

# Creativity

Character... It starts with me!

## Vs. Underachievement

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

APRIL 2010

### I WILL:

- use my talents for good
- see things from more than one perspective
- use principles to solve problems
- learn all I can
- look for new ways to be a person of character

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Quotes	2
Curriculum Connection	2
Hero	3
Teaching Creativity	3
Crayons	4
Creative Writing	4
Robin's Reading List	5
Crosky's Corner	6
Character in the Classroom Continuously	7

## Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective

Creative people question assumptions and eventually lead others to do the same. When Copernicus suggested that Earth revolves around the sun, the suggestion was viewed as preposterous because everyone could see that the sun revolves around Earth. Galileo's

ideas, including the relative rates of falling objects, caused him to be banned as a heretic. It is said that Newton got the idea of gravity when he was hit on the head with an apple while sitting under an apple tree. It is not necessary to sit under trees and wait for an apple to fall - we can get

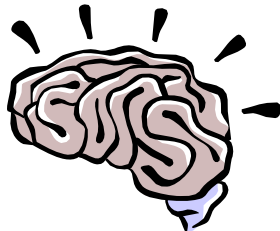
up and shake the tree. We can produce our own chance events. We can think outside the box. This month, find a way to inspire your creative juices.



## Brain teasers

Brain teasers are a great test of one's ability to let go of paradigms that can restrict your thinking. For a science lesson on the brain and a wonderful selection of brain teasers visit <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/braint.htm>

This website contains a video tour of the brain and its functions and has a terrific variety of brain teasers such as silly questions (Why can't a man living in the United States be buried in Canada? Answer:



Because he's not dead yet!), palindromes (did you know that SWIMS reads the same way upside down), math puzzles and much more for all ages.

### Go to the Root

In the literal sense, to create is to make something out of nothing. As humans, we do not really create rather we re-create. We take things already created and blend them into new combinations. It's not so much making something new as it is looking at things with a new perspective.

## Tom Swifties

are fun to create. They are a sentence in which an adverb relates both properly and "punningly" to a sentence of reported speech. An example: "I feel like I've been run over by a car!" Tom said flatly. Or "I need a pencil sharpener," Tom said bluntly. There are actually many forms of Tom Swifties but this form is the easiest to copy. Come up with several of your own, perhaps using current vocabulary words, and then let the students come up with some on their own either individually or in groups. It helps sometimes to have them start by thinking of adverbs first and then creating their Tom Swifty around it. (This is a good time for lessons on adverbs and punctuation for quoted speech.) After your students have created some, write them on the board or post them on the bulletin board. This is the type of assignment that tends to stick with kids and days later they will be bringing you more Tom Swifties.

“ ”

## Character Quotables

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.”

*Pablo Picasso*

“No artist is ahead of his time. He is his time. It is just that others are behind the time.”

*Martha Graham*

“Creativeness often consists of merely turning up what is already there. Did you know that right and left shoes were thought up only a little more than a century ago?”

*Bernice Fitz-Gibbon*

“Imagination rules the world.”

*Napoleon*

“Throwing away ideas too soon is like opening a package of flower seeds and then throwing them away because they're not pretty.”

*Arthur VanGundy, Ph.D.*

“To be successful we must live from our imaginations, not from our memories.”

*Steven Covey*

“A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something.”

*Frank Capra*

“Genius is one percent inspiration, and ninety-nine percent perspiration. I make more mistakes than anyone else I know, and sooner or later, I patent most of them.”

*Thomas Edison*

“Reason can answer questions, but imagination has to ask them.”

*Ralph Gerard*

“Creativity is allowing oneself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.”

*Scott Adams*  
The Dilbert Principle

“There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of the people you love. When you learn to

tap this source, you will have truly defeated age.”

*Sophia Loren*

“Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us. To create means to relate. The root meaning of the word art is “to fit together” and we all do this every day. Not all of us are painters but we are all artists. Each time we fit things together we are creating - whether it is to make a loaf of bread, a child, a day.”

*Corita Kent*

“There is a correlation between the creative and the screwball. So we must suffer the screwball gladly.”

*Kingman Brewster*

## Curriculum Connection Science

The tangelo is a citrus fruit that is a hybrid of a tangerine and either a pomelo or a grapefruit. Hybrid plants are created when two different plants are bred together to create something new and different. Sometimes this is done to create a stronger variety such as disease-resistant corn. Other reasons include pleasure as seen in flower varieties. Challenge your students to discover the origin of peppermint.



