CHARACTER COUNTS! gives you the tools to help young people learn and model the Six Pillars of Character. With support materials (like this book) and a broad array of training programs for schools and youth-serving organizations, CHARACTER COUNTS! reaches millions of youth across the U.S. and abroad.

Training Seminars and Workshops
CHARACTER COUNTS! offers a variety of training programs that address the specific needs of your school or organization. Three-day Character Development Seminars show educators and youth-service professionals how to build a lasting program that improves student behavior and performance. One-day workshops provide solutions to issues such as:

- Curriculum Integration
- Classroom Management
- Bullying
- Sportsmanship
- Involving Parents

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Schools that embrace CHARACTER COUNTS! and integrate it into all areas of campus life report dramatic changes: suspensions plummet, student engagement skyrockets and the whole culture is transformed.

The lesson plans in this book are a great way to get started. They’re designed to fit with today’s demanding curricular requirements in a variety of subject areas. They’re also useful for after-school programs and off-campus youth activities.

The Six Pillars of Character® are T.R.R.F.C.C.:
- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

Lesson plans for five age groups (K-12) from the nation’s most widely implemented character-education framework.
to Help Young People Develop Good Character

Lessons and Activities for Bringing the Six Pillars of Character® to Schools, Youth Groups, and Communities

Produced by Josephson Institute
Editors’ Note and Acknowledgments

This edition of *Good Ideas* features the lesson plans from the previous editions, plus an updated introductory section.

Josephson Institute thanks the teachers and youth-service professionals who shared their ideas with us, as well as the Institute’s CHARACTER COUNTS!® department for contacting CC! members for their input. We are also grateful to those who granted permission to reprint or adapt previously published work.

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GOOD IDEAS

to Help Young People
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GOOD IDEAS

SECTION ONE:
CHARACTER COUNTS!

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES
Introduction

Each year, more and more schools and communities across the U.S. and abroad are recognizing the importance of character education. And each year the evidence of its effectiveness grows stronger. Schools that use CHARACTER COUNTS!® report dramatic improvements in student behavior and a better school climate overall.

CHARACTER COUNTS! started in 1992 and it has since become the most popular character education program in the nation. With materials (like this book) and training workshops for educators, coaches and youth-service professionals, we help you bring out the best in young people. Specifically, we give you the tools to build the “Six Pillars of Character”: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

The nonprofit Josephson Institute, which administers CHARACTER COUNTS!, recently released a “report card” on youth ethics in the United States. The findings are encouraging: the rate of lying, cheating and stealing among teens has dropped for the first time in 10 years. But the frequency of these behaviors is still unacceptably high. Moreover, bullying remains an epidemic among our youth, and too often schools are not equipped to provide a safe haven for learning.

The lessons in this book will help you give students a moral compass. They are not intended to replace your existing curriculum or to be an add-on to an already busy school day. They are meant to enhance what you are already doing by using a common language to heighten awareness of students’ ethical responsibilities and duties.

Teachers report that many of these lesson plans are easily adapted. For example, with a little tinkering, an activity for 6- to 9-year-olds could work for a kindergarten class, and vice-versa.

For information about implementing CHARACTER COUNTS! throughout your school or organization, call us at 800-711-2670 or visit charactercounts.org.

Thank you and good luck.

— CHARACTER COUNTS! Team
The Six Pillars of Character®

The Six Pillars of Character are the framework for CHARACTER COUNTS®, which transcends politics, religion and cultural differences and doesn’t exclude anyone. The Six Pillars are universal values we all share: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Trustworthiness
Be honest • Don’t deceive, cheat or steal • Be reliable – do what you say you’ll do • Have the courage to do the right thing • Build a good reputation • Be loyal – stand by your family, friends and country

Respect
Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant and accepting of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements

Responsibility
Do what you are supposed to do • Plan ahead • Persevere: keep on trying! • Always do your best • Use self-control • Be self-disciplined • Think before you act – consider the consequences • Be accountable for your words, actions, and attitudes • Set a good example for others

Fairness
Play by the rules • Take turns and share • Be open-minded; listen to others • Don’t take advantage of others • Don’t blame others carelessly • Treat all people fairly

Caring
Be kind • Be compassionate and show you care • Express gratitude • Forgive others • Help people in need

Citizenship
Do your share to make your school and community better • Cooperate • Get involved in community affairs • Stay informed; vote • Be a good neighbor • Obey laws and rules • Respect authority • Protect the environment • Volunteer

CC! Works
“CHARACTER COUNTS! makes our teaching efforts more effective. When kids are more trustworthy, respectful, responsible, sharing, caring and good citizens, this allows us to go deeper with instruction and spend more time on tasks.”
– Carrie Ann Ortiz, teacher, Lennox Middle School, Los Angeles

Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character © Josephson Institute
YOUR 24/7 ONLINE TEACHING RESOURCE: CHARACTERCOUNTS.ORG
Putting the Six Pillars to Work

The T.E.A.M. Approach to Character Education

TEACH
• Let young people know character counts and enduring happiness depends on who you are, not on what you have or can do.
• Show that people of character know the difference between right and wrong because ethical values guide them.
• When explaining character, use the Six Pillars, stories, history and the news.

ENFORCE
• Reward good behavior and impose fair, consistent consequences that prove you are serious about character.
• Demonstrate courage and firmness of will by enforcing core values when it is difficult to do so.
• Discourage all instances of bad behavior.

ADVOCATE
• Encourage others to live up to the Six Pillars.
• Don’t be neutral about character or casual about improper conduct.
• Make it clear that you expect everyone to demonstrate the Six Pillars.

MODEL
• Set a good example in what you say and do.
• Be sure your actions reinforce your lessons about doing the right thing even when it is hard to do so.
• When you slip, act the way you would prefer young people do when they behave improperly. Be accountable, apologize sincerely — and do better!

An Effective Character Development Program Is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSEFUL</th>
<th>Articulate clear and explicit objectives, and design all program elements to influence values and behavior.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSUASIVE</td>
<td>Ensure that your organization’s commitment to the Six Pillars is apparent in all its activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPETITIVE</td>
<td>Convey repeatedly and conspicuously the meaning and importance of the Six Pillars, using common language and definitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSISTENT</td>
<td>Be sure attitudes, words and actions are consistent with the Six Pillars, regardless of how inconvenient or costly it may be.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CREATIVE</td>
<td>The program must go beyond moralizing and should employ an array of lively teaching strategies to engage the imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCRETE</td>
<td>Show the Six Pillars at work in concrete and realistic situations.</td>
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The Numbers Don’t Lie – CHARACTER COUNTS™ Works!

Across the country, schools with a comprehensive CHARACTER COUNTS™ program have significantly reduced bullying and violence while improving attendance and academic performance:

- **Riverside, IL:** Three years after implementing CHARACTER COUNTS™, Riverside Brookfield High School near Chicago reports: 22 percent fewer suspensions; a 51 percent reduction in in-school suspensions; a decrease of 25 percent in bullying incidents, 58 percent fewer fights and a 90 percent drop in verbal altercations. During those three years, not only did behavioral infractions plummet, but according to the principal, “our academic achievement improved, and our school spirit soared.”

- **Downey, CA:** In the Downey School District, annual API scores rose 5.1 percent during the first four years CHARACTER COUNTS™ was implemented. High school graduation rates jumped to 92 percent, compared with statewide graduation rates of 68 percent.

- **Tulare, CA:** CHARACTER COUNTS™ dramatically reduced incidents of violence and misconduct at Tulare County Probation Youth Facility. Just 8 percent of youths in the modified “boot camp” committed crimes in post aftercare, compared to a national rate of 72 percent.

- **Hutchinson, KS:** After implementing CHARACTER COUNTS™, Prosperity Elementary School reduced office referrals from 378 in 2007-08 to less than 50 in 2008-09, 2009-10, and less than 30 in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years.

- **Lennox, CA:** In Lennox School District in the Los Angeles area, the percentage of students at or above proficiency on the Mathematics CST increased steadily within two years following the introduction of CHARACTER COUNTS™ (in conjunction with other teaching and curriculum strategies). Elementary schools rose from 26 to 46 percent; middle schools (6th grade) jumped from 11 to 27 percent; and middle schools (7th and 8th grades) increased from 3 to 31 percent.

- **Port St. John, FL:** CHARACTER COUNTS™ improved test scores at Atlantis Elementary School. The percentage of students scoring 3 or above (on an ascending 1-5 scale) on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test jumped from 45 percent to 78 percent in one year.

- **Puerto Rico:** Nearly 500 schools have implemented CHARACTER COUNTS™ in Puerto Rico. A recent study found: 86 percent of principals reported higher student engagement; 86 percent of teachers said they were more positive about school, and morale was higher; 78 percent of parents said it increased their involvement in their child’s education; 85 percent of parents said the quality of their child’s education has improved.

For more research and results, visit charactercounts.org/research
CHARACTER COUNTS!
Talking Points

Here are some points to help you rally colleagues, administrators, youth leaders, parents and others in support of character education.

• Schools and youth-service groups have a direct interest in character education because it makes their primary goals, like improving academic performance, easier to achieve.

• CHARACTER COUNTS! is the most widely implemented approach to character education — reaching millions of youth through thousands of schools and hundreds of groups, such as YMCA, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, AYSO and Little League.

• CHARACTER COUNTS! teaches consensus values called the Six Pillars of Character® — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

• CHARACTER COUNTS! is not an add-on. It is a common-language framework that helps young people mature effectively by integrating ethical concepts into curricula, intervention programs and organizational culture.

• CHARACTER COUNTS! works — in every setting, from urban to suburban to rural.

  It improves commitment to school. Discipline referrals fell 75 percent at Easton Elementary in Easton, Maryland, over four years with CHARACTER COUNTS!. Suspensions fell 63 percent, repeat suspensions fell 53 percent and the number of students in extracurricular activities rose 58 percent over five years at Glenn Westlake Middle School in Lombard, Illinois. Moreover, Lombard police reported that offenses typical of youth have declined: graffiti by 61 percent, curfew violation by 68 percent, truancy by 63 percent and alcohol use by 41 percent.

  It enhances school climate. "It's like night and day," says Linda Jones, who ran CHARACTER COUNTS! in the Dallas public schools. "The whole emotional atmosphere of the building changes. It becomes a kinder, gentler place." Cindy Mau, assistant principal at Jim Hill Middle School in Minot, North Dakota, concurs: "We're seeing the school climate change. And in today's world, school climate is absolutely crucial." Or listen to Dan Horn, principal of St. Genevieve's High School in Los Angeles: "We went from having a theme of discipline to one of character."

• Nonpartisan and nonsectarian, it's endorsed across the spectrum by Democratic and Republican presidents, both houses of Congress, most states and countless faith communities, school districts and chambers of commerce.

• During National CHARACTER COUNTS! Week (the third week of October) schools and communities celebrate their achievements and commitment to character education. In 2012, four million American youth took part.

• CHARACTER COUNTS! national office offers training classes, workshops, curricular-support materials, publications, consulting services and networking opportunities.

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Introducing
CHARACTER COUNTS!® 4.0

Totally redesigned training to provide the most up-to-date strategies for today’s issues.

After decades of changing the lives of millions of students, CHARACTER COUNTS! has developed a new comprehensive approach to character education. Known as CHARACTER COUNTS! 4.0, this integrated character development system improves student behavior and decision-making.

CHARACTER COUNTS! 4.0 can be easily integrated into your current curriculum. It provides schools, teachers and parents with state-of-the-art research-based strategies for helping students develop core values and life skills. No other system takes such a complete approach to child development.

Our team will work closely with yours to help transform your school climate and increase engagement in the community. We provide the training, evaluation, support and coaching along with the resources to help ensure the program’s success.

We incorporate the best strategies and practices from:

- Character Development
- Social Emotional Learning
- Whole Child Development
- Research Based Instruction
- 21st Century Outcomes
- Anti-bullying
- Common Core

Experience Success Firsthand!
Regional Instruction Centers & Model Schools

CHARACTER COUNTS! schools that are recognized as “National Model Schools of Character” may be selected as Regional Instruction Centers to host our three-day professional development seminars.

At these schools, seminar participants meet with staff and students to see and hear firsthand how CHARACTER COUNTS! really works.

Visit charactercounts.org/schedule for a list of schools and the dates of the seminars they are hosting.

CC! Works
Suspensions fell 63 percent, repeat suspensions dropped 53 percent and the number of students in extracurricular activities rose 58 percent over five years of CHARACTER COUNTS! in Glenn Westlake Middle School in Lombard, Illinois. Moreover, Lombard police report that youth offenses have declined: graffiti by 61 percent, curfew violations by 68 percent, truancy by 63 percent and alcohol use or possession by 41 percent.

Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character
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Our In-Service Workshops
Bring School Climate Change Right to Your Doorstep!

CHARACTER COUNTS!® in-service workshops provide educators with innovative strategies for addressing the most pressing issues facing schools today. Whatever your challenges are, finding a cost-effective, sustainable solution is our specialty.

We can customize a one-day, on-site, in-service to fit your school or organization's specific needs, or you can choose from a selection of topics, including:

- **Bullying prevention.** Learn strategies to address and prevent bullying and create a culture of kindness so that bullying becomes unacceptable.

- **Curriculum integration and classroom management.** Discover how to seamlessly weave character building lessons into all school subjects and identify teachable moments.

- **CHARACTER COUNTS! for school counselors.** Provides counselors with techniques for improving student communication, infusing core values into counseling and building schoolwide buy-in for character development.

- **Pursuing Victory With Honor®.** Designed for coaches, parents and anyone involved in athletics, this training helps create a culture of respect and good sportsmanship on and off the field.

Visit charactercounts.org/inservice or contact us at charactercounts@jiethics.org or 800-711-2670 to book your in-service day.

Register for One of Our Webinars

Our webinars are a convenient and affordable way to learn valuable character development techniques. Learn how to get started with the CHARACTER COUNTS! program. Discover useful strategies for bullying prevention, curriculum integration, classroom management and much more.

After each webinar, participants receive a follow-up email with useful information, including a recording of the webinar, additional resources and content referenced in the webinar.

Webinar topics include:
- Getting Started With CC!
- Curriculum Integration
- Pillar Power!
- Bullying Prevention
- Cyberbullying

Each webinar includes:
- A live trainer who will answer specific questions
- Tips and strategies that you can use right away
- A guide to free resources
- Suggestions for follow-up training

Visit charactercounts.org/webinars for more info and to see the webinar schedule.
CHARACTER COUNTS!®
Membership

CHARACTER COUNTS! is two things: an educational framework for teaching universal values and a national association of organizations that receive special benefits.

There are hundreds of CHARACTER COUNTS! members, including schools, districts, municipalities, human-service agencies, youth-service groups and businesses. Together we reach millions of young people every year. As the membership has grown, so has the demand for practical teaching resources that help build character, such as the lesson plans featured in this book.

Membership benefits include:
• Free webinars and discounts on educational resources and support materials
• Free e-newsletters and consultations
• Special rates on Character Development Seminars
• Special rates on professional development and in-service workshops
• Free listing and link on our CHARACTER COUNTS! Members page at charactercounts.org

Membership commitments:
• Members agree to integrate character education – specifically the Six Pillars of Character® (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) – into their programs.
• Members agree to advocate community involvement in local and national CHARACTER COUNTS! programs, such as Worldwide CHARACTER COUNTS! Week.
• Members agree to share their practices and data along with the results of their CHARACTER COUNTS! program.
CHARACTER COUNTS!® Week

Each year, the President, U.S. Senate, state governors and officials around the world proclaim the third week of October to be CHARACTER COUNTS! Week. It’s the largest celebration of character in the world with millions of kids across the globe participating.

Educators, youth group leaders and communities all over the world help students volunteer, paint murals, perform random acts of kindness and learn about the Six Pillars of Character® — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. This celebration transcends religion, politics and cultural differences and champions the universal values we all share.

How can you celebrate CHARACTER COUNTS! Week?
It’s easy. First register online at charactercounts.org/ccweek, where you’ll gain access to lots of free resources, including:

• A list of meaningful and easy-to-plan activities for celebrating the Week
• Handouts and flyers to help you build community support
• Fund-raising tips and tools
• Mini-posters to help teach students about character
• And much more!

In addition to helping you plan your CHARACTER COUNTS! Week activities, the CHARACTER COUNTS! National Office wants to hear about your events so we can share them with other schools and organizations. And remember, you can celebrate character every week of the year!

