



**Contact:**

Barb Bergseth  
507-389-5112  
bbergseth@synergyexchange.org  
www.synergyexchange.org

**Synergy & Leadership Exchange Announces 2024 Minnesota School of Character**

*Community of Peace Academy Recognized for Excellence in Developing a Comprehensive Culture of Character*

NORTH MANKATO, Minn., (Jan. 26, 2024) – Community of Peace Academy is an urban, PreK–12 charter school serving more than 800 students of diverse cultures and backgrounds on the East Side of St. Paul. It was founded in 1995 with the profound vision of educating the whole person – mind, body and will. The school has maintained a firm commitment to character education for 29 years while experiencing dramatic growth as well as the retirement of the original vision keeper. Today, Community of Peace Academy was designated as a 2024 Minnesota School of Character.

Character.org works in partnership with Synergy & Leadership Exchange to evaluate the extent to which schools are aligned with the *11 Principles Framework*. This process includes a written applicant and external assessment of the application by trained and independent evaluators. Schools and districts that have developed and implemented an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that embeds character into all aspects of school life are certified as State Schools or Districts of Character. Across the country, 87 schools and one district received the state designation for 2024. Schools and districts announced today will be considered for Character.org’s highest distinction, National School or District of Character. Community of Peace Academy was named a National School of Character in 2003, 2014 and 2019.

“The 11 Principles Framework has been extraordinarily helpful in shaping, growing and maintaining our school’s focus on character,” said Sadie Fischer, communications and community engagement specialist for CPA. “It has given us a research-based framework that helps us get on the same page about how to best develop character in our students.”

“The greatest changes I have witnessed due to our character initiative have been positive and caring student actions and interactions,” said Amy Okan, CPA high school math teacher. “Students build meaningful relationships with each other, offer support and speak up about injustices that occur.”

Synergy & Leadership Exchange will celebrate Community of Peace Academy at the Character Recognition Awards in May.

**About Synergy & Leadership Exchange**

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a non-profit organization and program of the South Central Service Cooperative dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities. It sponsors the Schools of Character program in Minnesota in partnership with Character.org, the national founder. For more information, visit [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org).

**About Character.org**

Character.org is a national advocate and leader for character development in schools and communities. Since its inception, the Schools of Character program has positively impacted nearly three million students, staff, parents, and other community members. To learn more about the Schools of Character program, visit [www.character.org](http://www.character.org).

###