



April 2008

Character Council Educator Quality of the Month Persuasiveness

I will:

- point others in the right direction
- not stretch the truth to make it more attractive
- appeal to a person's conscience in terms of character
- wait for the best time
- not argue

Persuasiveness: Guiding vital truths around another's mental roadblocks

Everyday on the news we are hearing of examples of Persuasiveness from the presidential candidates and their supporters but Persuasiveness for the classroom needs to take on a much smaller personality. This month we are going to use the character quality of Persuasiveness to teach positive peer pressure.

- ☺ **Listen to Me!** You will need three volunteers, a deck of cards and a roll of toilet paper to perform this activity. Blindfold the first volunteer by wrapping toilet paper around their eyes several times until they can no longer see through it. Select the 10 – Ace of a single suit out of the deck of cards and place these face up in random order in front of the blindfolded student. (For younger students, you may want to use just a few of the single digit cards) Position each of the other two volunteers on either side of the blindfolded student. These students are to give directions to the blindfolded student on how to order the cards from smallest to largest. The trick is that one student is to give wrong directions and the other student is to give correct directions. The blindfolded student should know that he/she will be given conflicting directions but he/she will have to determine which one to listen to. Let the activity go on until the cards are ordered or the blindfolded student becomes frustrated. To process this activity once it is over, ask the students if the conflicting directions reminded them of cartoons where a devil is on one shoulder and an angel is on the other. Ask the blindfolded student what clues they used to determine who to listen to. Did the class give it away by laughing when the person giving wrong directions spoke? Liken this to using peers or parents to help in making judgments.



- ☺ **Roadblocks** Begin a discussion about peer pressure and how it can be positive or negative. Once there is a common understanding of the differences, divide the class into small groups. Each group will get several index cards. Have the students fold them in half so that they can stand up. Have each group brainstorm some ideas of behavior in the classroom that is unwanted and affects the whole class. Give some suggestions such as students forgetting homework, students who bully others, students who form cliques and exclude others, students who leave messes, etc. These are all roadblocks to having a great classroom. The students should write these ideas on their index cards. When the groups are done, bring all of the roadblocks together and share them. Pick a few of the roadblocks to work through as a class. For each roadblock, have the students brainstorm some ideas of how positive peer pressure could persuade an individual to improve their behavior. Be very careful that this exercise does not become personally attacking to any one student or group of students. For each roadblock that you discuss, you can write the solutions on the inside of the card and fold it in the opposite direction – now you can call it a stepping stone to success.

- ☺ **Tackle This!** If your students are older and there is a football player (preferably a tackle) have him discuss how a tackle needs to read an offense and be prepared to react to whatever the other team does. If your class is younger or does not have a football player, you may want to invite an older student, coach or even a Dad from the classroom to come in and talk about the strategy of being prepared on the football field. Once the presentation is over, explain that students are going to be exposed to negative peer pressure and that they need to be able to recognize it and have strategies for responding. Have the class brainstorm age-appropriate suggestions of negative peer pressure such as cheating on a test, skipping school, doing drugs, etc. Divide the class into groups and have them role-play some of the situations. Each group should come up with a "plot" of the negative peer pressure and then create several different endings of suggestions of how not to be influenced by it.



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Jill Tomey, Director of Education, jtomey@charactercincinnati.org

© Character Council of Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky Mary Andres Russell, Executive Director
513.467.0170 mrussell@charactercincinnati.org

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