Here are a few ideas on how you and your school or organization can celebrate CHARACTER COUNTS! Week:

• Participate in contests — write essays, shoot videos, design posters — that show off how the Six Pillars of Character are being embraced by your school or organization.
• Demonstrate citizenship by improving your neighborhood. Or organize a charitable event (e.g., a food drive, car wash, bake sale or walk-a-thon).
• Recognize caring in your school by instituting a Random Acts of Kindness Day.
• Service learning: Coordinate a project that addresses a community need.
• Encourage a culture of kindness by setting aside time each day for children to recognize one another for exhibiting good character.
• Select one of the Six Pillars of Character to feature during daily morning announcements, illustrating each Pillar with stories, quotes or skits.
• Show respect and responsibility for your school by setting aside time to beautify its campus and facilities, picking up trash, pledging not to vandalize property, or planting trees and flowers.
• Promote the Pillars via social media. For example, develop a prompt (an anti-bullying message or an inspirational quote about character) for children to copy-paste as their Facebook status.

— Kathy Vallance, Elementary School Counselor, Village of Barboursville Elementary, Barboursville, West Virginia

CC! Works

“Excellent program!!! It is helping to improve the character of our school. Thank you!”

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Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character

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Pursuing Victory With Honor®

- National sportsmanship campaign to build character, life skills, teamwork and academic performance in young athletes
- Endorsements from virtually every U.S. amateur athletic organization
- Training programs and support materials
- Practical principles and reports to guide your initiative, including the Arizona Sports Summit Accord, the Gold Medal Standards for Amateur Basketball and the Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports
- Blog and related e-newsletter full of stories, tips and implementation ideas
Your Character Education Resource Center:
CHARACTERCOUNTS.ORG

- Free teaching tools for educators, parents, coaches, youth leaders and community organizers — with handouts, guides and more
- Details on membership, with easy steps to get started
- Information on in-service workshops
- Calendar of training seminars around the country
- Free Lesson Plan Bank, organized by the Six Pillars of Character®
- Free and premium webinars on a variety of topics
- Online store and printable catalog of age-appropriate materials
- Data on CHARACTER COUNTS!® results and compliance with education standards
- Free reports and documents, including the Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth
- Information on the Josephson Institute and CHARACTER COUNTS!
- Decision making model
- Essays on character from prominent Americans
- CHARACTER COUNTS! activities around the nation, with photos and stories
- Library of inspirational quotes

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- Innovative lesson plans
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Sportsmanship
- News and character-building ideas
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What Will Matter, by Michael Josephson
- Insightful commentaries
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- iPhone and Android mobile apps

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Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character
Educational Support Materials

Available at charactercounts.org/store
or call 800-711-2670 for a free catalog.

• Books and booklets
• Banners and posters
• Sportsmanship resources
• Videos and music
• Pencils, pens, stickers and charts
• T-shirts
• Original lesson plans and activities
• Agendas... and more

[NOTE: Items not shown in proportion.]
GOOD IDEAS

SECTION TWO: LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES
THE SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER

TRUSTWORTHINESS
- Be honest.
- Don’t deceive, cheat or steal.
- Be reliable — do what you say you’ll do.
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country.

RESPECT
- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Use good manners, not bad language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

RESPONSIBILITY
- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere: keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Use self-control.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act — consider the consequences.
- Be accountable for your choices.

FAIRNESS
- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don’t take advantage of others.
- Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING
- Be kind.
- Be compassionate; show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

CITIZENSHIP
- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules.
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment
IDEA #1

Tower of Trust

OVERVIEW: Children learn about building trust by citing ways they can earn it. They then illustrate these ideas on index cards which are affixed to small boxes to build a “tower of trust.”

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one index card for each child
- small boxes or other cube-shaped items to use as building blocks (one for each child)
- tape
- enough crayons for all the children to color at the same time

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children: If your mom asks you to pick up your toys, can she count on you to do it? Wait for responses, then ask: Can she count on you to pick up those toys, even if she isn’t looking?

Field their comments, then explain what it means to have good character: People with good character do good things — even when their moms aren’t looking. When you do good things over and over again, even when parents and teachers aren’t looking, you earn trust. Nobody is trusted automatically. But when your parents and teachers realize that you have a habit of doing good things without being asked, then they let you do more things on your own. What are some things you can do to show your mom you can be trusted? Solicit answers and praise them for their good ideas.

Distribute index cards and crayons to the children and have them draw pictures of themselves doing the things they mentioned. Allow a few minutes for the children to draw and color, then ask them to share their pictures with the rest of the group.

Say: These are good examples of ways to earn trust. Let’s use them to make a “trust tower.” Tape each card to a building block (cut the cards to reduce their size if necessary), and carefully stack them to form a pyramid-shaped tower. Tell them that building trust takes several good examples like the ones on the blocks.

When you’ve completed the tower, say: It has taken a long time to build your mom’s trust in you. But it doesn’t take long at all to destroy the tower of trust. What if you tell your mom you picked up all your toys, and she finds them under the rug?

— Edgar J. Mohn
What will that do for the trust you’ve built? When one of them says it will damage it, affirm this and illustrate how it weakens trust by carefully pulling a block from the tower.

Ask: What if you tell your mom you ate your green beans and then she finds them wadded up in your napkin? What will that do for the trust you’ve built? Again, illustrate how it weakens trust by pulling another block from the tower.

Ask: What if you tell your mom you will wear your coat when you’re outside and then she sees you playing with only a T-shirt on? What will that do for the trust you’ve built? Pull another block from the tower.

Continue with examples until your tower crumbles. When it falls, tell them: Now it’s even harder to build trust because we have to clean up all of this mess before we can get started building again!

Conclude the activity with a discussion, asking them questions such as: Will you keep this tower in mind to help you remember to build trust? What good things are you going to do to build trust with your parents? Your teachers? Your baby-sitters? Your brothers and sisters? Say: Remember to keep doing good things to build trust even when no one is looking.

Adapted from “Exercising Character” lesson plans and activities by Peggy Adkins (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995.
IDEA #2

“Continue the Story” Game

**OVERVIEW:** Kids learn about the importance of telling the truth even when its consequences are unpleasant. First, they contribute to stories about an honest child and then about a youngster who is dishonest. They discuss and learn about how one lie can lead to more lies.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- set of dominos (optional)

**PROCEDURE:**

*Ask:* Does anyone know what it means to be “honest?” Discuss the meaning of “honesty” and “dishonesty.”

*Say:* Today we’re going to play a game called “continue the story.” I’m going to start a story about someone who was dishonest. When someone taps you on the shoulder, you have to say something to continue the story about this dishonest person.

Choose a scenario (below) and begin the story. Tap the shoulder of one of the children and tell him/her to continue the story. After adding one or two sentences to the story, he or she taps the shoulder of another child who then adds a little more to it. One way to make sure that each child gets a chance to continue the story is to start with the whole group standing and have each child sit down after finishing his/her turn. (Throughout the story, you may want to step in, adding parts showing how one lie often requires another lie to protect it.) After the last child has finished, you give the story an ending in which the lies are uncovered and the truth is revealed.

(Optional: Use a set of dominos to provide a good visual illustration of how one lie requires a string of new ones to keep it intact. Then, when one lie is finally uncovered, the whole series comes crashing down. After each child suggests a way to cover up the first lie, place a domino side-by-side on a flat surface. When the lie is revealed, knock down the dominos and explain the illustration.)

Use the following scenarios to begin:

1. Maria was playing “dress up” in her mom’s shoes and the strap broke. She pushes the strap back in so that it doesn’t appear broken, puts the shoes back in her mom’s closet and runs outside to play. Later that night her mom gets ready to go out and puts those shoes on without noticing that they’re broken. . . .

— Vaclav Havel
2. Even though his dad told him not to, Raymond was horsing around in the house and accidentally broke a vase. He glues it back together, hoping his mom won’t notice. But that evening his mom comes home with some flowers and wants to put them in the vase with water. . . .

3. Howard’s mom told him to be really careful with his new coat but he ended up losing it that same day. He didn’t want to tell his mom this so he said he let his friend borrow it. Then he went shopping with his mom and ran into the friend who was supposed to have the coat. . . .

After these stories are completed, begin them again. Tell the students that this time they are to show how Maria, Raymond and Howard could be honest. For example:

1. You were playing “dress up” in your mom’s shoes and the strap broke. You want to pretend it didn’t happen and leave the shoes, but you go tell your mom anyway.

2. You were playing in the house against your dad’s wishes and broke a vase. You have some glue and could probably glue it back together without him noticing, but you go tell him what happened anyway.

3. You lost your coat and you know your mom doesn’t have a lot of money to buy you another one. You’re tempted to lie and say you know where it is, but you tell her the truth.

After the stories are finished, ask the children what they think about telling the truth. Ask them if it’s hard, or if it can get you into trouble. Ask: Telling the truth is hard sometimes, but why is it always better than telling a lie or hiding the truth? (Solicit comments.)

Say: Have you ever heard anyone say, “One lie leads to another lie?” When we hide the truth, we often have to tell more lies to protect the first one, and sooner or later somebody usually finds out. For example, your mom might try to dance on her broken shoe, or water might spurt out of the vase. When this happens, all the people you lied to will be less likely to believe you the next time you tell them something.
IDEA #3

The Boy Who Cried “Wolf!”

OVERVIEW: This popular fable introduces children to the notion that trustworthiness must be earned and that it will be lost if one lies repeatedly.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the children the story about the boy who cried, “Wolf!” (Summary: A young boy, for his own entertainment, makes believe and screams that a big wolf has come into the village. The people in the village are very alarmed at first. But after he pulls this stunt several times and no wolf is ever seen, the villagers begin to realize that he is just pretending. One day a mean wolf actually comes into the village. But this time when the boy cries out to forewarn the others, everyone knows that he is not trustworthy and they ignore him.)

Discuss the importance of telling the truth all the time. Use the following questions in your discussion:

• What happens if someone lies a lot? (Others stop believing you.)
• Why didn’t the people believe the boy when there really was a wolf? (Because his repeated lying made him untrustworthy.)
• What is the best way to make sure people believe us all the time? (Always be honest.)
• Has this sort of thing ever happened to someone you know?
IDEA #4

A Walk in the Dark

OVERVIEW: Children appreciate how it feels to be trusted when they help a blindfolded friend navigate through a circle of toys.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- toys or objects to toss into a circle (one for each child)
- tape or string to make the circle
- blindfolds

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children: *If all the lights went off in this room, how would you find your way around?* Wait for responses. When the children say they would talk to one another, ask: *How could your friends help you? How could you help your friends?* Field responses and then emphasize the importance of providing honest information. Compare what would happen if they offered dishonest directions instead. Then explain: *When others know you speak honestly, they can trust you and believe you. If people believe you, how do they treat you?* Discuss some examples that illustrate the benefits of being honest. Next ask: *Why is it sometimes difficult to be truthful?* Discuss their answers and tell them: *Learning to be honest takes practice just like everything else.* Point to the circle and say: *We will use this circle to practice being trustworthy.*

Divide the children into pairs. Distribute to each child a small toy or object. Then instruct each child to set his/her item in the circle and to state one benefit of telling or being told the truth. Then blindfold one member of each pair. Instruct the non-blindfolded children to verbally guide their blindfolded partners through the trust circle without stepping on the objects. When all the blindfolded children have gone through the circle, have them switch places with their partners until everyone has walked through the circle.

Conclude the lesson with a discussion, asking: *What did your guide do to help you trust him/her? Why was it easy or hard to trust your partner? Did you want to peek? Why? What can you do to be trusted by others? How do you feel when people believe you? How do you think people feel when they can trust you?*

Adapted from an idea submitted by Mary Jo Williams, 4-H youth development specialist (4-H Youth Program, University Extension, University of Missouri System, Lincoln University) based on a lesson in “Show-Me Character All Star” (Missouri 4-H Youth Development’s character education program).
IDEA #5

Living Truth

OVERVIEW: Children associate positive images with honesty and are encouraged to be trustworthy.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of *A Big Fat Enormous Lie*, by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat (E.P. Dutton, 1993)
- plain paper folded in half
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the meaning of trustworthiness. Ask: *Who can you trust? What does trust mean to you?*

Read aloud *A Big Fat Enormous Lie*. Discuss how what starts as a small fib grows to become a giant web of lies.

Next, tell the children to think of a lie as a living creature. Ask what it would look like and have them explain their answers. Then have them describe what the truth would look like as a living creature.

Distribute the folded paper and crayons and instruct the children to draw on one half what they imagine the truth would look like and on the other half what they envision a lie to look like.

Have the children share and explain their pictures to the rest of the group. Display the drawings under a banner entitled “What You See Is What You Get.”

Adapted from an idea submitted by Katherine Boyer, a librarian at Conewago Township Elementary School in Pennsylvania. Her idea is based on a lesson in *Building Character and Community in the Classroom, K-3* by Rhonda Howely, et al. (Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press, 1997).

— Paul Bowles
20th-century American novelist
IDEA #6

Meet a Character: Shinrai

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the notion of good character, discuss and define it and then learn about Shinrai, the “Character Carousel” animal that represents trustworthiness. They conclude with a coloring activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Refer to the description of the “Character Carousel” on page 9.
- copies of the “Shinrai the Camel” handout (one for each child)
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing the Pillar of trustworthiness, introduce the children to the concept of character. Say: When you watch cartoons on TV, you see many different kinds of characters. Can any of you tell me who some of the characters are that you see? Field answers and compliment them on their choices. Next, say: The word “character” also has another meaning; it’s what we are inside. It shows itself when we behave certain ways. If we behave well, we show good character. What are some examples of behavior that shows good character? List and help explain their answers. Suggest others (e.g., telling the truth, helping others at home and in school, following instructions, sharing, etc.).

After you feel that they have an understanding of the concept, explain trustworthiness to them. Say: One way to show your good character is to act trustworthy. Hold up the handout of Shinrai for them. This is Shinrai the Camel. She has the courage to do the right thing even when it is difficult. She also keeps her promises, does what she says she will do and is always on time.

Go through the descriptions of Shinrai’s behavior and help the children define how the cartoon characters that they mentioned earlier show the trait of trustworthiness. Then ask them how they can show trustworthiness in their own lives.

Conclude the discussion with a coloring activity using the Shinrai the Camel handout. Invite them to take her home and explain her good character to others.

The coloring handout is reproduced from the “Character Carousel” posters printed by Frank Schaffer Publications (Torrance, CA). Materials featuring the Carousel animals are available through the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
IDEA #6 Handout: Shinrai the Camel

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Are you trustworthy?
• Are you honest in your words and actions?
• Do you keep your promises?
• Do you stand up for your beliefs and do what is right?
• Are you a good friend?
IDEA #7

What Does It Mean to Be Considerate?

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the concept of consideration and why it is important to be considerate.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Ask: Who can tell me what it means to be “considerate?” What about “inconsiderate” — who can tell me what that means?

Solicit responses, then say: Being considerate means being respectful. To help you do this, it’s important to remember the Golden Rule. Does anyone know what the Golden Rule is? Tell them: The Golden Rule means treating others the way you want them to treat you. Ask: Why is it important to be considerate and to practice the Golden Rule? Field responses and add any of the following which go unmentioned:

• When we behave selfishly and don’t practice consideration, people’s feelings are often hurt; we can avoid hurting the ones we love by being considerate.
• When we are inconsiderate, it makes others inconsiderate too.
• When we practice consideration, others start to practice it too. It’s contagious!
• Without consideration, people get into arguments because they feel their feelings are being ignored. But when we are considerate, things are more peaceful.
• When we are considerate, we let people know that they are important because we consider how they might feel before we do things.
• Getting in the habit of being considerate makes it much easier to do the right thing in any situation.

IDEA #8

Consideration in Action

OVERVIEW: Children learn that being a considerate person must not be limited to feelings — it’s essential to show consideration in our actions. In this exercise, they distinguish between considerate and inconsiderate behavior and think of ways to practice the former.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell them: Consideration begins by noticing how our actions are affecting other people. We find out what they like and don’t like and consider their feelings. But we don’t just stop there — we let the Golden Rule guide us when we do things. If we don’t want others to do it to us, we don’t do it to them. Can you think of a way that you followed this rule? Solicit comments and discuss.

Say: When I read these statements, you say if each one is considerate or inconsiderate. Read the following:

- You act as if others are just as important as you are.
- You walk quietly when someone is reading.
- You call your brother a jerk.
- You wait to ask a question if someone is busy.
- You run around and don’t pay attention when someone is talking to you.
- You make sure you come in for dinner on time so nobody has to wait for you.
- You hide the cookies from your sister so you can eat them all.

