

Responsibility

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Unreliability

I WILL:

- Keep my promises
- Not make excuses
- Do all my work to the best of my ability
- Make things right when I do wrong
- Know my duty and do my duty

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Knowing and doing what is expected of me.

Responsibility requires that we know what is expected of us. How do we do that? By asking questions, observing others, and simply asking ourselves what we would expect of others if we wanted them to provide an excellent example of responsibility. When we take on a task do we look for the quickest way to get it done or the best

way? Do we do a job completely or look for good enough? An example is the teenager's chore of mowing the lawn. Do they clean the mower when they were finished? Did they trim? Did the mower get put away? Did the sidewalk get swept? Were they careful to aim the clippings away from the landscaping?

This month, look at your completed tasks through the eyes of an observer and look for things to add to your knowledge base of responsible expectations.



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No Matter How You Say It

Responsabilidad vs. Irresponsabilidad

Saber y hacer lo que se
espera de mí



Go to the Root

The word responsible comes from two Latin roots, *responsum*, which means “an answer, a reply” and *spondere*, which means “to promise”. Can you see how responsibility is a promised response?

Idioms

Pass the buck placing blame on someone else

On somebody's shoulders to be responsible for someone

The buck stops here to take responsibility for something

Found on www.thefreedictionary.com

Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of the word Responsible and Neglect. Can you see how the sign for Responsibility shows ownership of a task and Neglect does not?

www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi

刚柔并济

gāng róu bìng jì to couple strength and gentleness

(Chinese idiom)

Found on www.Chinesetools.eu

“People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.” -David H. Comins

Character Quotables

With great power comes great responsibility.

Spiderman

Big pay and little responsibility are circumstances seldom found together.

Napoleon Hill

The price of greatness is responsibility.

Winston Churchill

You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.

Abraham Lincoln

Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity.

Kahlil Gibran

The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take total responsibility for our attitudes. That's the day we truly grow up.

John C. Maxwell

Rank does not confer privilege or give power. It imposes responsibility.

Peter Drucker

A hero is someone who understands the responsibility that comes with his freedom.

Bob Dylan

Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else.

Les Brown

The happiest people in the world are those who feel absolutely terrific about themselves, and this is the natural outgrowth of accepting total responsibility for every part of their life.

Brian Tracy

Faced with crisis, the man of character falls back on himself. He imposes his own stamp of action, takes responsibility for it, makes it his own.

Charles de Gaulle

In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never

ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Every right implies a responsibility; Every opportunity, an obligation, Every possession, a duty.

John D. Rockefeller

Those who enjoy responsibility usually get it; those who merely like exercising authority usually lose it.

Malcolm Forbes

I recommend that the Statue of Liberty be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the west coast.

Viktor E. Frankl

Curriculum Connection



Science

A scientist must be Responsible when conducting research and reporting outcomes. What do you think would happen if a scientist was unreliable in the way an experiment was conducted? What about companies that pay for research with the intent of swaying the outcome to one that is favorable for their product or service? What would happen if a scientist released a scary finding before it was totally proven?



Lemonade Brigade, Model of Responsibility

The Kids Wanna Help® Lemonade Brigade® is a very interactive fundraiser that gets kids involved in fundraising at all levels. A Young Business Owner Workshop kicks off the summer Lemonade Brigade® by teaching kids how to start their own businesses and then how to run them successfully. Once the kids are fully prepared to run their own professional lemonade stands, they get advice on choosing a charity that is just right for them. Then representatives from several charities make presentations to the members of the Lemonade Brigade®

explaining what their charity is all about, who they help and how their charity could benefit from the money raised from the lemonade sales. The young business owners have an opportunity to ask tough questions like “How much of the money I donate will go to overhead?” Based on these presentations, the Lemonade Brigade® teams make their own decisions about which charity or charities they are going to support through their lemonade sales over the summer. At the end of the summer, the money raised by the Lemonade Brigade® teams is donated to the

charities at an awards ceremony. This non-profit group gives kids an opportunity to raise money for charities through fun activities that build confidence and self-esteem and encourage a lifetime of social and community responsibility.

