

# **CHARACTER EDUCATION**

## **"Responsibility" Grades 5-8**

### **DEFINITION:**

Responsibility is being dependable, organized, and punctual, as well as being accountable for your words and actions.

### **STUDENT ACTIVITIES:**

- Have students list at least 5 things they would expect their students to be responsible for if they were the teacher. Write all ideas on the board and tally which five things received the greatest number of votes. (This might be a great way to discuss rules of the classroom on the first day/week of school.)
- Have students write a poem, jingle, paragraph, or saying about responsibility. Suggest that students start each day by reading one to the class or over the PA system (if permitted).
- Create a Responsibility Bulletin Board to display students' thoughts and writings about responsibility.
- Have students write a skit that demonstrates campus rules. Emphasize the students' responsibility to follow the rules. Present it to the first all-school assembly in the fall or over the announcements. Encourage students to include humor in the skit. People remember things better when they can laugh; however, explain that when a skit is too funny, people tend to miss the message.
- Ask students to consider whether math makes them more responsible. Does studying math have any effect on organization of thoughts or on perseverance? Can the benefits of learning logic skills and analytical thinking spill over into other areas of your life? Draw a mind map showing all of the connections students can think of between math and other life events.
- Have students do research on responsibility in advertising. Suppose that an advertiser of a popular breakfast cereal claims that "Crunchie Critters" gives a person more pep and energy than other breakfast foods. What if it isn't true? Are advertisers responsible for telling the truth? Ask students to watch a week's worth of television commercials and keep a record of any that seem to contain exaggerations or unproved claims. Discuss roles that students can take as consumers to influence responsibility in advertising.

- Find examples of popular music that promote responsibility, dependability, and perseverance. Bring them to school and share them with your class. (Clear them with your teacher first). Do you think that music has the power to inspire people to be more responsible? Less responsible? Explain your answer.
- Have students examine the role of responsibility in sports. Compare team sports to individual sports. Which sports seem to demand the most responsibility from the players? Which seem to promote responsibility? Which, if any, seem to promote irresponsible behavior? What about the responsibility of athletes when using illegal performance enhancing drugs such as steroids?

Variation: Have students interview coaches and athletes in your school and/or community. Ask their ideas about responsibility in sports.

- Encourage students, along with their parents or guardians, to survey their neighborhoods and find out if there are any elders who need help with such things as repairing fences, shopping for groceries, painting, doing minor repairs, caring for their lawn, etc. Encourage students to take responsibility and offer assistance with parent or guardian permission/supervision.
- Lead a discussion about the responsibility of work. Explore with students how to find a job or start their own business. Help them use math to determine how much to charge per hour or how much they will make per job. Examples might be doing yard work, babysitting, walking the neighbor's dog, or collecting papers/mail while neighbors are on vacation, etc. Encourage students to work with parents and/or guardians to make a one-page flyer describing the kinds of work they do and how much they will charge.
- Play a "What's Their Responsibility?" game. Make a list of roles or careers in society. Use some of the following examples: artist, bank teller, mother, cafeteria worker, child, coach, weather forecaster, veterinarian, student, teacher, etc. Divide into two or more teams. Give each team the list of roles/careers. The object of the game is for students to list four different or unusual responsibilities for each role or career.
- Brainstorm ways to demonstrate responsibility for school work. Have students identify one area of responsibility they will work on.
- Discuss what responsibilities students think parents have toward their children. Do those responsibilities change as children get older? How?
- Ask student how privilege and responsibility are linked. "What are the privileges you'd like to have as an adult?" "What responsibilities go with that?" Have students write these on paper and collect the papers. Ask volunteers to share their ideas.
- Ask students to identify the advantages of being responsible when they come to school. How do they benefit?

- Encourage students to assume a new responsibility at home such as cooking dinner one night or taking care of a younger brother or sister. Have them write a paragraph about their responsibility and what it involved.
- Work in teams to design a poster demonstrating responsibility.
- Place a dollar bill on the floor. As students enter, stand near the dollar, but do not say anything. Watch the students' reactions. When the students are seated, pick up the dollar and ask them what they would have done if you were not standing nearby or if they found it on the sidewalk. Ask students what they would do if they found a hundred or a thousand dollars. Ask questions such as "How would your actions change if the amount of money was large or small?", "Should you keep the money if no one asks for it?", "Should you turn it in if it's a small amount?", "Should you keep the money if someone asks for it?", "Should you tell him or her you don't have it?", and "Do you have a responsibility to the person who lost the money?". Encourage honest discussion without judging or reprimanding students for differing opinions.
- Have students identify times when they have made a promise to a friend that they kept and times when they made a promise that they did not keep. Discuss responsible behavior in keeping a promise. Invite the students to role play how each person would feel in these types of situations.
- Discuss the importance of good health. Explain to the students that we must be responsible for taking care of our body and staying healthy. Have the students brainstorm how they can take care of their bodies. Ask the school nurse to share ideas for making healthful decisions. Include in the discussion: Getting lots of sleep, Eating healthy foods (fruit and vegetables), exercising every day, and practicing good hygiene (brushing teeth and hair, bathing)
- Have the students observe another student who is practicing responsibility. Ask students to write one or two paragraphs about how the other student was being responsible. Discuss their findings in class.
- Have the students watch the news on television, read the newspaper, or listen to the radio for an individual who is being responsible. Ask them to report their findings.
- Have students list all the ways they practice being responsible at home. Have them exchange their list with a partner. Create a third list that combines both lists. Have one person report on their findings.

- Ask students to consider these scenarios in writing or through discussion:
  - Suppose that you are a recent immigrant to the United States. Are you responsible for obeying the laws if you don't know what they are? If you unknowingly break a law, should you be held accountable?
  - Suppose you have a real talent for gymnastics, but your parents can't afford to pay for lessons. Are they responsible for finding ways to support and encourage your talent? If they aren't responsible, who is?
  - Suppose you're a parent whose child is caught painting graffiti on a school building. Are you responsible for the damage your child has done? If not, why not?
  - Suppose someone who lives in your neighborhood accidentally broke a water pipe while planting a tree on the boulevard. The boulevard is public property. Who should pay for repairing the damage? Is the city responsible? Is the neighborhood organization responsible? Would it make a difference if you knew that person was a single parent with several children and a very limited income?
  - Suppose your school has a "closed" campus rule, meaning that students aren't allowed to leave school grounds during school hours. A group of your friends regularly eats lunch at a nearby fast-food restaurant. Do you have any responsibility in this situation? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

## **SOURCES:**

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