# Leonardo da Vinci - Hero of Creativity



Leonardo da Vinci was a scientist, engineer, artist, instrument inventor, anatomist, philosopher, and composer. He embraced all types of learning and he didn't differentiate between disciplines because he believed that they were all inter-related. He believed that the learning and discoveries made in one area affect your understanding and knowledge of another subject of

study and that true creative intelligence will come with the development of all your intelligences. Da Vinci employed many techniques to get in touch with his creative genius. He would paint with both hands, he would practice writing backwards, he looked for images in the ashes of his fireplace and he used a notebook to record his thoughts, ideas and observations using both words and sketches. For creative thinkers everywhere, da Vinci is a hero and awe-inspiring role model.

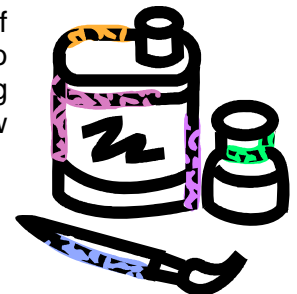
Leonardo da Vinci left us a code of four principles to stimulate and encourage creative genius:

1. Study the science of art.
2. Study the art of science.
3. Develop all your senses especially your ability to see.
4. Study all the above in the light of the idea that everything connects, in some way, to everything else.

## TEACHING CREATIVITY

Surprisingly, I see the least imaginative work being produced when a teacher gives instructions and says, "In this lesson you can use any topic you want to." Or, "In this lesson you can work in any media you like." Even in the case of students whose work seems quite imaginative and creative, if I know the student, I generally find that the work is merely a rehash of that student's previous success. We are naturally creatures of habit. Our natural way to learn is by imitation. Students imitate their own success and they imitate their peers. When allowed to do what we want to do, we are most likely to revert to whatever we previously found enjoyable and/or successful. This amounts to what I call, "another one of those" artworks. Sad as that is, the worst part is that the creative process is not being learned. Limitations can be a good thing to motivate creativity. Requirements in an assignment narrow the realm in which one is allowed to operate, making it easier to focus on a problem or an issue. In creative teaching, assignment limitations provide a way to change the student's habits of work. When a student isn't allowed to repeat a familiar pathway into the work, additional creative effort is expended to succeed. So long as the difficulty level is reasonable, new learning happens. A new approach is learned.

For more information on this topic you can read the whole article at [www2.goshen.edu/~marvinpb/arted/tc.html](http://www2.goshen.edu/~marvinpb/arted/tc.html)



# Crayons! Crayons! Crayons! Crayons!

## Color Outside the Lines!

Challenge your students to create a picture using crayons, colored pencils or markers. The only rule is they cannot color inside of their picture. They may only color around it so that the blank space in the middle actually defines the picture. The background can be solid colors, stripes, dots or whatever they wish it to be. To visualize a completed assignment, picture the shape of a heart where the heart is blank and the rest of the page is colored completely red (or a variety of colors). For younger students you may want to get a First Coloring Book with simple line drawings and give a page to each student. The same challenge exists – they can not color inside the lines. For much older students you may want to give them the item or a scene to draw so that it is more complicated. Examples would be two children tossing a ball, or a cloud raining on a flower. You can come up with one for each student or a single one for the class and compare the different interpretations.



## Recycle Those Old Crayons!

According to a recent press release, Crayola makes 3 billion crayons a year. That makes for a boatload of used and broken crayons. Why not challenge your students to come up with Creative ways to give new life to crayons? They can be melted down into new shapes and new colors, used to make wax paper mosaics, batiking, candle coloring and fire starters. Host a contest at your school to find creative ways to use crayons. Send your ideas to the email address from which this newsletter originates.

Here are a few websites with ideas to get you started:

[http://www.crazycrayons.com/recycle\\_program.html](http://www.crazycrayons.com/recycle_program.html)

[http://frugalliving.about.com/od/frugalfun/ht/Make\\_Crayons.htm](http://frugalliving.about.com/od/frugalfun/ht/Make_Crayons.htm)

<http://www.thriftyfun.com/tf666289.tip.html>

## Creative Writing

Choose three students to each choose a single random word from an age appropriate dictionary. You can limit their selections to the first noun on the page they open to or you can let it be the first word no matter what. Now challenge the students as a class to compose a short story that incorporates all three words. If your students are older you can also do this in small groups and then share the many stories that could get created from those three words. If time allows, you can use it as a writing prompt and each student writes their own story. If doing groups or individuals, you may want to come up with a unique set of words for each group or person. Make the first task to choose three words, then have the groups/individuals swap words. When completed, point out how the random words could be linked in the story. Ask the students to think back on how they processed the three words in their mind. What steps did they take to find links? Would they have thought to combine these words if the exercise hadn't called for it?