To learn more visit:
www.kidswannahelp.com



Team~Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

Cartoon Character



Discuss famous cartoon characters from Looney Tunes to Disney. Once you have named several characters, allow time for each student to decide which cartoon character they would like to be and what their most visible and positive character trait would be as that cartoon character. If time allows, let each student share who they would like to be and what they like about that character. They can also share in small groups. When the sharing is over, look at the results. More than likely, there will be a few characters chosen by multiple people. Did they choose this character for the same reason or different reasons? Did anyone chose a character that no one else had heard of before? Did girls choose only girl cartoons and boys only boy cartoons?



A Handful of Responsibility



Grab a large double-handful of buttons, pennies or any other small item. Have the students pass the handful around the room. Do not pick up any that drop. Go around the room once with minimal instructions. Once completed, point out the items that have been dropped. (Make it a large handful so that it is not an easy task.) Explain how if one person “drops” their responsibility it affects the whole group. Pass it around again and see if they improve. A variation of the game would be to have 2 groups that race each other. If there is a student who may have difficulty with the motor skills necessary for this game or one who has very small hands, point out that helping them, not making them feel inferior, is the responsible choice.

Flag Folding

Being a good citizen requires being responsible for the proper care of the American Flag. If you have any scouts in your room, you may ask them to demonstrate how to fold a flag. You may also want to discuss flag etiquette. This may also be a good job for a local veteran.



Hand Activity



Have the students trace their hand on colored paper. For younger children, you can call them helping hands and have them write or draw a picture of what they can do to be more responsible around the house with chores. For older children, call them the High Five and have them write 5 things, one on each finger/thumb that they can do to be more responsible.

Liberty Mutual's "The Responsibility Project"

Several years ago, Liberty Mutual sponsored "The Responsibility Project", a campaign actually started by one of their television commercials in 2006, about strangers doing good things for strangers, and how that can pass around. At the website below you can watch short films on actual events that showcase people doing the right thing. One story called "The Home Run" is about a college softball game and how doing the right thing meant one team giving up their win and their bid for the Championships. The short film on the website is very moving, as is the news coverage of it, which was posted on YouTube as the "Amazing Softball Story". There are other stories like this on The Responsibility Project's website.

To learn more visit <http://sociodynamics.org/archives/121>



Trash Talking



For a cool math problem, and to get your students thinking about how they can affect the environment and be environmentally responsible, ask them to count how many bags of trash their family goes through in a week. Add up the numbers from the class, then average that number. Use that number to estimate how much trash the families in the school discard in a year, how much the county throws away, even how much trash your state produces! Next, have them split off into groups to come up with creative ways to reduce the amount of trash that is thrown away. They can even launch a recycling drive at the school, if the school does not already recycle.



For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Responsibility**: Knowing and doing what is expected of me.

To practice Responsibility I will:

- Keep my promises
- Not make excuses
- Do all my work to the best of my ability
- Make things right when I do wrong
- Know my duty and do my duty



Family Activity:

The Blame Game



Teach your children the finger symbols for winners and losers. For Losers, place your fingers in the shape of an L and place it on your forehead. For winner, use 3 fingers to resemble a W. Next, talk about how winners will take the blame when they have done something wrong and then try to learn from the mistake. Losers will blame someone else and invariably make the same mistake over and over. When you catch somebody shifting blame to someone else or a circumstance, make the Loser sign. Anyone in the family can catch anyone else. Same goes for when someone takes the blame or the responsibility for an action - cheer them with the winner sign.



Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the "I wills" and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php

Can't Do? Won't Do?

Croskey's Corner

I used to teach high school psychology. In my class, we read *The Art of Loving*, written by Erich Fromm. In that book, Fromm wrote that love has four components: Caring; Respect; Responsibility; Knowledge. On Responsibility, he made a distinction between (1) respond-ability, or the ability to respond lovingly to someone; and (2) willingness to respond. I think these two aspects of this month's Character Quality, Responsibility, apply to more than love relationships. Seems like they fit in a school setting as well.