Say: Now let’s talk about some examples. (Call on children individually.) What would consideration look like if . . .

- Your brother was feeling bored because he was sick and had to stay in bed?
- You and your sister liked different kinds of music and you only had one radio?
- You were having a birthday party and you could only invite a couple other friends?
- You were opening a door at school and realized someone was right behind you?

The most sublime act is to set another before you.
— William Blake
• You had just come home from school and your grandmother was taking a nap?

Conclude the activity by saying: Before we act, we should always ask ourselves things like “Will this hurt or disturb someone else?” and “Would I be upset if someone did this to me?” If the answer is yes, we have to think of another way to do it that is considerate to other people . . . or we shouldn’t do it at all.

IDEA #9

Respecting Differences

OVERVIEW: Children discuss how each of them is unique and learn that physical characteristics are never a good reason to deny others respect. The students color self portraits to highlight and discuss their differences.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- crayons (enough for each child to use several colors)
- one photocopy of the “Self-Portrait” activity sheet for each child

PROCEDURE:

Say: As we go through life, we meet many people who are different from us. But that is exciting. Whenever this happens, think of it as a good way to learn something new. Even though each of us is different and we don’t always understand the way others think or behave, we must always remember to give others respect.

There is nobody in the world just like you. You look different, your thoughts are different, your family is different, and some of you might even speak different languages. There is no one else in the world just like you. Today we are going to discuss our differences and make a picture to show just how special each of us is.

Explain that it’s important to respect people who look different. Tell them: When you meet someone who doesn’t think like you or look like you, remember that this person still deserves respect.

Ask: What are some of the differences in the way we look? Have students cite examples of some differences in their appearances (possible answers might include height, weight, color of eyes, hair, skin, etc.).

Tell the students: You have named some things about yourselves that are different. That’s great! Wouldn’t life be boring if we were all the same?

Have them color self-portraits on photocopies of the “Self-Portrait” activity sheets. Using their crayons, they are to color the picture to reflect the way they are dressed and their eye, skin, and hair color.

Write each youngster’s name on the back of his/her picture when they are finished. Then organize the kids in a semicircle and show some of the pictures, asking

Civilizations should be measured by the degree of diversity attained and the degree of unity retained.

— W. H. Auden
20th-century English-born poet
them to identify who it is. After they have identified several pictures, ask them:

*Now who can tell me some reasons why any of these people in the drawings don’t deserve respect?* Solicit comments, making sure they understand by the end of the discussion that everyone deserves respect, regardless of physical characteristics.

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IDEA #9 Activity Sheet: Self-Portrait
IDEA #10

Respectful Borrowing

OVERVIEW: Children learn to behave courteously toward their peers; they practice saying “please” and “thank you” in an exercise on borrowing and sharing materials.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: Gather five or six items to use in a role-playing exercise on borrowing (e.g., pencil, ball, block, hat, eraser, etc.).

PROCEDURE:

Ask: How would you feel if someone took your favorite toy without asking you? Field responses and make it clear that nobody likes this. Tell them: When someone borrows things without asking, they are being rude and sometimes others might think the person is stealing. So we should always ask first.

Tell the children that asking to use something is one way of showing respect for another person. Say: Now let’s practice this form of respect. Let’s see how you ask to borrow one of these things from each other. Remember to say “please” and “thank you.”

Seat them in a circle, either in chairs or on the floor. Give one of the items (a ball, pencil, block, etc.) to one of the children. Then have another ask this child if he or she may borrow the item for a few minutes. Remind the student to be certain to say “please” when asking to borrow the item, and “thank you” when returning the item. Also, encourage the loaner to say “you’re welcome.” Continue this exercise until everyone has had the chance to be both the loaner and the borrower.

Now ask them what other situations they can think of where they can use these skills (at home as well as away from home). Solicit examples and discuss respectful borrowing, making sure to mention the importance of keeping our promises if we commit to returning a borrowed item by a certain time or using it only in a certain way.

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IDEA #11

“Respect-acle” Vision

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the concept of respect; they discuss the feelings that accompany receiving and giving it.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Twist the pipe cleaners to form a pair of eyeglasses, or “respect-acles.”
(See instructions below.)
- 12-inch pipe cleaners (one for each child)
- 6-inch pipe cleaners (two for each child)

PROCEDURE:

Ask: What does it mean to be respectful? How do we show respect? Ask for and offer examples (listening to the teacher or to your parents, saying “please” and “thank you”). Suggest: We have to show respect to others if we expect them to respect us. Ask: How can we show respect in the classroom? Again, field answers and offer examples (not talking when the teacher is speaking). Next, say: Sometimes we can forget to be respectful. We all need a little help to remind us.

Ask the children if any of them know what “spectacles” are. Tell them that this is another word for glasses. Put on your “respect-acles.” Say: These are my “respect-acles.” Why do some people wear glasses? Field answers. People wear glasses to help them see better. My “respect-acles” help me see respectful behavior. Today we are going to make “respect-acles” to remind us to watch for and show respect.

Pass out pipe cleaners and demonstrate construction:

1. Twist ends of 12-inch pipe cleaner together to form circle.
2. Twist the circle to make a figure 8.
3. Give the figure 8 an added twist to make the nose bridge.
4. Attach two 6-inch pipe cleaners to each side.

After the task is complete say: Now we are going to test them. Put on your glasses and let’s see how well you can spot respect. Ask several questions about respect, such as: If the teacher is reading aloud to the class, how should we act to show respect? If the class is lining up for recess and people are shoving each other, how should they act to show more respect? If there is only one toy that everyone wants to play with, how can we show respect? Field answers.
Before the lesson ends, discuss the following: *We respect others even if we don’t think or look the same way. We respect others even if they like to do different things than we do. We respect others even if they are not our friends.*

Conclude with these questions: *How does it feel when you see others being respectful? How does it feel to show respect?*

_Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself; it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being to use him as a means for some external purpose._

— Immanuel Kant
18th-century Prussian geographer and philosopher

Adapted from an idea submitted by Mary Jo Williams, 4-H youth development specialist (4-H Youth Program, University Extension, University of Missouri System, Lincoln University). Her idea is based on a lesson from the “Thought, Word and Deed Program” by State Farm Insurance Company. See www.statefarm.com/educate/twdpage.htm.
IDEA #12

Imagined Respect

OVERVIEW: Children associate the concept of respect to positive experiences and images.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- drawing paper
- crayons or markers

PROCEDURE:

Distribute paper and crayons.

Demonstrate polite behavior: Invite a student to come up to the front of the room. Ask him or her: May I borrow one of your crayons, please? When the child hands it to you, reply: Thank you very much. Next ask: How was respect demonstrated here? Field answers. Remind the children that you said “please” and “thank you.” When we show good manners and ask to share things politely, we are showing respect. How else do we show respect when we are sharing? Field answers and cite examples, emphasizing that respectful behavior makes others feel good. Remind them of the Golden Rule: we respect others by treating them how we would like them to treat us.

Ask metaphorical questions such as: What color is respect? What kind of weather is respect? What animals are respect? Ask them to explain their answers.

Instruct them to draw respect as a color, a type of weather, an animal or a holiday on the paper in front of them. Afterward, invite them to share their creations and to comment (respectfully, of course!) on others’ work.

Inspired by an activity idea posted on the website of the Kids’ Conscious Acts of Peace Project. This project was developed by the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, an initiative of Educators for Social Responsibility and Ben & Jerry’s. For more information and activity ideas, visit www.euphoria.benjerry.com/esr/cap.

What a man’s mind can create, man’s character can control.
— Thomas Edison
19th/20th-century American inventor
IDEA #13

Meet a Character: Austus

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the notion of good character, discuss and define it and then learn about Austus, the “Character Carousel” animal that represents respect. They conclude with a coloring activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Refer to the description of the “Character Carousel” on page 9.
- Austus the Lion handout (one for each child)
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing respect, introduce the children to the concept of character. Say: When you watch cartoons on TV, you see many different kinds of characters. Can any of you tell me who some of the characters are that you see? Field answers and compliment them on their choices. Next, say: The word “character” also has another meaning; it’s what we are inside. It shows itself when we behave certain ways. If we behave well, we show good character. What are some examples of behavior that show good character? List and help to explain their answers. Suggest other examples (e.g., treating others as you would like to be treated, helping others at home and in school, following instructions, sharing, etc.).

After you feel that they understand the concept, introduce them to the Pillar of respect. Say: One way we show good character is by being respectful. Hold up the handout of Austus for them and say: This is Austus the Lion. He uses good manners and is considerate of the feelings of others. He also deals peacefully with disagreements and accepts people’s differences.

Go through the descriptions of Austus’s behavior and ask the children to share examples of how the cartoon characters that they mentioned earlier show respect for others. Then have them suggest how they could show respect.

Conclude the discussion with a coloring activity using the “Austus the Lion” handout. Invite them to take him home and explain his good character to others.

Prejudice is the child of ignorance.
— William Hazlitt
18th-century English essayist and literary critic

The coloring handout is reproduced from the “Character Carousel” posters printed by Frank Schaffer Publications (Torrance, CA). Materials featuring the Carousel animals are available through the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
IDEA #13 Handout: Austus the Lion

RESPECT

Character Counts!

Are you respectful?

• Do you treat others the way you would want to be treated?
• Are you polite and courteous?
• Do you treat others well even if they look, act, or believe differently than you do?
IDEA #14

Never Give Up!

OVERVIEW: Children develop skills to stay focused on the task at hand, carrying it out to completion without getting distracted. They also learn to persevere and deal with the frustration of not succeeding immediately.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Prior to the activity, photocopy the following activity sheet, color and cut out the mule pattern, and glue it on a piece of cardboard.

PROCEDURE:

Tell the children: Today we’re going to learn how important it is to never give up. When we start on something, we’ll never finish the task if we give up. Giving up means stopping. When we’re trying to learn something new at school, we must not stop listening. And, even if it’s hard, we have to keep trying to understand.

Tell them: We’re going to play “I Spy” today. That’s a game some of you may already know how to play. For those who don’t, the point of the game is to find this mule after I hide it. Hold up the mule so that everyone can see it. This mule is a stubborn creature. Like you, he never gives up.

Say: If I pick you, you have to go outside the room (or cover your eyes) while I hide the mule. Then I’ll call you back in and you have to try to find the hidden mule. There is only one way the rest of you can help this person find the mule: When he or she gets close to the mule say, “you’re getting warmer.”

If the person is getting really close, we say, “You’re getting hot, hotter... burning up.” If the person is moving away from the mule, we tell them that they’re getting colder.

When the person looking for the mule sees it, he or she says, “I Spy.”

(Tell the group not to look at the mule or it will be easy for the person to find it. You might give them hints at the beginning to help them catch on.)

Place the mule so that it is hidden fairly well, but still partially in view. You can determine how difficult to make it by how quickly the students find it. Play the game for as long as interest holds. Compliment the student who is looking, reminding...
him or her that it is important to “never give up” until he or she finds the mule and finishes the job. Each time a player finds the mule, stress how important it was not to give up.

After completing the game, thank the children for being such good players. Ask them: What can we learn from this lesson? (Never give up!) How did you feel when you found the mule? (You felt good because you knew you had finished the job you had begun.)

Say: It’s the same way at home and at school. When you’re trying to clean your room or do your schoolwork, don’t give up. Keep on working at it until you’re finished. Remember, never give up!

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IDEA #14 Activity Sheet: Never Give Up!
IDEA #15

Sharing Responsibilities

OVERVIEW: Children learn responsibility when given responsibilities. They also learn about working together to get a job done.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

While the children are playing, make a list of as many separate tasks as you can think of which need to be done in order to clean up the area. These tasks are to be completed by the children, so make sure they are not too difficult.

After the children’s play time, have them gather together for a brief discussion on being responsible. Explain what this word means, especially as it relates to doing what we’re assigned to do. Tell them that you want to see how each of them can be responsible for straightening up the play area and/or helping set up the next activity. Identify specific tasks that need to be done and assign them to individual students. For example, tell one child that he is responsible for making sure all the building blocks are put away. Another might be assigned to help straighten up the chairs. Make sure everyone has a responsibility before anyone gets started.

If it appears that a task is being neglected, ask whose responsibility it is and remind everyone that you expect them all to be responsible. Praise them as they carry out their duties and thank them for being responsible when they have finished.

Adapted from the activity book accompanying the Kids for Character™ videotape (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1996.
IDEA #16

Counting on King Alfred

OVERVIEW: Children discuss what it means to count on someone and then hear a story illustrating this. Cupcakes or cookies remind them of the lesson in the story.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- burned cupcakes or cookies, properly-baked cupcakes or cookies
  (enough good ones for entire class)

PROCEDURE:

Say: Today, I am going to read a story about being responsible. What does a responsible person do? Field answers. Offer examples, such as: If our parents count on us to brush our teeth or clean our rooms, we do it. Next, ask the children what it means to count on someone. Say: Doing what we are supposed to do when people count on us shows them that we are responsible.

Read aloud “King Alfred and the Cakes” (next page). Afterward, ask the children to explain why King Alfred was not responsible. Remind them that the woman counted on him to do something, and he didn’t do it. Point out that other people were affected. Show them a couple burned cupcakes or cookies to remind them what happened in the story. Say: If King Alfred had been responsible, everyone would have had cakes to eat. Pass out the properly-baked cupcakes or cookies for the children to eat. Equate the good taste of the cookie with responsible behavior. Suggest that King Alfred and the couple would have been able to enjoy tasty treats if the king had been responsible.

Ask if the king did anything to try to make up for failing to do what he was supposed to do (he stacked the wood). Discuss the importance of being accountable for one’s mistakes and resolving to do better.

To conclude, go around the room and invite the children to share an example of how others count on them.

IDEA #16 Story: King Alfred and the Cakes

After being defeated by warriors from another land, King Alfred and his soldiers were forced to leave their homes. To avoid being captured by these warriors, the king disguised himself as a poor shepherd and went into the woods to hide. But the king was not familiar with the woods and soon became lost. Unable to find his way out of the forest, he wandered alone for several days. Finally, he came upon a cottage. He knocked on the door and told the man and woman who lived there that he hadn’t had a meal or a warm place to sleep for many nights. The woman, not noticing that this ragged fellow was actually the king, asked him for something in return.

“We must go chop and gather wood for the stove,” she said, “so when I’m gone if you will watch the cakes baking on the stove and prevent them from burning, I will give you supper when I return.”

Alfred thanked the couple and agreed to watch the cakes. But he was tired from wandering in the woods and shortly after they left, Alfred fell asleep. He awoke to the smell of smoke. The cakes now looked like small, black lumps and it was too late to save them.

The couple returned to the cottage and the woman scolded Alfred for not keeping his promise. “You lazy man! You told me you would watch the cakes, but you slept while they burned.”

She turned to look at him more closely and suddenly realized that the man she was scolding was actually the king of the land! Both the man and woman dropped to their knees, apologizing for speaking to the king so harshly.

“Please, my friends, you owe me no apologies,” said King Alfred. “It is I who must beg for your forgiveness. I accepted responsibility for watching the cakes and I have no one to blame but myself for letting them burn. I apologize to you, for anyone who agrees to a task, big or small, should do what is promised.”

All was forgiven and the couple fed the king and prepared a bed for him to sleep in that night. The next morning when the man and wife awoke they found that King Alfred had chopped and neatly stacked their gathered wood by the door before going on his way.

IDEA #17

Charting Responsible Behavior

OVERVIEW: Children identify rules and learn to be responsible for their own behavior.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- a large chart listing the name of each child
- a photo of each child (instruct them ahead of time to bring photos from home)
- reward markers (e.g., stars, smiley stickers, etc.)

PROCEDURE:

Discuss with the children the components associated with responsibility. (See the “Six Pillars” listing at the beginning of this section.) Clarify vocabulary words they may not understand.

Remind them: Part of being responsible is doing what we are supposed to do — even when it is difficult. Ask them for examples of something they had to do that was difficult. Then have the children sit in a given number of rows with a given number of kids in each row (determine this based on how many are in your group). Ask them what rules they had to follow to sit in this arrangement. Have them explain why rules are important. Suggest: Rules help us to act responsibly. Ask each student to name a classroom or school rule. After each student shares an answer, have them state how this rule helps them behave responsibly.

Point out the rewards for responsible behavior (e.g., it helps everyone get along, it makes things easier for the group, we avoid punishment, etc.).

