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**Burlington County Alternative School-Character.org Designates 83 Schools 4 Districts as 2017 National Schools of Character. Program developed in 1998 has positively impacted the lives of 2 million students**

Washington, D.C. (May 8, 2017)— [Character.org](http://Character.org), the nonprofit organization that validates character initiatives in schools and communities around the world, today designated 83 schools and 4 districts from 21 states as 2017 National Schools and Districts of Character. This is the second year that BCAS has been part of the Character.org application process. Last year, BCAS was given honorable mention for promising character education practices, and given specific feedback correlating to the eleven Principles of Character Education. The staff were able to utilize this feedback to improve practices in order to be recognized as a State School of Character and ultimately a National School of Character.

Mrs. Joan Barbagioanni, BCAS Principal, reacted to the award: "I am so proud that the hard work and dedication of our staff to the education and development of our students is being recognized through Character.org and the National Schools of Character program. A focus on the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education has helped to refine established best practices in a challenging alternative school setting."

Since the inception of Character.org's Schools of Character program in 1998, 474 schools and 30 districts have been designated as National Schools or Districts of Character, impacting more than 1.5 million students' lives. All designees will be announced at a [press event](#) in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., on May 23. Through an in-depth and rigorous evaluation process, these schools were found to be exemplary models of character development. Of the schools named today, 17 schools are former National Schools of Character reapplying for the national designation. Criteria for selection are based on Character.org's [11 Principles of Effective Character Education](#), a framework to assist schools in providing students with opportunities for moral action, fostering shared leadership, and engaging families and communities as partners in the character-building effort.

When referring to this prestigious recognition, Superintendent Dr. Christopher Nagy noted that "this honor bestowed upon the staff and students of our alternative school is a result of a dedicated multi-year plan by the administration and staff to create a culture of character that transcends the classroom and applies to every aspect of one's life." Referring to behavioral scientist, Dr. Steve Maraboli, Dr. Nagy noted that "this reality can be summarized in one phrase: *the truth of your character is expressed through the choice of your actions*. The campus as a whole has adopted a series of actions that embrace the key principles of character, and student behavior personifies these principles. I am very pleased that on the state and national levels these efforts have been recognized and the resulting honor is well deserved."

"At Character.org, we are extremely proud of this year's National Schools of Character as well as our district recipients. Their dedication to character development has proven over time to increase the well-being of so many students, their families and their communities across the United States and beyond," said Doug Karr, Character.org's President & CEO. He continued, "Validating character initiatives is at the core of what we do because it creates fertile conditions for multi-generational character growth where students and those in their lives thrive as ethical members of our society. The students of National Schools of Character are developing a lifelong skillset that they will leverage well into their adult lives."

**About Character.org:** Founded in 1993, Character.org, is a national nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. The mission of the organization is to provide leadership and advocacy for character worldwide. It is dedicated to help people everywhere become educated, inspired and empowered to be ethical and compassionate citizens. Character.org validates character initiatives in schools, sports, families and the workplace through certifications and sharing of best practices. Results of effective character initiatives in schools typically include improved academic achievement, a decline in behavioral problems and an increase in an



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overall positive school climate.

**About Character Education:** Character education is an approach to school culture and climate improvement that supports the social, emotional and ethical development of students. It is the proactive and intentional effort by schools, districts, communities and states to help students develop important core ethical (recognizing what's right) and performance (doing what's right) values such as caring, honesty, diligence, fairness, fortitude, responsibility, grit, creativity, critical thinking and respect for self and others.

**Attachments:** BCAS Photo – Photo taken by Laura Geltch and NSOC logo