

HAPA recognized with WCEP 'Promising Practices' award

MILWAUKEE — Hmong American Peace Academy has been recognized by the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership (WCEP) with a Promising Practices Award, honoring the school's commitment to character education through its Peacebuilder culture and innovative "High School Helpers" program.

The Promising Practices Award recognizes schools and organizations that demonstrate effective, impactful approaches to character education. HAPA's award-winning initiative, "High School Helpers," empowers high school scholars to serve as literacy mentors for younger students while developing leadership skills of their own.

During study hall periods, participating high school scholars volunteer in Primary School classrooms after receiving training in literacy instruction and phonics support. They provide one-on-one and small-group reading support, helping elementary students strengthen foundational literacy skills while building meaningful relationships across grade levels.

As Wisconsin's first Hmong charter school, serving K4-12th grade scholars, HAPA is uniquely positioned to foster mentorship opportunities between younger and older students. The "High School Helpers" program reflects the school's Peacebuilder philosophy by encouraging scholars to lead through service, kindness, responsibility, and positive role modeling.

"One of the greatest strengths of being a K-12 school is watching our scholars learn from one another," said Dr. Chris Her-Xiong, HAPA's founder and CEO. "Our High School Helpers program demonstrates that leadership isn't reserved for adults. Our scholars are making a meaningful difference in the lives of younger students while growing into compassionate, capable leaders themselves."

The recognition also reflects HAPA's broader commitment to embedding character education throughout the school experience. In June, several HAPA educators participated in the Eleven Principles for Effective Character Education Institute, further strengthening the school's approach to integrating character development into daily instruction.

"This recognition belongs to our entire HAPA community," Dr. Her-Xiong said. "It reflects the dedication of our scholars, educators, and families who work together each day to create a culture where service and respect are more than values. They're lived experiences."

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