Introduce the chart and display it in a place where everyone can see it. Attach a photo of each student alongside his/her name. Other students can then recognize whom each name identifies. Explain that whenever you notice someone going out of his or her way to act responsibly and obey rules, a sticker will be posted next to that person’s name. Draw attention to the chart periodically and praise the children for being responsible.

— Adlai Stevenson II
20th-century American politician

You can tell
the size of
the man by
the size of
the thing
that makes
him mad.
IDEA #18

Positive Mistakes

OVERVIEW: To reinforce perseverance, children are encouraged to look at a mistake as a learning opportunity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of the handout (one for each child)
- crayons
- A Big Mistake, by Lenore Rinder and Susan Horn (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Ask: How can we show that we are responsible? Explain and review examples of responsible behavior. (See the “Six Pillars” listing at the beginning of this section.)

Say: Responsible people are not afraid to admit when they are wrong. They understand that everyone makes mistakes, but they try to learn from their mistakes. What are some mistakes we might make? Field answers. Lead a discussion about the examples they suggest. (You might also mention such mistakes as breaking rules and failing to follow instructions.) Emphasize that these are mistakes everyone makes.

Discuss with the children how they feel when they make mistakes and compare this to their feelings after the mistakes are corrected.

Distribute the mistake handout and crayons. Say: Pretend you made this line accidentally — it was a mistake you made. But you are responsible students, which means you keep on trying. So see if you can turn the line into something nice. Turn the paper various ways to model the many perspectives from which the children can view the “mistake” line. Once the task is complete, encourage the children to share their “beautiful mistakes” with the class.

(Optional: You may want to introduce and read aloud the book A Big Mistake to further enhance this lesson.)

Adapted from an idea submitted by Katherine Boyer, a librarian at Conewago Township Elementary School in New Oxford, Pennsylvania. Her idea is based on an activity in Building Character and Community in the Classroom, K-3, by Rhonda Howely, et al. (Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press, 1997).
IDEA #19

Meet a Character: Ansvar

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the notion of good character, discuss and define it, and then learn about Ansvar, the “Character Carousel” animal that represents responsibility. They conclude with a coloring activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Refer to the description of the “Character Carousel” on page 9.
- Ansvar the Elephant handout (one for each child)
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing responsibility, introduce the children to the concept of character. Say: When you watch cartoons on TV, you see many different kinds of characters. Can any of you tell me who some of the characters are that you see? Field answers and compliment them on their choices. Then say: The word “character” also has another meaning: it’s what we are inside. It shows itself when we behave certain ways. If we behave well, we show good character. What are some examples of behavior that show good character? List and help to explain their answers. Suggest other examples (e.g., helping others at home and in school, following instructions, sharing, etc.).

After you feel that they understand the concept, introduce the Pillar of responsibility. Say: One way to show your good character is to act responsibly. Hold up the handout of Ansvar for them. This is Ansvar the Elephant. He thinks before he acts and is accountable for his choices. He works hard and tries to fulfill his promises.

Go through the descriptions of Ansvar’s behavior and help the children define how the cartoon characters that they mentioned earlier show the trait of responsibility. Then ask them to suggest how they can show responsibility in their own lives.

Conclude the discussion with a coloring activity using the Ansvar the Elephant handout. Invite them to take him home and explain his good character to others.

The coloring handout is reproduced from the “Character Carousel” posters printed by Frank Schaffer Publications (Torrance, CA). Materials featuring the Carousel animals are available through the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
Responsibility

Are you responsible?

• Do you do what you are supposed to do?

• Do you think about how your actions will affect others?

• Do you always try to do your best?

Character Counts!

IDEA #19 Handout: Ansvar the Elephant
IDEA #20

Sharing Toys Fairly

OVERVIEW: Children learn about taking turns with toys and sharing them fairly.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- toy ball (or other toy that can be used alone and in a group)
- toy (or other interesting object) that appeals to all children in the group

PROCEDURE:

Gather the children together and explain the meaning of the word “turn.” Bring out a toy or some other interesting object and show them what it means to take turns with it. Have them pass it around, praising them every time they give another child a turn. Explain that equal time is fair and use a timer or stopwatch to demonstrate what this means. Tell them that in order for the activity to be fair, everyone should get a chance.

As children learn to be fair about taking turns, explain that sometimes instead of taking separate turns with something, they can share by playing with it at the same time. Illustrate this by giving one child a ball and telling her or him to play with it as many different ways as she/he can alone. Then let another child join in and point out how many more things they can do with the ball. Show the children that they can generally have more fun and make their fun last longer if they share.

There is no delight in owning anything unshared.
— Seneca

IDEA #21

Why Be Fair?

OVERVIEW: Children learn what it means to be fair and discuss what can happen when people are unfair.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the concept of fairness to the children. Make sure to emphasize that fairness means:

- Everyone is given the same chance.
- People aren’t picked on because of how they look.
- People aren’t liked because of what they have or what they can do for you.

Pose the following discussion questions:

- What could happen if you aren’t fair to other people?
- Can you think of a time someone was not fair to you or to someone else? (Have them explain why it was unfair and how they felt about it.)
- Can you think of a time when you didn’t act fairly? (If so, have them tell you how they should have acted. If the children can’t think of a personal instance, use an imaginary situation or one from your own experience and have them “re-do” the situation to make it a fair one.)
- What are some jobs that adults have? (With each suggestion ask: Why is it important for that person to be fair? What might happen if this person were unfair?)

Contributed by Janet Gunson, M.S. Ed (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA).
IDEA #22

Fairness Skit

OVERVIEW: Children act out a scenario in which two children disagree on what is fair. The group discusses fairness and comes up with a fair solution.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Have two children role-play the following scene to illustrate how two children might perceive fairness differently:

A child finds a toy on the ground outside. No one is around, so the child begins to play with it. Another child runs up and grabs it, saying, “It’s mine!” They wrestle with each other for the toy, both calling the other “unfair.”

Ask the children what they think is fair. Make sure they see both sides of the issue. Have them come up with a solution that everyone agrees is fair for both sides. Have them look at what one child could do, and then what the other could do to solve the problem, rather than simply saying they both work it out together. (This teaches them to solve the dilemma from an individual standpoint without relying on an impartial arbiter.) The solution should include an apology.

Justice is truth in action.
— Joseph Joubert

Contributed by Janet Gunson, M.S. Ed (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA).
IDEA #23

Story of Fairness

OVERVIEW: Children hear a story about being fair and kind to others, then discuss the lessons found in the story.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

If they are just, they are better than clever.
— Sophocles

Read “Señor Coyote Settles a Quarrel” (on the next page) aloud to the children. Before you start, tell them that this is an old story from Mexico that teaches important lessons. Say: As I read this, think about what is fair and what is not fair in this story.

Discuss the story with the children when you are finished. Use the following discussion questions:

• Is it fair to use others just to get what you want? Why not?

• Was the Snake’s reward fair for the Rabbit? Why not?

• What did the Coyote do to prove that he was fair? Why was this fair?

• At the beginning of the story, Señor Snake says he has very few friends. What lesson about friendship might he learn by the end of the story?

Adapted from “Lessons in Character” (student activity workbook), by B. David Brooks (Young People’s Press, San Diego, CA), 1996. Used with permission from the Jefferson Center for Character Education (Pasadena, CA).
One morning Señor Rattlesnake crawled out of his den. He lay down at the foot of a mountain and fell asleep. While he was sleeping, a large rock came loose from the side of the mountain and rolled down. When it finally stopped, it was squarely on top of Rattlesnake’s body.

Señor Rattlesnake awoke abruptly and found himself pinned to the ground. He twisted and squirmed, grunted and stretched, but he could not free himself. Then he heard footsteps hopping down the canyon.

“Who could this be?” thought the Snake. “I wish it were one of my friends. But I doubt it because I have so few.”

Suddenly, Señor Rabbit appeared from behind a boulder.

“Help me! Help me! Brother Rabbit,” called the Snake from under the rock. “Help me and I will see that you are rewarded.”

Señor Rattlesnake began to groan as if he were about to die. Rabbit was such a kindhearted animal that he hated to see even mean Mr. Snake suffering.

“Calm down, Señor Rattlesnake,” said little Rabbit, “I will get this rock off you somehow.”

So little Rabbit got a pole and put it under the stone. He braced himself on the side of the mountain. Then he lifted and pushed, over and over. Finally, he rolled the heavy rock off of Rattlesnake.

“Now,” said the Snake, “about your reward.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” said Señor Rabbit, “I don’t need a reward.”

“But just come a little closer and listen to my plan,” said the Snake with an evil grin.

“What do you mean?” asked Señor Rabbit, becoming frightened.

“I mean,” said the snake, “that your reward is that you will be my dinner.”

At this moment old Señor Coyote appeared from behind a large bush. “What’s going on here?” he asked.

“I helped Señor Snake,” said the Rabbit. “He was trapped under a big stone and I rolled it off him. But now he wants to eat me as my reward.”

“That is not true,” said the Snake. “Señor Rabbit tried to roll the rock over me so that it would crush me worse than it already had.”

The Coyote took off his big sombrero and scratched his head. “Let me think a minute,” he said.

At last he said, “This is what we will do. Both of you go to the exact spot where you were when Rabbit came along. I want you both to show me just how things happened. That way I can more easily decide what is fair.”

So the Coyote and the Rabbit pushed and shoved the rock back on Rattlesnake. The Rabbit went up the canyon and came hopping back down to the rock just as he had before.

“Is this the way it was, Señor Snake?” asked the Coyote.

“Yes, this is the way I was,” said the Snake, squirming and making a face. “Now get this rock off me right now!” he hissed.

“If that is the way you were,” said the Coyote, “then that is the way you would have stayed if it weren’t for Señor Rabbit’s kindness.”

Señor Rattlesnake would have died without the Rabbit’s help. Yet, after the Rabbit saved his life, all the Snake wanted to do was eat him. This clearly was not fair.
The Coyote, who was old and wise, said that he would free Señor Snake, but that the Snake would have to thank Señor Rabbit for being kind and apologize for threatening to eat him.

“Señor Rabbit acted like a friend to you,” Coyote told the Snake. “So you must do something kind in return. Of course, that means not eating him! That is the only fair thing to do.”

After the Snake agreed to this, the Coyote thought about asking the two to shake hands on the deal. Then he realized it wouldn’t be fair to ask this of Señor Rattlesnake.

Adapted from “Stories of Fairness,” compiled by Henry and Melissa Billings (Young People’s Press, San Diego, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #24

Standing in Another’s Shoes

OVERVIEW: To learn about seeing others’ perspectives, they stand in the traced outlines of their classmates’ feet.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils and/or crayons
- scissors

PROCEDURE:

Say: *Today we are going to talk about being fair. How do fair people act?* Solicit answers. Offer examples: following rules, sharing, letting others play with the same toy for the same amount of time, etc. *Another way people act fairly is when they try to see things the way others see them.*

Divide children into pairs. Place two pieces of drawing paper side-by-side on the floor for each pair. Instruct them to stand on the paper and face each other, and have one of the students trace his/her partner’s feet. Then have the child whose feet were traced do the same for his/her partner.

Next, tell them to take turns standing in the outlines of their partner’s feet looking straight ahead. Instruct them to describe to their partner all the things they see. Ask them about the differences between the two points of view.

Once everyone has done this, say: *Part of being fair is trying to see things as others see them. When we stepped in our friends’ shoes, we noticed that they may not see things the same way we do. Fair people know that different people see things differently, and it affects the way they feel.*

Have the children color the outlines of their shoes and cut them out. Write their names on them and display them on a section of the floor or on the wall.

Activity submitted by Nat Cooper, director of Lubbock Christian University’s Center for Character Development in Lubbock, Texas.

*Men are not punished for their sins, but by them.*

— Elbert Hubbard
19th/20th-century American entrepreneur and publisher
IDEA #25

Listening: A Step to Fairness

**OVERVIEW:** Children learn that being a good listener takes practice and is important to being fair.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask students: *What does it mean when we say we are listening?* Field answers. Distinguish between “hearing” someone and “listening” to someone. Ask: *When do we need to listen to other people?* List answers. Say: *We must listen when we need to make a fair decision. We often need to get lots of information in order to be fair.* Give an example such as: *A student doesn’t have his or her homework. What should the teacher do?* Field answers. Then explain: *Before the teacher can decide whether to give the student a zero, he or she must listen to the student’s explanation. The teacher needs all the facts to the story. If the teacher were to punish the student before hearing the whole story, he or she would be unfair. Have the students help you define fairness. (See the “Six Pillars” listing at the beginning of this section.)*

Tell the children that they are going to practice listening to help them learn about fairness. Divide children into pairs (preferably, pairs would consist of two children who do not know each other well) and have them stand back-to-back. Instruct one partner in each pair to say two things about something he or she did over the weekend. Then ask the other student to repeat what was just stated. Once he or she has done this, go around the class and see who can repeat what the first person said. Then ask the other student to repeat what was just stated. Once he or she has done this, go around the class and see who can repeat what the first person said. Then reverse roles, having the listener of the pair mention two things that he or she did over the weekend. Repeat the process until every pair has had the opportunity.

Afterward, ask the children why it was sometimes hard to repeat exactly what their partner said. Have the children reiterate what they can do to listen to people better and why it is an important element of fairness.

IDEA #26

Fairness Treats

OVERVIEW: Through just and unjust rewards, students learn basic principles of fairness.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- plenty of candies (or other treats)

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the class to these basic notions of fairness:
1. Fairness is treating everyone the same according to the rules.
2. Fairness is giving everyone the same chance to win.

Tell the class: Everyone who says, “Hello, it’s nice to see you,” will get a treat. Give everyone who says it a treat, and ask: Did I follow my rule and give everyone a treat? They’ll say, “Yes!”

Then say: Everyone who puts their hand on their head gets a treat. Give a treat to only one child who has done this. Ask: Was I being fair? Why? When they answer, say: You’re right. I didn’t play by the rules. Give a treat to everyone.

Next say: Here’s a treat for everyone with brown hair, because I like brown hair. Hand out the treats. Ask the students: Was I fair? Why? Get their answers and say: You’re right. I goofed again! I didn’t give everyone the same chance to win. I only picked people with brown hair. I’d better correct my mistake. Give treats to the children who don’t have brown hair.

Then tell the class: Everyone who can say, “Six slimy slugs suddenly slid into the sludge,” gets a treat. Give a treat to all who can manage the sentence. Ask: Was I fair? Why? Get their responses.

Ask the class: What are some ways you can be fair and go by the rules at home? What are some ways you can be fair and give everyone the same chance at home?

Say: You’ve earned a lot of treats today. Take them home, if you haven’t already eaten them, as a reminder that being fair and building strong character is a treat in itself.

Adapted from “Exercising Character” lesson plans and activities by Peggy Adkins (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995.
IDEA #27

Meet a Character: Guisto

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the notion of good character, discuss and define it, and then learn about Guisto, the “Character Carousel” animal that represents fairness. They conclude with a coloring activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Refer to the description of the “Character Carousel” on page 9.
• Guisto the Giraffe handout (one for each child)
• crayons

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing fairness, introduce the children to the concept of character. Say: When you watch cartoons on TV, you see many different kinds of characters. Can any of you tell me who some of the characters are that you see? Field answers and compliment them on their choices. Then say: The word “character” also has another meaning; it’s what we are inside. It shows itself when we behave certain ways. If we behave well, we show good character. What are some examples of behavior that show good character? List and help to explain their answers. Suggest other examples (e.g., helping others at home and in school, following instructions, sharing, etc.).

After you feel that they understand the concept, introduce them to the pillar of fairness. Say: One way to show your good character is to be fair. Hold up the handout of Guisto for them. This is Guisto the Giraffe. He plays by the rules, takes turns and shares.

Go through the descriptions of Guisto’s behavior and help the children list examples of how the cartoon characters that they mentioned earlier show fairness. Then ask them to suggest how they can show fairness in their own lives.

Conclude the discussion with a coloring activity using the Guisto handout. Invite them to take him home and explain his good character to others.

