

## **What makes Westbrook special? A few of Westbrook's Best Practices**

**Character Education:** Westbrook incorporates a Community of Caring character development program in all aspects of its academic and social programs. Starting in kindergarten, all Westbrook students learn five core values to help them understand how to be responsible and caring members of a community. The five values – caring, respect, trust, responsibility and family – are integrated into the curriculum at each grade level wherever natural connections exist. A quote that reflects one of the values is read by a student at the end of each day's morning announcements, class meetings focus on using the values to resolve disputes, and parents are encouraged to remind the children about using the values at home. A Community of Caring column is written each month for the school's newsletter highlighting each grade's character development activities. These columns are often written by the students themselves.

In 2004, Westbrook was recognized as one of 10 schools nationally for its character education through the National Conference of Character Education Partnership.

**Environmental Programs:** Westbrook has an extremely active series of programs devoted to teaching its students about the environment. Many of the following programs are partially or fully funded by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in addition to PTA funds. **Shad in Schools** is a program where, for the last seven years, Westbrook students have hatched American shad from eggs and released them to the Potomac River. This activity involves all the children at the school: the fourth and fifth graders raise the shad and teach the younger students about their project with updates as needed. Students in the upper grades also raise **horseshoe crabs** for a year before releasing them to the Bay. Westbrook also sponsors the Aqua Eagles, an extracurricular club which allows 5<sup>th</sup> graders to pursue interests in stream and Bay education and restoration. **Aqua Eagles** also monitor water quality in Little Falls stream and work to stabilize the stream bank by weeding and planting tree buffers. Westbrook students have also installed a **rain garden** and other planted buffers at Westbrook to reduce run-off into Little Falls stream. Westbrook has its own environmental club, **Eco-Defenders** which promotes environmental awareness through sponsoring trash-free lunches, doing plantings around the school and promoting active discussion at all levels about environmental issues. In 2001, Westbrook was named a Governor's Green School by the State of Maryland.

**Academic Enrichment programs:** The PTA sponsors a number of after and before school academic enrichment programs, including French and Spanish lessons, Hands on Science, an After School Arts program, a Chess Club and a Geography Club.