## Robin's Reading List

### **"If I Was the Mayor" by Lauren Howell (K – 2)**

"If I Was the Mayor" is a splendid example of how wonderful a child's imagination can be! It is a thought provoking picture book that encourages dreaming, and exploring ways they can make their world a better place...one child can make a difference. In this book, one boy is mayor and he changes almost everything he sees, smells, hears, and touches. This little boy's town if a magical place.

### **The Library Mouse by Daniel Kirk (K – 2)**

A mouse, in a library, who is a writer...Wow!!! Sam is a mouse who lives in a hole in the wall behind the children's reference books in the library. He sleeps by day, and reads by night. One night he decides to write and illustrate his own book. He puts his book, "Squeak! A Mouse's Life" on the library shelf, where a little girl finds it and hands it to the librarian. She becomes curious and puts a note on the bulletin board, inviting Sam to "Meet the Author Day." What is Sam to do??? Great book for writing inspiration.

### **Creative Thinking and Problem Solving for Young Learners by Jerry D. Flack and Karen Meador (Grades K – 4)**

Meador shows how to nourish creativity and problem-solving abilities in your students. After presenting valid models of creative thinkers appearing in outstanding children's literature, she offers a variety of

activities you can use to develop creative processes through originality, fluency, and flexibility. Creativity can be taught!

### **Learning About Creativity from the Life of Steven Spielberg by Erin M. Hovanec (Grades 3 – 6)**

This book is a brief biography of filmmaker, Steven Spielberg, whose creative drive has led him to make many different kinds of movies including "Jaws," "Jurassic Park," and "Raiders of the Lost Ark." The book details who exactly this man is, what compels him to do the movies that he does, and what is his driving force!

### **The Creativity Book by Nancy Rue (Grades 3 – 6)**

This book is written to inspire girls to dare to be different, and explore their own creativity. It's filled with ideas to help them develop their creative self. Everyone has a creative niche.

### **The Value of Creativity—The Story of Thomas Edison by Anne Donegan Johnson (Grades 3 – 6)**

This book tells of Tom's childhood tendency to take things apart to learn how they worked. His creative imagination and love of reading helped him to learn in school and on his own. Closing quote: "Of course there isn't anything wrong with doing things the old way—the sure way that always works—but when you try new ways, there is always a chance that they will turn out to be better ways. And if you try them, you may have more fun and you may create wonderful things, too. Just like our good friend, Thomas Edison." (p. 62).

### **Making the Most of Today: Daily Readings for Young People**

### **on Self-Awareness, Creativity, and Self-Esteem by Pamela Espeland and Rosemary Wallner (Grades 6 – 8)**

Daily readings for all young people who want to know themselves better, be more creative, and feel better about themselves. This is the kind of book that can instill positive values and character in the young people of today, while building their problem-solving strategies and self esteem. This is a great book for reflection, discussion, and fresh perspectives.

### **What Color is Your Dream by Kittie N. Beletic (All Grades)**

This book is for dreamers of all ages. As long as we are flexible and open to new possibilities, our lives can be filled with creative moments. Readers follow the life of a dream, and explore the adventurous and unpredictable journey presented by new thoughts and ideas. The relationship between thinking and feeling, mind and body, are important to releasing creativity. The world is full of possibilities.

### **Cracking Creativity: The Secrets of Creative Genius by Michael Michalko (Grades 9 – 12)**

There are many different techniques for creative insight located in this book. It is packed with fascinating stories, mind-stretching exercises, inspiring quotes, funny visuals, and checklists. Michael comments on famous inventors, thinkers, and artists from science, mathematics, history, etc. in order to further his point of creative thought throughout this book. "Michael does not simply show problems in creativity without a creative plan-of-action for facilitation. He brings creative solutions to mind and elaborates on them in detail. He gives many examples for looking at a problem or solution, in many different perspectives."

*Robin Castetter is a Retired Elementary Teacher Loveland City Schools*



# Croskey's Corner

Just before his inauguration, President-elect John F. Kennedy spoke to the Massachusetts legislature and offered this Biblical quote: "For of those to whom much is given, much is required." One can imagine that a powerful politician, let alone a Kennedy, might sometimes need to remind himself and others that the rich and powerful were not merely supposed to enjoy their privilege but might choose to give something back, as they say. This idea has always held great power for me. But, with my often juvenile view of things, I tend to seek my philosophical guidelines not so much from politics as from comics. Thus, the comic book philosophy version comes from Spider-Man's Uncle Ben, who says, "Remember, with great power, comes great responsibility."