The coloring handout is reproduced from the “Character Carousel” posters printed by Frank Schaffer Publications (Torrance, CA). Materials featuring the Carousel animals are available through the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
IDEA #27 Handout: Guisto the Giraffe

FAIRNESS

Are you fair?
- Do you play by the rules?
- Do you take turns and share?
- When you disagree, do you try to see the other person’s side?
- Do you speak up if you know something is unfair?
IDEA #28

“Acts of Kindness” Tree

OVERVIEW: The children help create a paper tree which is posted on the wall. They are reminded to be kind and caring when the teacher / youth leader rewards this behavior by placing a new leaf on the tree each time one of them is spotted showing kindness to another.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- enough paper to cut out and post a decorative tree on the wall (brown and green colored paper are preferred)
- stickers to be used as rewards (optional)
- a chart to track “acts of kindness”
- “thank-you” slips to recognize caring behavior

PROCEDURE:

Explain to the children what “acts of kindness” are. Say: Acts of kindness are what caring people do.

Then cut out an “Acts of Kindness Tree” from sheets of brown paper (or have the children help you color it) and post it prominently on the wall. Whenever one of them is spotted showing kind and caring behavior toward others, the child’s name and action are written on a green paper “leaf” which is displayed on and around the tree.

In addition, give a sticker or other reward to the child who “contributes a leaf.” Small “thank-you tickets” describing their kind act should be distributed for the children to take home and show their parents.

Finally, create a chart to track their “acts of kindness” and periodically draw their attention to the chart and the tree to note the proliferation of leaves.

Contributed by Vita Monastero, P.S. 160 elementary school (Howard Beach, NY).
Sample tickets given to children to recognize acts of kindness. These may be given out whenever a child contributes to the "acts of kindness tree."

(Tickets created by Diana Davis, Northwood Community Parks and Recreation Department, Irvine, CA)
IDEA #29

“Mean Ugly Fish” Game

OVERVIEW: A game is played with the children which shows how being kind to others can bring out people’s better qualities.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- a small table, chairs or a couch on which all of the children can sit together

PROCEDURE:

Ask all the children to tell you what kindness and caring mean. If they don’t give you an example while explaining, ask for one from their own personal experience. Then ask them: What does it mean to be unkind? Solicit comments and discuss the meaning of these words until all the children are clear on the concept.

Then play the “Mean Ugly Fish” game with the students. First, have them sit together on a small table, on chairs or on a couch. Tell them to imagine that whatever they are on is a boat and that you are a “mean ugly fish” swimming around in the water (on the floor). Playfully snap and growl at them and say, “I’m a mean ugly fish and I don’t like anybody!”

Then tell them to show how they can be kind and caring — even toward a “mean ugly fish” like yourself! Tell them to say the kindest things they can think of to you. When they give you a compliment or demonstrate how they care in another way, instantly transform into a nicer fish. (Smile, calm down, and say, “I am? Oh, well . . . I’m sorry I snapped at you.”) Then tell the children they can say unkind things to you. With the first unkind comment, revert back to a “mean ugly fish.” Carry on this way for a few minutes. Then tell them that people can be like mean ugly fish. Say: If you’re caring and kind, they become much nicer. If you’re mean, they become mean too.

Stress that we often don’t see immediate changes like they saw in the game. Say: Sometimes it takes a lot of caring and kindness to help someone become nicer.

— John Marks Templeton

IDEA #30

Who Needs My Help?

OVERVIEW: The children are prompted to think about the needs of others and to provide help without being asked. Their experience providing help is reinforced by drawing and/or writing about it.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one photocopy of the “Who Needs My Help?” worksheet for each child

PROCEDURE:

Have a brief discussion with the children about what it means to be a caring person. Be sure to emphasize that caring people don’t wait to be asked to help others — they do nice things for others on their own.

Then meet with each child individually to fill out the “Who Needs My Help?” worksheet. Tell them to think about someone in their lives who could use their help. Offer suggestions if they can’t think of anyone (e.g., a parent at dinner time, a younger sibling who can’t dress him/herself, a friend who lost a toy, etc.).

Fill out these worksheets with them (or, if you feel they are capable, have them do this as a homework assignment). Say: After you have helped your person, the next step is to draw a picture on the worksheet showing how this looked. (Have those who do this as a homework assignment bring in their worksheets after they have provided the designated help.) Gather the worksheets and have the children share their pictures when they are all completed.

You might consider making this an ongoing activity by replenishing the worksheets as the children turn them in. Also, you might provide rewards (treats, “Big-time Helper” badges or ribbons, etc.) to those who complete a given number of worksheets.

**Idea #30 Worksheet: Who Needs My Help?**

*Help someone without being asked!*

Who needs my help?

What help does he/she need?

When does he/she need help?

Why does he/she need help?

How can I help?

When I helped, this is what it looked like (draw a picture in the box):
IDEA #31

Taking Care of Each Other

OVERVIEW: Children role play with stuffed animals and dolls (or cut-out figures) and share ways people and pets can take care of each other.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- dolls and stuffed animals (as an alternative, children can draw and cut out figures on paper)

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children: *What do people do when they want to show they care about someone or something?* Field answers. Cite examples and encourage the kids to offer their own, such as: telling family members you love them, helping friends when they need it, not teasing others, being kind to animals, etc. Explain that a caring person is nice and thinks about the feelings of others.

Pair the children up and distribute the stuffed animals and dolls. Have one child in each pair play the animal and have the other play the doll. (If you are not using toys, have the kids draw or trace figures, color, and cut them out.)

Say: *Now, I want you to pretend that the animal and the person in your group are friends and have to take care of each other.* Let the children role-play with these figures. Make sure they have the figures tell the other how they would care for them. Encourage them to have the characters demonstrate caring behavior.

Afterward, invite each pair to share how the “animal” and “person” took care of each other.

In conclusion, ask: *How did these caring actions make the figures feel?* Suggest that when a pet or person is treated well they feel better and are more willing to be kind in return.

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What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?
— Jean-Jacques Rousseau
18th-century French philosopher
IDEA #32

Caring for Needy Children

OVERVIEW: Children discuss ways to help needy children and then make sock puppets and bring in new socks to donate to them.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
A few days before this activity, ask children to bring in old — but clean! — pairs of socks, or single socks that are missing their mates.

- art supplies: glue, yarn, ribbon, markers, buttons, felt, colored paper, etc.

PROCEDURE:

Hold up one of the old socks that you’ve collected. Ask the children to describe it. Then ask them to explain what a sock is used for. After fielding answers, ask: Why are you lucky to have socks to keep your feet warm when it’s cold? Field answers. Suggest that some children are not as fortunate. Have them help you explain why (e.g., the children are poor, orphans, homeless, etc.). Next, ask: How could we show that we care for these children who need the help of others to stay healthy? Invite the children to offer caring solutions. Suggest that they can bring in pairs of socks for children at a nearby shelter. (You should probably notify and explain your plan to the students’ parents beforehand. Encourage the parents to take their children out to help pick out the socks that they will purchase and donate.)

Once you have discussed why such a donation shows that they are caring, inform them that they are also going to make toys to donate to the needy children. Explain that they are going to use the old socks to make sock puppets. (Have one already made to display as a model.)

Have the children work together in pairs designing puppets. Tell them to take turns placing a sock over a hand while their partners mark where the eyes, nose and mouth should be. Then let the children use the art supplies to create eyes, noses, mouths, hair and clothes for their puppets.

When everyone has completed the project, invite them to sit in a circle with their puppets, introduce them, and then have their puppet explain how he or she is going to help a needy child.

IDEA #33

Meet a Character: Karina

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the notion of good character, discuss and define it, and then learn about Karina, the “Character Carousel” animal that represents caring. They conclude with a coloring activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Refer to the description of the “Character Carousel” on page 9.
- Karina the Kangaroo handout (one for each child)
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing caring, introduce the children to the concept of character. Say: When you watch cartoons on TV, you see all different kinds of characters. Can any of you tell me who some of the characters are that you see? Field answers and compliment them on their choices. Then say: The word “character” also has another meaning: it’s what we are inside. It shows itself when we behave certain ways. If we behave well, we show good character. What are some examples of behavior that show good character? List and help to explain their answers. Suggest other examples (e.g., helping others at home and in school, following instructions, sharing, etc.).

After you feel that they understand the concept, introduce them to the Pillar of caring. Say: One way to show your good character is to show you care about others. Hold up the handout of Karina for them. This is Karina the Kangaroo. Her name comes from the Spanish word for caring. She is kind, thankful, forgiving and helps those in need. She thinks about how her actions will affect others.

Go through the descriptions of Karina’s behavior and help the children define how the cartoon characters that they mentioned earlier show caring behavior. Then ask them to suggest how they can show caring in their own lives.

Conclude the discussion with a coloring activity using the Karina the Kangaroo handout. Invite them to take her home and explain her good character to others.

The coloring handout is reproduced from the “Character Carousel” posters printed by Frank Schaffer Publications (Torrance, CA). Materials featuring the Carousel animals are available through the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
IDEA #33 Handout: Karina the Kangaroo

**CARING**

**Are you caring?**

- Are you kind with your words and actions?
- Do you help others?
- Do you think about other people’s feelings and needs?
- Are you thankful for what others do for you?
IDEA #34

Miniature Community

OVERVIEW: Children help create a miniature community and learn about the active role citizens play in making the community a better place to live.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- popsicle sticks
- construction paper
- scissors
- crayons
- various boxes to simulate buildings in a town

PROCEDURE:

Say: *We all want to be good people. Good people are good citizens. That means good citizens help make their home, school, community and country a better place. They help make the community a good place to live for everyone. Today we’ll think about our community and the people who make it a good place.*

Display miniature buildings you have created from small boxes or milk cartons wrapped in paper. Each building should be identified with a label such as “City Hall,” “Post Office,” “Fire Department” or “School.” You could have them affix these labels. Also, have them color and draw on the buildings. You may want to provide smaller boxes for children to decorate as their homes if time permits. Say: *These buildings represent some important parts of our community. Identify each building and talk about what happens there. If time permits, let them add details like flags and flowers.*

Then say: *But the citizens in our community are more important than the buildings. Good citizens help others. What are some examples of what good citizens do? Encourage them to answer. Mention the following: recycling; voting; obeying school rules and not missing school; obeying laws; paying taxes; helping the homeless, hungry, sick, and lonely; and taking care of property.*

Make paper cut-outs of good citizens doing what good citizens do. Have the children color the people and prop them up with popsicle sticks or simply glue them to the sides of buildings. Have them add details that show how they are helping. Assist them and offer suggestions as they go.

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.

— Charles Dickens
When you are finished, ask them to identify the good citizens and how they are helping. Ask: Who are the good citizens in our community? What are they doing? What can you do as citizens? Solicit answers and discuss. Finally, say: Let’s close with a cheer for our community. When I point to you, tell me something or someone that makes this a good place to live.

Use the following cheers: “Two-Four-Six-Eight! What do we appreciate?” or “Two-Four-Six-Eight! What makes our town so really great?” Point to children to name good things about the community. (You might suggest: Fire fighters! Schools! Police officers! Parks! Roads!) Tell them: Practice the cheer at home and see if your family can answer the rhyme with things they like about our community.

Adapted from “Exercising Character: Lesson Plans and Activities,” by Peggy Adkins (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995.
IDEA #35

Families and Community

OVERVIEW: Children learn about the concept of citizenship by comparing it to the benefits and responsibilities of being in a family.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one piece of paper for each child
- scissors and magazines from which to cut out photos (optional)
- enough crayons for all the children to color at the same time

PROCEDURE:

Help the children understand the concept of citizenship and community membership by comparing it to being in a family. Have them draw pictures of families or cut out photos from magazines. Ask: What’s nice about being in a family? Solicit responses, then ask: What are the things you’re expected to do as a member of a family? Compare these benefits and expectations to being a member of a community.

Ask them if they can think of any good things about being a member of a community. Suggest benefits of community membership such as having public parks, schools, libraries and streets.

Discuss obeying the law as a duty of a good citizen. Tell them that this is similar to the idea of obeying rules at home. Ask: What are the rules in your family? Solicit responses and tell them that they should get in the habit of obeying these rules even when no one is looking. Say: To uphold the rules even when your mom or dad isn’t looking really means you’re a good family member. A good family member obeys the rules because they help keep us safe and because they help make our homes better places. We obey the laws of our community for the same reasons.

Adapted from “Exercising Character: Lesson Plans and Activities,” by Peggy Adkins (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995.
IDEA #36

Community Helpers

The concept of an individual with a conscience is one whose highest allegiance is to his fellow men.
— Ralph Nader

OVERVIEW: Children learn how members of a community work together to help each other.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Begin by discussing the word “community” with the students. Explain that communities are made up of many neighborhoods. Make sure they understand the meaning of community before proceeding. Then discuss jobs that adults do to make the community work.

1. List “community helpers” and the type of help they provide. Show how each person is necessary in order for the community to work.

2. Set up specific scenarios in which the kids act out what might happen if these community helpers were not available.

3. Discuss ways that kids can be “helpers” in the community (e.g., contributing to recycling efforts, taking out the trash, keeping their school grounds and public parks clean, etc.).

Adapted from “Character Education in Ohio: Sample Strategies” handbook (Ohio Department of Education, Columbus, OH), 1990.
IDEA #37

Appreciating Nature

OVERVIEW: Children take a “field trip” to study and observe a tree, appreciating its unique qualities and structure.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- bags for picking up litter

SETTING: area with a large tree

PROCEDURE:

Take the children to a large tree and direct them to sit under it. Begin by asking the children to name things they care about. Say: Just like people and pets, nature needs us to care for it. How can we care for nature? Solicit answers and cite examples. What can happen if we don’t take care of nature? Discuss how the area around the tree and the tree could become “unhealthy” (e.g., litter makes the area look bad, animals that live in the tree could become sick after eating the trash, the tree and the grass could die if we don’t water them).

Next, study the tree. Ask the children about the height of the tree. Have them compare its size to buildings and houses. Ask them to describe the shape of the tree and invite them to mimic the shape with their bodies. Have the children feel and smell the leaves and ask them to compare these leaves to other items. Lastly, have the children put their arms around the trunk of the tree to measure the width of its trunk.

Afterward, ask: What can we do to say thank you to the tree for giving us so many ways to have fun today? Share answers and model some of the suggestions (e.g., pick up any litter near the tree before you leave).

Invite the children to observe the area over time and to notice how people treat nature there.

IDEA #38

Envisioning a Safer World

OVERVIEW: Students are shown a globe and then draw their own after discussing what kinds of things make up the world and how they can improve them to make the world safer.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- globe (optional)
- drawing paper cut in the shape of a globe (one for each student)
- crayons or markers

PROCEDURE:

Show the students a globe. Ask them to help you explain what it is. Invite them to describe all the different things that make up the world. Discuss various examples from their own communities and environments (e.g., forests, stores, parks, homes, etc.). Next ask: How can these things in our world be hurt? Field answers. Say: As good citizens, you can protect these things from being harmed. First, let’s refresh our memories about what a good citizen does. Go over the Pillar of citizenship definitions (see page with descriptions of the Six Pillars). OK, now let’s give examples of how we can protect these things. Prompt and solicit answers.

Once everyone has shared an answer, invite the children to imagine what a safer world of good citizens would look like. Pass out a blank piece of drawing paper shaped like a globe. Instruct the students to draw their version of a safer world of good citizens. Lastly, display their “safer” worlds all over the room.

Inspired by an idea from “In the Palm of Your Hand” by the YMCA Earth Service Corps (Y Care International, CreActivity. 1998). The original idea is posted on www.mightymedia.com.
IDEA #39

Pulling-Together Web

**OVERVIEW:** Through demonstration children see how one person’s actions can affect others.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- ball of string

**PROCEDURE:**

Have children sit in a circle. Hand a ball of string to one child. Instruct him/her to hold onto the end of it. Then have him/her roll the ball of string to a classmate on the other side of the circle. Instruct the recipient of the ball to hold onto a piece of the string and then roll it to someone else. Have each child repeat these actions until everyone in the group holds a piece of string.

When everyone has the string, a “web” will have formed in the center of the circle. Step into the center of the circle and tug on the string. Ask which student felt the pull. Repeat this several more times.

Afterward, ask the children what citizenship means. Emphasize that being a good citizen means doing one’s share to help the whole group. Then say: *We must all work together as a team because one person’s actions are felt by others. If one of us didn’t hold onto the string the web wouldn’t be complete.* Demonstrate how they are connected by pulling on part of the “web” again. Ask them to share other examples of how they are “connected” to others and how their actions affect people around them.

