees, or governing body, visibly affirm their support of the school's stance on the development of ethical life.

### Oversight

5. An individual or group at the school is designated to oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the school's program for ethical development.
6. A significant number of school personnel are trained, educated, or are in the process of professional development to be up-to-date on issues of moral/ethical development as these relate to the school's goals.

### Curricular Integration

7. The school's approach to the development of ethical life is integrated into the curriculum. This does not mean every class or every day. The key here is that teachers have carefully considered ways in which the content of their classes can be approached "through the lens of character development."

### Students

8. The school has available, and a significant number of students avail themselves of, opportunities to play meaningful roles in the school. At a minimum, this means significant opportunities for peer interaction inside and outside the classroom. The litmus test of this standard would generally be that students feel their presence is valued, and that what they do at school contributes to making them better people and the school a better place.
9. Students recognize that the school has goals for moral and ethical development, and typically can articulate, even if imperfectly, what the goals are.

### Parents

10. Parents are included in the school's goals for the development of ethical life, at a minimum through regular information about the school's work to that effect, and about how they can work in tandem with the school. Ideally, parents are actively engaged in promoting the school's goals.

## How are these standards verified?

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The submission procedure aims to be as simple as possible for schools. On many points (e.g., how moral issues are integrated into the curriculum), a school's word is taken in trust, based on the written documentation form. Certain other points (e.g., mission or school statement on ethics) can be verified from the school's web site or promotional materials. Each application must also include a one-day visit to the school (to include observation, visiting key individuals, and interaction with the student body as arranged with the school) by a CSEE designated observer.

## What costs are associated with this visit?

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CSEE will charge a modest fee for the visit. To the extent possible, the visitor (usually a CSEE Moral Development Team member) will come from as nearby a location as possible.

See descriptions of schools that have already been recognized as CSEE Schools of Excellent Practice at [www.csee.org/projects/excellence.html](http://www.csee.org/projects/excellence.html)

## CSEE Recognition Program

For information, contact CSEE or visit:  
[www.csee.org/projects](http://www.csee.org/projects)

*Excellent Practice in  
Ethical Education*

*... becoming standard  
practice in schools*

### Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education

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