The April Character Quality of the Month is Creativity. It is defined as "Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective." That is one of the *Character First!* definitions which coincides with our general understanding of Creativity. As is common with me, I find the "I will..." statements very illuminating. One in particular caught my eye: I will... "Use my talents for good." To me, that is just another way of hearing Uncle Ben tell his super hero nephew to use his super powers to help others.

The comics are full of characters who made the choice to use their great powers for good. Superman is a "strange visitor from another planet, who came to Earth with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men." Yet his Earthly parents, Ma and Pa Kent, teach him to channel those powers to help others. One story has a dying Pa Kent telling him, "No man on Earth has the amazing powers you have. You can use them to be a powerful force for good." So Superman, who can squeeze coal into diamonds, instead decides to save the world from disasters. Bruce Wayne sees his parents gunned down by a cheap hood. (Good to know that it was not done by an expensive hood.) Many boys might become juvenile delinquents or turn to drugs. But Bruce decides to dedicate his life to fighting crime. Since criminals are a superstitious, cowardly lot, he determines to dress as a mysterious figure of the night, and Batman is created. Wonder Woman, an Amazon princess, leaves the safety of Paradise Island and the promise of immortality to join "Men's World" and to help them defeat evildoers. The character Green Lantern's ring is a virtual Aladdin's Lamp, that can create any object he wills it to. So what does he do - create vast treasure? No, he hits criminals with green boxing gloves! Many of the comic book super heroes are rich playboys or playgirls who have the dedication (and the free time allowed when one does not have to work!) to plow their fortunes into righting wrongs. The hero could make himself or herself rich or ruler of the world or both. Instead, the heroic path is to do good and to help others.

All well and good, you might say. But that's comic books. What about reality? There is no doubt that, at least at times, that our culture seems to admire and encourage the development and possession of great power and wealth – but not the choosing to do good deeds with the great power. Indeed, our worship of athletes, musicians, actors, and media stars seems to glory in the power but not in the honor. However, maybe our appreciation for a hero "matures" when we see them perform service and give back. Take Bill Gates. He was certainly admired, if not worshipped, for his accumulation of wealth through his development of Microsoft's technological monopoly. Yet today, he and his wife's foundation takes the spotlight, especially when they devote funding and hard work to improving education. Someone such as Bono continues to sell concert tickets, CD's, and downloads, but his efforts to fight poverty and hunger attract more attention. Even former Presidents Carter, Bush I and II, and Clinton draw crowds for their work in Haiti, in Africa, and with international efforts to promote peace and democracy. We may have a passionate fling with wealth and power, but we seem to "marry" the celebrities who do good deeds.

The challenge for schools is to change the culture from one that worships power to one that is devoted to using power to help others. Or, changing the culture from "Might makes right" to "Might for right." We can help young people to gravitate to media stars and celebrities who do good work. It may come through history, where we study not just famous people but also famous good people. If Andy Warhol's concept of 15 minutes of fame still attracts kids today, then we have to show them the famous do-gooders as models. They need to meet the Anthony Munozes and the Tom Gills, who are well known but also well respected. I know a teacher who will only let her students choose biographical subjects for their One Person Shows if the person has had a positive impact on the world. Why not? History needs to study the villains, as well as the heroes. But kids need not rehearse being these villains.

In an old Superman story, his enemy, Lex Luthor, feeds a bunch of data into a computer, asks the machine to figure out Superman's secret identity, and gets the answer: Clark Kent. Luthor fires the computer programmer for failing. Why? Luthor reasons that no person with the great powers of Superman would ever pretend to be a weak human being. Yet that is the glorious thing about true heroes. They have great power but they choose to curb their own passions and desires and to help others. I think that is what we mean by "heroic." Let's pass the word to our students.

Bill Croskey is a retired school psychologist from the Loveland City Schools



**The Character Council of Greater  
Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky**

P.O. Box 33144  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45233

Mary Andres Russell, Executive Director

Phone: 513.467.0170

Fax 513.941.2755

E-mail: [mrussell@charactercincinnati.org](mailto:mrussell@charactercincinnati.org)

[www.charactercincinnati.org](http://www.charactercincinnati.org)

Written by Jacqueline Tomey and Jill Tomey,  
Education Committee Co-Chairs

© 2010 Character Council of Greater Cincinnati &  
Northern Kentucky

The 49 Character Qualities are adapted from Character First!  
materials and are used with permission from the Character  
Training Institute.

**Character...It Starts With Me!**

## Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.