*Adapted from an activity submitted and developed by Debbie Gilbert Taylor, executive director of the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce in Connecticut.*

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*Life is the sum of your choices.*

— Albert Camus

20th-century

Nobel Prize-winning French novelist
IDEA #40

Meet a Character: Kupa

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the notion of good character, discuss and define it, and then learn about Kupa, the “Character Carousel” animal that represents citizenship. They conclude with a coloring activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Refer to the description of the “Character Carousel” on page 9.
- Kupa the Bear handout (one for each child)
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing citizenship, introduce the children to the concept of character. Say: *When you watch cartoons on TV, you see many different kinds of characters. Can any of you tell me who some of the characters are that you see?* Field answers and compliment them on their choices. Then say: *The word “character” also has another meaning; it’s what we are inside. It shows itself when we behave certain ways. If we behave good, we show good character. What are some examples of behavior that show good character?* List and help to explain their answers. Suggest and discuss other examples (e.g., helping others at home and in school, following instructions, sharing, doing your chores, etc.).

After you feel they understand the concept, introduce them to the Pillar of citizenship. Say: *One way to show your good character is to be a good citizen. Hold up the handout of Kupa for them. This is Kupa the Bear. She obeys laws and rules and works hard to make her community a better place.*

Go through descriptions of Kupa’s behavior and help the children define how the cartoon characters that they mentioned earlier show the trait of citizenship. Then ask them to suggest ways they can show citizenship in their own lives.

Conclude the discussion with a coloring activity using the Kupa the Bear handout. Invite them to take her home and explain her good character to others.

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*The coloring handout is reproduced from the “Character Carousel” posters printed by Frank Schaffer Publications (Torrance, CA). Materials featuring the Carousel animals are available through the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.*
IDEA #40 Handout: Kupa the Bear

CITIZENSHIP

Character Counts!

Are you a good citizen?
- Do you cooperate with others?
- Do you obey rules and laws?
- Do you do your share to make your school and neighborhood better?
- Do you help protect the Earth?
IDEA #41

What Is a Good Choice?

OVERVIEW: Children learn the difference between good and bad decisions. They also learn to consider consequences before acting.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the children: *Today we are going to learn how to make good decisions.*

Ask: *Who can tell me what it means to make a good decision?*

Say: *Sometimes we choose to do things that are not right because we think our choice will make us happy.*

Ask: *Can someone give me an example of making a bad decision?* Compliment the children on their answers.

Say: *These are great examples. Now let me give you another example. If your friend invites you to share a pizza, and you choose to do so, this is not a bad decision. Pizza is not bad for you. But if a friend suggests that you steal candy from the store, and you choose to do so, this is not a good decision. Why? Because stealing is always wrong, and you could get into trouble for making this decision.*

Ask them what kind of trouble they can get into by making bad choices like stealing. Also, ask them who else is harmed when a bad decision like this is made. Encourage all students to respond.

*We are our choices.*
— Jean Paul-Sarte

Adapted from “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.
IDEA #42

Good Choice, Bad Choice

OVERVIEW: Children play a game in which they learn to distinguish between good and bad choices.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- two chairs, positioned back-to-back
- drawing paper
- chalkboard or other area to display team scores

Cut out two faces — one smiling and one frowning — and tape one to each chair before the activity.

PROCEDURE:

Tell the children: *We are going to play a game called “Good Choice, Bad Choice.” I am going to read some statements that require you to make choices. When I read a statement, the first person in each line should race to either the “happy” chair (if it’s a good decision), or the “sad” chair (if it’s a bad decision).*

*The object of the game is to try to make the right decision and reach the right chair before the other person does.*

Divide the class equally into two rows, one on each side of the classroom. In the middle of the room place two chairs, one with a “happy face” for good decisions, and the other with a “frowning face” for bad decisions. Explain that the first students from each row will start the game. When you read the statement (from the “Good Choice/Bad Choice” activity sheet), the two students will decide if it is a good decision or a bad decision, then race to the appropriate chair. Each player who reaches the correct chair first earns one point for his or her team. Keep score on the chalkboard as the game progresses.

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Idea #42 Activity Sheet: Good Choice, Bad Choice

Using the instructions from Idea #21, read the following choices aloud. Say: You make a choice to . . .

1. Take your classmate’s pencil without asking.
2. Tell your teacher if you notice that she dropped her wallet.
3. Go outside to play without asking your parents.
4. Tell your teacher if you see someone stealing from her purse.
5. Play with matches with your friends.
6. Watch TV and avoid your reading lesson.
7. Walk away when someone tries to start a fight with you.
8. Get mad at your mother because she won’t buy you a new toy.
9. Talk to your parents in a nice way.
10. Skip class and hide out in the gym.
11. Work hard every day to make good grades.
12. Go play with your friends even though your mom asked you to clean your room.
13. Tell your parents a lie so they will not go to the PTA meeting.
14. Always say that you can’t do anything right.
15. Stand up for yourself.
16. Call your friends ugly and stupid.
17. Take your friend’s lunch and secretly eat the cookies.
18. Stay up late after your parents have told you to go to bed.
19. Kick the dog.
20. Tell your parents you love them.
IDEA #43

Spotting Good and Bad Decisions in a Story

OVERVIEW: Children listen to a story and identify the characters’ good and bad choices.

PREPARATION/MATERIALS:
- pencil or other writing implement for each child
- drawing paper

PROCEDURE:

Tell the children: Take out a piece of paper and a pencil (or other writing implement). I am going to read you a story. Each time you hear a good decision made in the story, make a “plus” sign on the paper. When you hear a bad decision, make a “minus” sign. Illustrate “+” and “−” on the chalkboard.

Say: At the end of the story, we should all have the same number of pluses for good decisions, and minuses for poor decisions. Listen for the word “decision.” The only time you will mark on your paper is when you hear that word. Listen carefully for the good and bad choices.

Read “The Tale of Todd” story aloud. When the story is finished, check to see that everyone has the same number of pluses and minuses. Finally, say: Todd is a smart boy. He makes good decisions and stays out of trouble. All boys and girls should try to be like Todd. Try to make good decisions and stay out of trouble. You will notice that your parents and teachers let you do more things because they trust you to make the right choices.

Adapted from “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.
Idea #43 Story: The Tale of Todd

Todd always tried to do the right thing, but sometimes he made bad choices. For example, Todd loved to go to school. But when some kids he knew saw him going to school, they would often try to talk him out of going, and would ask him to skip school with them. Since Todd had a hard time saying “no,” he would hide from them so they would not ask him to skip school.

One day, he made the decision to not hide from them (+). When they came up to him, they said, “We have made a decision not to go to school today (-). What are you going to do — go to school, or hang out with us?”

Todd said, “I have made the decision to go to school (+).”

They said, “You are so stupid. You don’t need to go to school today. We can have some fun if we hang out. We made the decision to play video games at the store (-). It’s fun to play video games and not go to school.”

Todd said, “My decision is to go to school because I want to be trustworthy (+). If I skip school, my parents may not trust me to walk there by myself each day.”

They told Todd that they wouldn’t get in trouble because no one would know where they were. Todd made the decision to just walk away from them and go on to school (+). He did not care if they called him “chicken” or “stupid” because he knew that it was not right to skip school.
IDEA #44

Good Sports

OVERVIEW: Children practice good sportsmanship while improving their motor skills.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one small ball per two students
- five paper cups per two students

SETTING: large open area

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the concept of good sportsmanship. Start by discussing proper behavior in the classroom. Afterward, say: Just as we have to be polite and respectful of others in the classroom, we also have to show good manners to others when we are playing a game or sport, especially when we lose. Ask the students to share examples of disrespectful behavior after losing a game. Then contrast them with examples of good behavior.

Divide the children into pairs. Say: Now we are going to practice the good behavior we’ve talked about. Emphasize that the more we practice good behavior, the more naturally it comes to us.

Have each pair stand behind a designated line. Hand out five paper cups to each pair of students and instruct them to line them up in a row at a designated area (about fifteen feet away from where they will roll the ball). Next hand out a small ball to each pair of students. Inform them that they will each take one turn rolling the ball at the cups that they set up. The partner who is not rolling the ball is to display courteous behavior and reset the knocked-down cups. He/she then takes his/her turn rolling the ball. Inform them that the individual from each pair who knocks down more cups is the winner and must be congratulated by his/her partner with kind words and a handshake. Demonstrate the activity with a student before they begin. Model how they should act and practice things they could say.

Mix up the pairs so that each child has an opportunity to interact and experience a different end result. Afterward, ask the children how they felt when the other person congratulated them for winning.

IDEA #45

Character Countdown Bulletin Board Project

OVERVIEW: Students create paper rocket ships to track on a bulletin board their progress in practicing the Six Pillars of Character.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Create a bulletin board (see below) and a few cardboard stencils of rocket ships before the activity.
- scissors
- construction paper

PROCEDURE:

Create a bulletin board titled “Character Countdown.” (Draw land at the bottom and, toward the top, a scene of stars, a “Six-Pillar planet” and a moon. Also, draw faint, evenly-spaced horizontal lines on the board to indicate levels.)

You may want to read a book about astronauts to introduce this topic. Then discuss the meaning of “character” and the Six Pillars. Ask the children why astronauts must have good character to fly the space shuttle or a rocket. (Examples might include: self-discipline in order to learn many complicated tasks and to get their bodies ready for the long trip; courage in order to face challenges they may not know about, trustworthiness in order to conduct truthful experiments in space, respect for others in order to work out problems during the trip, etc.)

Pass out rocket ship stencils (have them share these) and instruct the children to trace the rocket ships onto pieces of construction paper. Have them cut out the rocket and color it, writing their name somewhere on it to identify it as their own.

Next, explain that all the rocket ships will be placed at the bottom of the bulletin board. For every action of good character that they display, they will be able to move their rocket up one notch on the board toward the “Six-Pillar planet.” Every week or day (it’s up to you), name a type of behavior that exemplifies one of the Six-Pillar traits. If children demonstrate this during the course of the day or week, let them move their rocket ships up one notch on the board. Recognize and reward students when their rocket ships make it to the top.

Adapted from an activity in Spotlight on Character: Plays That Show CHARACTER COUNTS! by Sara Freeman (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999). This publication is available from the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.

To sensible men, every day is a day of reckoning.
— John Gardner
20th-century American nonprofit leader (founder of Common Cause)
IDEA #46

Making Decisions

OVERVIEW: Children identify stakeholders in their decisions and the effects that their choices have on these people.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper lunch bag (one for each student)
- crayons or markers
- variety of snacks

PROCEDURE:

Offer a selection of snacks, making children choose which to take.

Say: Today we’re going to talk about choices. Another word for “choices” is “decisions.” When you picked a snack, you made a choice, or a decision. Ask them what made them pick the snacks. Summarize their responses. Say: The decision about which snack to take didn’t really matter to anyone else, unless you took the last piece of something someone else wanted. Most decisions we make can affect other people — and the choices that they have. We always want to make choices that are good for as many people as possible. We want to make decisions that don’t make good people sad. Pretend your mom asked you to stay out of her closet, but you want to try on her new boots. Who will care about what you decide? Solicit answers, then tell them: Your mom will care. If you do something to these new boots, it affects her because the boots belong to her.

Distribute lunch bags to make hand puppets. Have them color in and design the puppets’ faces, adding hair, eyes, ears, noses and mouths. Demonstrate how to make the puppet. Then say: When you are finished, use your puppet to talk to the puppet made by the person next to you. Talk about how good decisions are made.

Instruct the children to take their puppets home and have the puppets tell a family member why it is important to think about other people before making a decision.


The way of the sage is to act but not to compete.

— Lao-Tzu
Chinese sage (from the Tao Te Ching)
THE SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER

TRUSTWORTHINESS
- Be honest.
- Don’t deceive, cheat or steal.
- Be reliable — do what you say you’ll do.
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country.

RESPECT
- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Use good manners, not bad language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

RESPONSIBILITY
- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere: keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Use self-control.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act — consider the consequences.
- Be accountable for your choices.

FAIRNESS
- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don’t take advantage of others.
- Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING
- Be kind.
- Be compassionate; show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

CITIZENSHIP
- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules.
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment
IDEA #47

Keeping Promises

OVERVIEW: Children discuss the meaning of promise-keeping, why it is important and what to watch for when making promises.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Talk to the students about what promise-keeping means in the world today, and why it is important. Then offer examples for discussion.

Say: Everybody knows that promises are not meant to be broken. The person making the promise is trusted to keep his/her word. But the person making the promise must make sure it’s not a promise to do anything wrong. What does it mean to keep a promise? How important are promises to you?

Say: Now let’s look at some real-life examples of promise-keeping.

Your mom asked you to promise to pick up your room before she took you to soccer practice. But you forgot, and your mom is now asking you, “Didn’t you promise to clean up your room for me?” What do you say? (Possible answers: “Oops, I forgot. Sorry.”; “What promise?”; “I’m really sorry I forgot. Do you want me to clean it right now?”) Why did you answer the way you did? Solicit answers.

Say: Sometimes failing to keep a promise is a very selfish act. Here’s an example: A young woman goes to the library and checks out some popular books from the library. As the librarian stamps each one, he reminds the girl, “Now, remember to return these books in two weeks. Many people like these ones so it’s important to have them back on time.” The girl says, “Sure, I promise to have them back here by then.”

Two weeks, and then three weeks, pass. Late book notices are mailed to the girl’s house and overdue fines pile up. In the meantime, others are waiting for the library books to become available. And lost somewhere in the mess is the promise she made to bring the books back on time. Do you feel bad for the people who want to check out the books? What does her behavior show? Solicit responses.

Now ask: What would you do if a friend said he wanted to tell you a secret, but before he told you, he said you had to promise not to tell anyone? You swear not to tell. Then he shares his secret: he stole some money from someone. (Possible
answers: don’t say anything; talk the friend into giving the money back, along with an apology; tell the person he stole the money from; tell a parent.)

Why did you answer the way you did? Has this ever happened to you? Solicit responses. Then conclude by saying: The last example shows how important it is to find out as much as possible before you make a promise. Make sure you can keep your promises before you make them.

Adapted from the American Youth Soccer Organization’s “Take Five” activities.
IDEA #48

Class Rules Contract

OVERVIEW: Children learn about a formal promise-keeping arrangement: a contract. They prepare a contract concerning classroom rules and commit to uphold it.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one large sheet of paper
- one felt-tip marker
- one photocopy of the “Class Rules Contract” for each child

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children if they know what a “contract” is. Through class discussion, help them understand that it is an agreement and a special kind of promise. Say: A contract is made when two or more people discuss a particular situation, decide what to do about that situation, and then promise each other they will do it. An oral contract is one that is spoken; the people tell each other what they will do. There are also written contracts. The people write what they will do, and then sign their names. Explain that signing one’s name to a written contract means that you agree with what is written and you promise to do what it says.

Prepare a written contract for the class. Have the children choose the most important rules — rules they all agree to uphold. (Emphasize that it is up to each child to suggest changes if he/she doesn’t agree with or isn’t prepared to abide by certain rules.) List these on a large piece of paper. Then write, “I will follow these rules at school” (or wherever appropriate). Sign the contract yourself, and ask each of them to sign it. Post the contract in a conspicuous place to remind everyone of the commitments they made.

In addition to, or instead of the class contract, you might have each child make up his/her own document. Photocopy the “Class Rules Contract” or create your own. Have each child fill in the blanks with commitments he/she agrees to keep. Then sign your names. Have the kids take these documents home for parents’ signatures.

Adapted from “Life / Liberty / Law,” by Carol Roach (Center for Educational Research and Service, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS). Used with permission.

Who breaks his faith, no faith is held with him.
— Seigneur du Bartas
I agree that class rules help the teacher and the students do their jobs. These are some rules we’ve decided on together. I agree with these rules and promise to stick to them:

Rule 1: ____________________________________________________________

Rule 2: ____________________________________________________________

Rule 3: ____________________________________________________________

Rule 4: ____________________________________________________________

Rule 5: ____________________________________________________________

Rule 6: ____________________________________________________________

Rule 7: ____________________________________________________________

Student Signature _________________________________________________

Teacher / Youth Leader Signature _____________________________________

Parent / Guardian Signature _________________________________________
IDEA #49

Promise-Keeping in a Story

OVERVIEW: “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” a story by Hans Christian Andersen, is read and discussed as it relates to the making and breaking of contracts. Children learn that breaking a contract means breaking a promise, resulting in a loss of trust.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” by Hans Christian Andersen

PROCEDURE:

Discuss promise-keeping. Tell the children: When we do what we say we will do, people learn to trust us; when they trust us they let us do more things on our own. But when we break a promise, we lose some or all of that trust and we have to start from the bottom and build it back up again. Now I’m going to read a story to you. Think about trust and what it means to make a contract, or a promise, when you listen to this story.

