

Early Childhood Center named State School of Character

By Cathy Spaulding Phoenix Staff Writer Feb 4, 2016

http://www.muskogee phoenix.com/news/local_news/early-childhood-center-named-state-school-of-character/article_1058da62-cb0c-11e5-a95c-73f8e3103253.html

Children are happy to greet visitors at Muskogee's Early Childhood Center. "We have three student greeters every morning," ECC Principal Malinda Lindsey said. "We're trying to get kids more active in leadership."

Practices such as these daily greetings helped ECC be named a State School of Character by the citizenship program Character.org.

Character.org also named Whittier Elementary as an Emerging School of Character.

Madison Tomlinson, the program's state coordinator, presented the honor to ECC during a Wednesday morning assembly. ECC is the first pre-kindergarten school in Oklahoma, and one of a few in the U.S., to be named a State School of Character, Tomlinson said.

"We rock," ECC librarian Kim Landers said as she listened to Tomlinson. "We're doing good."

Muskogee Superintendent Mike Garde told the youngsters what the character honor means to them. "You see how important it is to be nice to other people," Garde said. "How you treat other people is how they will treat you back."

Lindsey said good character is woven into the school's curriculum. Students and teachers also participate in several community activities, such as the annual Trike-A-Thon to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Other activities include singing at nursing homes, giving socks to nursing home residents, and adopting people from the Salvation Army's Angel Tree each Christmas and buying presents for needy children, ECC teacher Lori Alexander said. "At Christmas, each of our classes were out in the community doing something," Alexander said.

Fatimah Mamdo said she has seen how ECC's character program has helped her daughter, Bryleigh. "They work real well with the students," Mamdo said. "They teach them kindness and how they express their warmth."

Character.org awards Schools of Character designations based on how well a school meets [The 11 Principles of Effective Character Education](#), which include fostering student self-motivation, creating a caring community, and offering opportunities for moral action.

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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING:

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http://www.muskogee phoenix.com/opinion/editorially-speaking-character-education-gets-fast-start/article_2c2759f6-cd16-11e5-9f91-cf19cdb9dc03.html

Congratulations to the staff and students at the Early Childhood Center for being selected as a State School of Character by character.org. ECC is the first pre-kindergarten school in Oklahoma, and one of a few in the U.S., to be named a State School of Character.

Character.org also named Whittier Elementary as an Emerging School of Character. Character education has become an integral part of the Muskogee Public Schools. Our community and MPS students are better off for the district's emphasis on character education.

It is especially encouraging to see the Early Childhood Center become a State School of Character. The lessons learned through character education will help the children in our school system to be better students and human beings. That's the kind of education that can't begin soon enough. These ECC students will spend their entire MPS careers learning character.

Teaching character in schools helps close the door on bad influences. ECC's accomplishment proves the continued worth of the program. Congratulations to all involved.