My mentor, Warren McClellan, former principal at Loveland Schools, used to challenge our problem-solving team with the question of whether a student who was struggling in school was one who CAN'T DO the work; or was it more that he or she WON'T DO the work. "Can't Do" asked whether the student had the ability or the skill required to succeed at a task. "Won't Do" wondered whether the student was unmotivated, hung up by problems at home, or distracted by non-school interests. If a student cannot do the work, he or she is unable to respond successfully to the challenges of school work. If a student is choosing NOT to do the work, she or he is unwilling to respond for some reason which must be uncovered.

The distinction between Can't Do and Won't Do matters. Our special education system, while being renovated with Response to Intervention (RTI) and 3-tier approaches to serving students, still is set up for and geared to identifying "Can't Dos." The special education categories are pigeon holes which are pretty clearly defined and which suggest what is wrong with the student who is not Responding to regular instruction or previous Interventions. In fact, the whole RTI system is an exercise in monitoring Respond-ability. But these Can't Dos are misidentified at times. In a world where we care more what surface behavior looks like than what "hidden" motives may exist, a person who does not respond to regular education approaches is, almost totally by definition, a "Can't Do. But I have seen many students who seemingly lack the skill or ability in a subject, but are in fact withholding their Responses. Kids whose parents are going through divorces have withheld academic responding as they might have resisted toilet training or refused to eat in a different period of their lives. Why? To get a reaction from their parents. What do kids that age control? Not much besides their school work. So, what do they use to make their point, consciously or unconsciously? School work. How about kids who are depressed? They may not have the energy to respond. But it does not mean they do not know how to read or do math. Or anxious kids? School anxiety is real. Students who may easily demonstrate their academic skills in one environment freeze up when the pressure increases. Can't Dos? Well, yeah, in a way, but only when their anxiety is high.

In addition, the children who are finally seen to be Won't Do's can really frustrate teachers. A Can't Do is right in a teacher's wheelhouse. You may have been taught to instruct kids in multiplication. If a kid does not know how to multiply, you can teach him. But if you've taught him to multiply, and he shows he's "got" it, and he refuses or neglects to perform, you get frustrated. You want him to show what he knows. Motivating the unmotivated is tricky. It seems easy but can end up being more like teaching someone who is blind to see. The Can't Dos either make us look like heroes because, if they succeed, then we have accomplished what others could not with them. Or, if they fail, we are only

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another in the line of those who couldn't turn the Can't into Can. But the Won'ts will not easily release us. We often fail because other issues are the obstacle, not improved instruction. They walk away but do not release us of the guilt of failure.

Croskey's Corner

Perhaps an answer for how to help Won't Dos is to follow a framework that will help BOTH Can't Dos and Won't Dos.

Figure out the antecedents; what environmental factors does the student bring along which may promote or impede learning? For example, is she H.A.T.S.? (Hungry? Angry? Tired? Sick?) Does she have her basic Maslow needs of Safety and Security met?

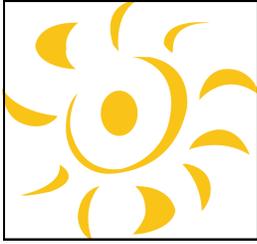
What should we teach these students? Instruction must be active, relevant, and interesting. A motivating question for many is: If you don't learn what is being taught, will you have to pay someone else to do it for you when you are on your own? Also, school learning often competes with other, more stimulating or more attractive possibilities. These may, nevertheless, not be safe. Offer students a substitute learning process which will also be stimulating, but safer!

Figure out how to teach what you want to teach. First, identify what you want the finished product (learner) to be able to do. Second, figure out what we would accept as evidence that students have achieved the desired end learning. Third, plan teaching which will yield the evidence we are looking for to prove that subject has been mastered.

Develop positive reinforcers. Behavioral contracts, extrinsic motivators, intrinsic motivators, any enticements which will encourage students to get over the hump which will get them to choose what you have to offer. Have a situational plan, a contingency, which will help the Tough Kids, who are distracted by outside forces, to be able to respond to your plan.

I don't guarantee that you will always be able to tell the difference between Can't Dos and Won't Dos. But your use of the classroom management and motivation tools will help most students be Able and Willing to Respond.

Can't ? Won't



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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.