Read “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” After you have read the story, explain to the children that the emperor and the weavers had a contract. Discuss these questions:

a. Was it an oral contract or a written one?
b. What did the weavers agree to do for the emperor? (weave the magic cloth)
c. What did the emperor agree to do for the weavers? (supply the thread and pay them)
d. Did the emperor honor keep his promise? (yes)
e. Did the weavers honor their part of the contract? (no, they only pretended to)
f. Pretend you are the emperor. If the weavers said they were sorry they had tricked you, and wanted to make a new contract with you, how would you feel? Would you agree to do this?

Adapted from “Life / Liberty / Law,” by Carol Roach (Center for Educational Research and Service, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS). Used with permission.

A promise made is a debt unpaid.
— Robert W. Service
IDEA #50

Trustworthy People

**OVERVIEW:** Children discuss how trust is earned and why they consider others trustworthy, then provide specific examples and illustrations to express their thoughts.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- crayons, pencils or markers for drawing pictures (enough for all children)
- two or three copies of the “I Can Trust . . .” worksheets for each child

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask the following discussion questions:

- *How do others earn your trust?*
- *How do you know when you can trust people?*
- *Which people do you feel are the most trustworthy?*

Distribute two or three “I Can Trust . . .” worksheets to each child. Tell them to write the names of people they can trust and why they consider them trustworthy.

When they are finished with this, have them draw a picture which relates to each of their choices.

*Adapted from “Enhancing Self-Esteem,” by John Gust (Good Apple, Carthage, IL), 1994. Used with permission.*
Idea #50 Worksheet: “I Can Trust . . .”

I can trust ____________________________________________

because ____________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

(Draw a picture below of this person doing something trustworthy.)
IDEA #51

Trustworthiness at the Mall

OVERVIEW: Students perform a skit about earning trust. They show how doing the right thing makes kids more trustworthy and therefore gives them more freedom.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one photocopy of the skit for each student

PROCEDURE:

Select students to read the lines and act out parts in a play. (You might reassign roles periodically to include as many students as possible.) Assign the following roles:

- Susan
- Alice
- Rick
- Diane
- Mall Security Guard
- Maria Chavez (Reporter)
- Joe (TV camera operator with no dialogue)

(The students are at a local shopping mall. They are left alone while the mother of one of the girls gets her hair done.)

Susan: Wow, I can’t believe my mom left us alone at the mall for two whole hours while she gets her hair done. I feel free! Free! Free! (Susan spins and dances.)

Alice: Yeah, Susan, your Mom is really cool. My mom would never let me loose in the mall like this.

Susan: Well, Alice, my mom trusts me. She knows that I know the difference between right and wrong. She says the more I show her I’m trustworthy, the more freedom I have.

Rick: Will you two stop wasting all our time yapping? Let’s get moving and check this place out.

Diane: Yeah, I’m ready. My sister said they’ve got an awesome music store here.
and I want to go over there and check it out.

**Rick:** How about playing some video games in the arcade?

**Alice:** Aren’t you guys forgetting something? Buying CDs and playing video games costs money — and that’s one thing we don’t have.

**Rick:** Oh, yeah, I forgot. Set free in the mall with no money. What a drag.

**Susan:** Come on, you guys. Cheer up! My mom gave me ten bucks so we could all get some ice cream or something. Let’s head over that way.

**Diane:** Well it’s not a CD, but I really could go for a scoop of chocolate chip right now.

(They start walking toward the ice cream stand, then suddenly stop.)

**Rick:** Wait! What’s that on the floor by that trash can?

**Diane:** It looks like a wallet. Rick, go check it out.

(Rick goes over to the wallet and brings it back to the others.)

**Rick:** Look, you guys! (He shows them the wallet and opens it up.) And it’s packed full of money!

**Diane:** Quick, Rick — hide it!

(Rick slips the wallet into his pocket.)

**Alice:** Can you believe this? What a dream come true! Now we have all the money we need.

**Diane:** Let’s go spend it quick — before someone sees us. The music store is right over there.

**Susan:** Hey, wait a minute, you guys! That money isn’t ours. We can’t just go spend it. I think we should turn it in.

**Rick:** Are you crazy, Susan? Imagine what we could do with this money. Just think of the stuff we could buy!

**Susan:** Yes, I can imagine that, Rick. But can you imagine how the person who lost the wallet feels? And can you imagine how guilty we’ll feel if we take what’s not ours? If we lost our money, we would want the finder to give it back, wouldn’t we?

**Alice:** Susan is right, you guys. Her mom trusted us to be responsible on our own
today, and that’s what we better do. If you think about it, it’s just like stealing if we keep it. The right thing is give the money back no matter who lost it and no matter how much it is.

**Rick:** Well, deep down I know you’re right, Alice. I guess this is what they mean at school when they talk about trustworthiness. Good bye video games! Good bye new CDs! Good bye pizza and ice cream! Hello trustworthiness.

**Susan:** Let’s just turn it in to the security guard over there. He’ll know what to do with it.

(Kids walk to the guard and hand him the wallet.)

**Rick:** Excuse us, sir. We found this wallet over there by the trash can and we’d like to turn it in.

**Security Guard:** (takes wallet) Hey, thanks for being so honest. I’ll turn it in to the lost and found office right away.

(A reporter with a microphone and another man holding a video camera approach the kids.)

**Reporter:** Hold it right there, everyone. I’m Maria Chavez from Channel Seven News and we’ve been videotaping this whole thing. We planted that wallet as a trustworthiness test. I’m happy to say that you kids passed the test and I’m personally very happy to see kids your age who are trustworthy. It makes me feel much better about kids today. Watch the Channel Seven News tonight because you’ll all be on it. Do you mind if I ask you what motivated you to turn in the money?

**Rick:** Well, at first, I have to admit, some of us were really tempted to spend it, but Susan reminded us about trustworthiness and doing the right thing.

**Alice:** That’s right, Ms. Chavez. We’re sure glad Susan is our friend. That would have really looked bad if we’d tried to run off with the money.

**Diane:** Ms. Chavez, Susan has a cool mom who trusted us to be on our own at the mall today. I’m sure glad we showed her — and all our moms — that we deserve to be trusted. Can we wave to our parents?

**Ms. Chavez:** Sure. Hey, Joe, be sure to get a good shot of these great kids.

(Joe points the camera and focuses on the kids as they wave and shout.)

**ALL KIDS** (facing the camera): HI, MOM!

(Kids turn to the audience.)
ALL KIDS: Good-bye, everyone!

Susan: But don’t forget. Show people they can trust you.

Diane: You’ll be happier and so will they.

Alice: Show them you know that character counts!

Rick: It counts at home, at school and even at the mall.

Contributed by Jim Schippers, Chelwood Elementary School counselor (Albuquerque, NM).
IDEA #52

Building Trust

**OVERVIEW:** Children learn about the need for trust in working together.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- an object made from Legos or other building-block materials
- Legos or blocks to make a replica of the object (enough for each group)

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask: *When do we need to trust other people?* Field answers. Then ask: *When do people need to trust you?* Define and discuss cooperation and teamwork. Emphasize the importance of being able to trust the accuracy of information when people work together. Say: *When we work together to achieve a goal, we must be able to trust each other. Can anyone tell me why?* Discuss some examples of what may go wrong when people work together but don’t trust one another. Ask: *How can we get people to trust us?* List answers.

Divide the children into groups and distribute building blocks. Make sure the model object is hidden from view. Next, introduce the activity. Say: *We are going to practice teamwork and show our trustworthiness by constructing an exact copy of an object made out of blocks (or Legos, etc.). The problem: the object is hidden, and only one person from each group can come up and see it. This person then must go back and tell the rest of his/her group how to build it based on what he/she saw.* Instruct them to take turns adding a piece to build a replica. Be sure they understand that the person who saw the object is not allowed to touch the replica his/her group is building.

When all groups have finished discuss the process. Ask the children to explain what skills were needed, how they showed trustworthiness and the effect it had on the outcome of their construction.

_________

*Adapted from an idea submitted by Herb Gould, a CHARACTER COUNTS! Character Development Seminars trainer and police officer in Waverly, Tennessee.*
IDEA #53

Be a Good Egg

OVERVIEW: Students watch an eggshell decay over time to understand what happens when a person loses someone’s trust.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- jar or container, eggshell and cup of vinegar (for each child)
- graph paper; pencils; markers (for each child)

PROCEDURE:

As a class, discuss what decay means. Then list examples, such as tooth decay, a building’s decay, food that has rotted, etc. Next, introduce the activity, saying: We are now going to take an eggshell and demonstrate over the course of the next week what happens when something decays. Distribute a jar labeled with the student’s name, an eggshell, and a cup of vinegar to each student.

Instruct them to place the eggshells in the jar, pour the vinegar on it, and cap the jars. Inform them that they will have to monitor their eggshells over the course of the week. Pass out graph paper. Have them draw the shape of the eggshell on the paper. Instruct them to blacken graph blocks with a marker in the same areas where the actual eggshell decays.

After they have witnessed several days of decay, and the eggshells have noticeable holes, ask them to think about how their graphed pictures of decay might represent lying. Field answers. Explain: Think of the black spots as lies. When we tell a lie, we are not taking care of ourselves or others. Our character is decaying. And just as the eggshells or our teeth decay, the amount of trust people have in us decays. What happens to the eggshell as it decays over time? Less of it is there. Have them explain why less of it is there. Mention that the eggshell weakens as it decays. If we don’t brush our teeth regularly, they can become like the eggshell. And in a similar way, the trust people have in us disappears if we tell lies. Why is it important to tell the truth? Field answers.

Sum up the lesson: If we tell the truth, people will trust us more and more. They won’t see our honesty decaying and disappearing like the eggshell. Truth keeps us strong.

Inspired by an activity about tooth decay posted on the Organization for Community Networks Academy Curricular Exchange website (www.ofcn.org/cyberserv/academy/ace), by Melodie Hill, a staff member at Lewis Arriola Elementary School in Cortez, Colorado.
IDEA #54

Everyone Can Be a Hero

OVERVIEW: The essence of heroic behavior is courage, a key element of trustworthiness. Children read about heroes, research heroes and then create a plan to act like a hero.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- access to a library or the Web (for research purposes)
- handout (for each student)
- pencils

PROCEDURE:

List the Six Pillars on the board. Have the students help you define them. Invite them to describe behaviors that display these traits. Ask them what kind of people might show them. Say: People who exhibit these Six Pillars could be defined as heroes. Ask them to help you explain what a hero is. Suggest that they act in courageous and compassionate ways that inspire others to do the same. List their responses and then introduce an age-appropriate resource chronicling the story of someone (preferably a real person) who showed integrity and courage and did the right thing.

After reading the story to them, discuss why the person in the story was heroic. List ways his or her actions inspired others and what resulted. Suggest ways this hero’s community benefited. Instruct them to find a similar story about someone whom they would consider heroic and to write something describing the heroic actions. If possible, have them discuss the topic at home so their parents can suggest heroic figures to profile. Help them at a library to find information that they can read and share with the rest of the class. They might also decorate their papers with artwork related to the hero they profiled.

Once everyone has completed this part of the project, pass out the handout. Read it over with them. Explain that they will now create their own plan to become people who display courage and integrity. (Of course, you should explain the meaning of the word integrity.)

Invite the children to share their responses with the rest of the class. You may want to follow up with them in several weeks or months and have them chronicle their progress with these goals.
IDEA #54 Worksheet: Everyone Can Be a Hero

Answer the following questions (in complete sentences) to help set up a practical plan to act with the courage and integrity of a hero.

1. How are you going to be a hero by showing trustworthy behavior?

2. List several ways someone displaying this behavior would act.

3. How are you going to act this way?

4. When and where is it especially important to act this way?

5. What do you hope others will do if you act this way?

6. I, ____________________________, pledge to make a difference and earn the trust of others by following these plans and by encouraging others to act heroically.
IDEA #55

Respect Groups

OVERVIEW: Points are awarded to groups of children showing respectful behavior during small group exercises. This system of rewards is to be integrated into standard coursework to help maintain an orderly environment by encouraging the kids to respect each other as well as the instructor.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

This activity can be integrated into virtually any other exercise requiring children to work together in small groups. Begin by assigning a number to each group and drawing large squares on the chalkboard labeled with each group’s number.

Explain that throughout the exercise you will be awarding points to groups whenever they demonstrate exceptionally respectful behavior — either toward you or each other. If, for instance, “group 3” is quiet and ready to start part of a lesson while all the other groups are talking, one point will be chalked up for them. Or if members of “group 1” are encouraging and listening respectfully to one another, they will be awarded a point. Tell them: On Friday, when we add up all the points, the class might be getting a little more recess time (or invent your own incentive). The groups do not compete against each other since every point goes toward a payoff for the whole class.

When tallying up the points at the end of the week, make a star for every five points. Then circle every five stars and announce that the class has won an extra minute of recess time on Friday. Carry out this activity throughout the week, converting points to stars and stars into recess time. (Tallying up the marks together helps the kids learn to count by five.) They will work mighty hard for a little extra recess time on Friday!

Some children may get impatient with a member of their group who continually causes them to go without points. Remind them that they also have to be respectful toward this child. Turn this into a lesson on being respectful even when frustrated.

Contributed by Laurie Kutch, Coolidge Elementary School teacher (San Gabriel, CA).

He who says what he likes shall hear what he does not like.
— English proverb

IDEA #55

Respect Groups

OVERVIEW: Points are awarded to groups of children showing respectful behavior during small group exercises. This system of rewards is to be integrated into standard coursework to help maintain an orderly environment by encouraging the kids to respect each other as well as the instructor.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

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Contributed by Laurie Kutch, Coolidge Elementary School teacher (San Gabriel, CA).
IDEA #56

Courteous Cards

OVERVIEW: Students are recognized for exhibiting courteous, respectful behavior without being prompted. They learn what respectful behavior means and that it matters.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- “courtesy cards” (see following page)
- hat or bucket from which to draw names
- table and chairs, paper plates and utensils
- pizza, ice cream or other treats

SETTING: playground, classroom or cafeteria

PROCEDURE:

Photocopy and cut out small “courtesy cards” which acknowledge respectful behavior. (Use sample cards provided on next page or make your own.)

Each time you spot a youngster “going beyond the call of duty” to show respect for other students, teachers or staff, issue him/her a courtesy card.

At the end of predetermined intervals (e.g., once a month or every two weeks), have a party to reward students who have accumulated a given number of cards. Decorate and set up a “courtesy table” at which pizza, ice cream or other treats are served.

After the party, hold a “respect raffle.” Having collected courtesy cards from every recipient (even those not present at the party), draw two or three from a hat and give prizes to students whose names were selected.

Melinda Keenan, Eldorado Elementary School teacher (Lancaster, CA), and Cheryl Moser, Fruitland Park Elementary School counselor (Fruitland Park, FL), each contributed to this idea.
Idea #56: Sample Courtesy Cards

**COURTESY CARD**

______________
(name)
was caught showing RESPECT.

_This card is good for one entry in the RESPECT RAFFLE and may help earn a spot at the COURTESY TABLE. Keep it up!_

**COURTESY CARD**

______________
(name)
was caught showing RESPECT.

_This card is good for one entry in the RESPECT RAFFLE and may help earn a spot at the COURTESY TABLE. Keep it up!_

**COURTESY CARD**

______________
(name)
was caught showing RESPECT.

_This card is good for one entry in the RESPECT RAFFLE and may help earn a spot at the COURTESY TABLE. Keep it up!_
IDEA #57

Golden Rule Discussion

OVERVIEW: Students learn that respect shouldn’t be reserved for heroes and authority figures — it should be a day-to-day habit based on the Golden Rule.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell them: Today we are going to talk about respect. Does anyone know what respect means? Allow for responses, then say: Respecting someone usually means that we look up to them, even admire them — like our parents and our heroes. Those are people we respect, right?

Ask: Who are some heroes of yours and why do you think they deserve respect? Allow for some responses and tell them that people don’t deserve to be heroes just because they are rich, good looking, or famous. Needless to say, the most important quality is good character!

But not just heroes should get our respect. Respecting others should be something we practice daily with our friends and family — even with people we don’t know. An easy way to show respect to everyone is to remember the Golden Rule. Does anyone know what the Golden Rule is? Allow for responses, making sure they understand that the Golden Rule is treating others the way we want to be treated. You want people to be nice to you, so be nice to others. It’s as simple as that!

Conclude by saying: When you go home, tell your family about the Golden Rule. Tell them it’s a rule that’s better than gold — a rule for everyone to follow.

Adapted from the YMCA Character Development program (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).

Trusting men, and they will be true to you.

Treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson
IDEA #58

Wall of Respect

OVERVIEW: Children discuss the difference between respect for authority figures and respect for peers. After citing examples of how they can show courtesy and respect to their peers, they express these ideas in drawings of respectful behavior which are posted on a “wall of respect” as a reminder of appropriate behavior.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of “Respecting My Friend” worksheet for each child
- enough markers, crayons and/or pencils for all children to draw and color pictures at the same time

PROCEDURE:

Ask: Who usually tells you to show respect and what do they mean by this? Solicit answers (they will probably mention authority figures such as parents and teachers) and discuss why these people deserve respect.

Then tell them: We all know it is important to show respect for adults, but it is also important to respect our friends. This means treating them as we would like to be treated and being polite to them. What are some ways you can be respectful toward your friends? Discuss their comments before moving on to the drawing activity.

Next, distribute copies of the “Respecting My Friend” worksheet. Tell them that you’d like to see pictures of what they’ve said so far. Have each child draw a picture of being polite or showing respect in some other way to a friend.

When they have finished, have them share their pictures, describing what they have drawn and why they think it’s important. Then post their pictures on a “respect wall” as a reminder of this lesson. If a conflict arises between students or if one is spotted acting disrespectfully toward another, refer to any drawings which seem relevant.

Contributed by Candace Lamma, Rappahannock County Elementary School (Washington, VA).
Idea #58: Worksheet: “Respecting My Friend”

I can show respect to a friend by . . .

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

(Draw a picture below of how you can show respect to your friend.)
Don’t Neglect The Need For RESPECT

Sample drawing for a “Wall of Respect.” Artwork by Matt Hardgrove, Gaithersburg Middle School (Gaithersburg, MD).
IDEA #59

Respect or Disrespect? (Role-Playing)

OVERVIEW: Students will learn to better distinguish between respectful and disrespectful statements and actions through role-playing exercises.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Have a brief discussion about what it means to show respect to others. Then call on students to role-play the situations on the “Respect or Disrespect?” activity sheet. After each one, ask if it was a good example of respect or disrespect.

Depending on how the students carry out the role-playing, some scenes may be characterized by both respectful and disrespectful behavior. Tell the group to watch for this. Finally, call on them to describe how anyone showing a lack of respect could have acted respectfully.

Rudeness is the weak man’s imitation of strength.
— Eric Hoffer

Adapted from “Developing Character-Building Values,” by John Gust (Good Apple, Morristown, NJ), 1995. Used with permission.
Idea #59 Activity Sheet: Respect or Disrespect?

Have students role-play the following scenarios:

- A classmate pushes you out of line and takes your place.
- You raise your hand to answer a question, and everyone listens quietly while you talk.
- A friend borrows one of your toys and will not return it.
- You're working in a group. You tell the others your idea and someone says, “That’s dumb.”
- A friend says, “Pardon me,” before going around you to hang up her coat in the closet.
- A classmate teases you about your new haircut.
- Your partner ignores you when you ask him to pass the crayons.
- A friend saves your place in line while you help a classmate pick up the books she dropped.
- You’re waiting in line and someone cuts in front of you.
- A classmate takes time to help you understand a math problem.
- You tell a classmate a secret and he tells it to a few other people.
IDEA #60

Good Character in Conversation

OVERVIEW: Children discuss the purpose of conversation and list the key ingredients needed for it to be successful. They apply these lessons to conversation in the lunchroom.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- index cards
- shoebox
- paper; pencils or pens
- bulletin board

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the purpose of lunchtime and what the children hope to achieve at lunch. Suggest that certain behaviors and character traits are required to meet their goals for having an enjoyable lunch (e.g., staying in your seats, table manners, listening, etc.).

Have students role-play scenes from the lunchroom to model the behavior you discussed. Afterward, have the students point out the positive and negative results. Make sure they offer solutions to improve the conversation.

Ask why people talk with friends and what makes a conversation interesting. Create a list of possible elements that would make a conversation successful.

Next, brainstorm a list of topics that would be fun and interesting to talk about at lunchtime (e.g., favorite foods, traits of a hero, best ways to do your homework, etc.). Pass out index cards. Instruct students to write a topic on them. Then place them in a shoebox labeled “Quality Conversation Topics.” Draw a topic from the box periodically. During lunch, assign topics to the children and tell them to discuss their topics with friends.

Discuss their efforts the next time you meet. Talk about what made the conversation better and what made it more difficult. Have the students compliment each other on their respectful behavior. Then have the students write down what they learned about their friends. Display the results of their positive conversations at lunchtime on a bulletin board in the room.

Adapted from the article “Let’s Do Lunch!” by Marlynn K. Clayton in The Responsive Classroom. This idea is also posted on www.responsiveclassroom.org.

— William Hazlitt
18th-century English essayist and literary critic
IDEA #61

We Are All Different; We Are All the Same

OVERVIEW: Students share examples of things they like and learn how much they have in common as well as how to accept differences.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- scissors
- paper bags
- pencils or pens
- strips of paper (one for each student)
- magazines for students to cut out pictures

PROCEDURE:

Explain that part of respect is taking the time to learn about other people and listening to what they have to say. Field questions and comments about this. Then divide the students into groups of three or four. Tell them to take turns telling their group what they like (e.g., kinds of food, activities, places, movies, TV shows). Instruct them to look through the pile of magazines designated for their group and cut out pictures of all the things that they like. Have them place these in a paper bag designated for their group.

Once the groups have completed this task (you may want to set a time limit), collect the bags. Have the groups reunite as one class. Pull some of the pictures from each bag. As you pull out each picture, explain what it is, and have the students raise their hands if they like the item shown. The students will be able to see how many interests they have in common.

Afterward, have them share other ways they are similar and different. Reiterate that respectful people may come from different types of families, or appear different, but there are still many things they have in common. Emphasize that one of those common traits is the ability to accept others’ differences. Ask the students to help you describe ways that they can show respect for others’ differences. Have them write at least one example down on a slip of paper that you can post on a bulletin board about respectful tolerance.


The highest result of education is tolerance.
— Helen Keller
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning American social activist and author
IDEA #62

Tell Me; I’ll Listen

OVERVIEW: Children learn the importance of listening, a hallmark of respect.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- *Angel Child, Dragon Child* by Michele Maria Surat (or any story that points out the role listening plays in understanding)
- drawing paper
- crayons

PROCEDURE:

Read or summarize *Angel Child, Dragon Child* by Michele Maria Surat.

In this story a little Vietnamese girl named Hoa is teased and ridiculed at her new American school because of her language and dress. In one instance she is taunted by a classmate and she fights back. To settle the dispute, and to teach the children a lesson, the principal orders the two angry children to complete an unusual assignment. The girl must tell her tormentor about Vietnam, and the boy who teased her must listen carefully and write down her story. This leads to a friendship between the two children — and ultimately to the involvement of the whole school in a fundraiser to help reunite Hoa’s family.

Discuss how this story illustrates the importance of listening and how our viewpoints about other people change if we take the time to understand them better.

Inform the students that they will practice the art of listening. Divide students into pairs. Instruct them to tell each other about their own families and what they like to do together. Have each child draw a picture of an activity that their listening partner shared about his or her family.

Have the children share with the class what they learned about their partners from listening to them. If possible, have the children share pictures of their partner’s family with the class.

*Adapted from Developing Character When It Counts,* by Barbara Allman (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999).
IDEA #63

Persevering Poetry

OVERVIEW: Children discuss and focus on perseverance. Taking a few minutes each day to memorize lines to a poem, they eventually see their efforts pay off as they learn to recite the entire poem.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- a poem appropriate to the children’s developmental level

PROCEDURE:

The first and the best victory is to conquer self. To be conquered by self is, of all things, the most shameful and vile.

— Plato
Greek philosopher


Define perseverance. Say: Perseverance is sticking to a task even when it is difficult. It is pushing to reach the finish when it would be much easier to give up. When you try to be the best person you can be, especially when it is difficult, you are showing perseverance.

Ask students to share examples of perseverance. Discuss these and why perseverance is important.

Introduce the task. Explain that to model perseverance, they are going to memorize one line of a poem each day until they have memorized the whole poem.

Read the title and first line of the poem. Have them repeat the line back to you. If necessary, explain to them what each line means. Then read the line again and have them commit it to memory. Before they leave, ask them to recite the line one last time.

Each day have them learn a new line. Once they have memorized the whole poem, have the children recite it together in front of another class.
IDEA #64

Taking Responsibility for Myself

OVERVIEW: Children are introduced to the meaning of the word “responsibility” and learn that being responsible means knowing information like one’s phone number, address and birth date. They learn this information as part of demonstrating self-reliance.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

• one photocopy of the “Taking Responsibility for Myself” worksheet for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Explain the meaning of the word “responsibility.” Say: Part of being responsible is knowing certain things about yourself. Explain to the children the importance of memorizing their phone number, address and birth date. Say: If there’s ever an emergency situation, it may be very important you to know these things by heart. This is one way you can be responsible for yourself.

Pass out a photocopy of the “Taking Responsibility for Myself” worksheet to each youngster and tell them to complete these worksheets as a homework assignment. When they bring the completed forms back, make sure they learn to spell each item correctly and recite each one from memory. If children can learn songs by heart, there’s absolutely no reason why they shouldn’t be able to do the same for phone numbers, addresses and birth dates. Give them a quiz at the end of the week to make sure everyone has these items memorized.

Adapted from “Developing Character-Building Values,” by John Gust (Good Apple, Morristown, NJ), 1995. Used with permission.

The willingness to accept responsibility for one’s own life is the source from which self-respect springs.

— Joan Didion
Idea #64 Worksheet: Taking Responsibility for Myself

Are you responsible for what happens to you? You need to be! What would happen if there was an emergency and you were asked these questions? Make sure you learn the answers so you can be responsible for yourself.

My full name is:

________________________________________________________________

My parents’ names are:

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

My address is:

House number, street name, apartment number

________________________________________________________________

City and state

________________________________________________________________

Zip code

My phone number is: ( ___________ ) _________________________________

My birth date is:

________________________________________________________________

My school’s name is:

________________________________________________________________

My teacher’s name is:

________________________________________________________________

My classroom number is:

________________________________________________________________
IDEA #65

I Am Responsible

OVERVIEW: Students learn about being responsible by reciting the lyrics to a children’s song about this. They reinforce the song’s message by coming up with statements about (or selections from) the song and stating them with conviction in front of the group.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “I Am Responsible” song lyrics for each small group

PROCEDURE:

Have a discussion about what it means to be responsible. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- How grown up are you?
- What can you be responsible for?
- What feeling do you get when you take responsibility for something?
- Could you make your bed every day?
- Could you remember to always put away your toothbrush?
- Do you remember to always hang up your clothes?
- Do you clear your own dishes?
- Could you do that for a baby brother or sister too?
- Outside your house could you keep the sidewalk clear of trash?
- Could you keep the sidewalk clean all the way to school?
- What are the rewards?
- Would you get a feeling of pride if you did that?

After you have introduced this concept to the students, divide them into groups of four or five and distribute photocopies of the “I Am Responsible” song lyrics. Read the lyrics aloud to everybody, then have the students alternate reading verses of the song, then tell them to pick out a word, phrase or sentence which they consider significant. Or, if they are able, tell them to think up a statement on their own which expresses an idea in the song. Encourage the students to help each other.

When they all have come up with a sentence or phrase, go around the room having them make their statements with conviction. Tell them that it’s O.K. to repeat each other, but that each statement should be made original somehow — by its content or delivery. Encourage them to use body gestures to make their statements more emphatically.

In the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have. . . is the ability to take on responsibility.

— Michael Korda
If you are unable to purchase this tape, have the students come up with a tune to which they can all sing these lyrics. Have some of them keep the tempo by pounding on boxes or tapping pencils.

Conclude this activity by recapping your discussion and having the students reflect on what they have learned.

Adapted from the “It's Your Character That Counts: Songs and Activities” booklet, by Paul Tracey (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1994.
Idea #65: Handout: “I Am Responsible”  
(song by Paul Tracey)

If you see a bagel  
Lying on the kitchen floor,  
Don’t say, “Mum will pick it up,  
‘Cause that’s what mums are for.” Rubbish!  
Pick it up yourself, take responsibility.  
Your mum will have more time for hugs,  
Just you wait and see.

Chorus:  
I am responsible, I am responsible,  
I am responsible for everything I do.

If your room is messy  
And you don’t know who to blame,  
Look in the mirror,  
Yes, you know your name.  
Who left their skateboard  
On the bottom stair?  
Who is to blame when dad  
Flew through the air?

(Chorus)  
Why are there ants

Coming right in the door?  
Did you spill soda  
Right there on the floor?  
Who left the bath water  
Running all day?  
Where has my rubber ducky  
Floated away?

(Chorus)  
You cleaned up your room  
And you turned off the bath.  
That’s great! Let’s go out  
To the movies and laugh.  
Kids who are responsible  
I like the best.  
When I meet responsible kids,  
I’m impressed.

(Chorus)
IDEA #66

Responsibility in Literature
(part 1)

OVERVIEW: In coordination with a well-known children’s story, the children define responsibility and describe responsible actions.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- well-known literature selections that clearly illustrate responsible behavior of one or more characters (e.g., “The Little Engine That Could,” “Horton Hatches the Who,” “The Wizard of Oz”)
- dictionary
- tagboard and magic markers
- large sheet of paper or other material for making a banner that reads, “Responsible Action Is . . .”

PROCEDURE:

Begin by writing “RESPONSIBILITY” on the chalkboard. Read it with the students and talk about its meaning. Listen to their responses, and then point out that the word itself gives an important clue about its definition. Ask them: Do you see two smaller words here? Discuss the words “response” and “ability,” and help the students recognize that part of responsibility is having the ability to respond and take action. Using the input of the students, write an initial definition on the chalkboard. Then look up responsibility in the dictionary and compare definitions. Discuss any differences.

Use literature to provide examples of characters taking responsibility. Two recommended anthologies are A Call to Character by Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl (eds) and The Book of Virtues by William Bennett (ed). Read a story to the students, or read passages from a story with which they are already familiar. Then ask:

- Who acted in a responsible way in this story?
- Was anyone not responsible (or irresponsible)?
- In what ways did (name of character) act responsibly?
- How would you feel if you were . . . (examples: one of the children who
would not get toys if the Little Engine was not so responsible?; the baby in the egg who would not hatch if Horton didn’t keep it warm?; Dorothy and you didn’t have the Scarecrow, Tin Woodsman, or Cowardly Lion to help you get to the Emerald City?)

• How do you feel about the characters who were irresponsible?

Redirect the students to their initial definition of responsibility and ask them if they believe the definition can be improved. Facilitate further discussion about the meaning of responsibility, adding words to the definition or writing a clarifying sentence or two on the board. Write the revised definition on tagboard and post it at the top of a bulletin board under a banner reading, “Responsible Action Is . . .”

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #67

Responsibility in Literature
(part 2)

OVERVIEW: In coordination with a well-known children’s story, the children discuss responsibility and describe responsible actions through artwork and writing.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- well-known literature selections that clearly illustrate responsible behavior of one or more characters (e.g., “The Little Engine That Could,” “Horton Hatches the Who,” “The Wizard of Oz”)
- drawing paper and other art and writing materials for each child
- tagboard and magic markers
- large sheet of paper or other material for making a banner that reads, “Characters with Good Character”

PROCEDURE:

Read a popular children’s story in which one or more characters demonstrate responsible behavior. Throughout the story, point out instances of responsibility and irresponsibility and discuss these examples.

When the story is finished, have them draw a picture illustrating one of the character’s responsible actions. Below this drawing, tell the students to write a sentence or paragraph describing the responsible action and how they feel about it. Circulate as the students draw and write, offering encouragement, acknowledgment, and assistance as needed. Post the drawings along with a banner which reads, “Characters with Good Character.”

Conclude the activity with discussion questions like these:

- Does responsible action just happen or do we have to think about it and then do it?
- Is an action responsible if it is sloppy or poorly done? Why or why not?
- What must we do to let people know we are responsible people?

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #68

“The Finger of Blame” Play

OVERVIEW: Students read aloud and perform a play about fairness and then discuss it.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of play (for students to read)
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Define accountability. Explain that responsible people are accountable for their actions — they accept responsibility for what they’ve done rather than blaming others for mistakes.

When you are confident they understand these terms, write these questions on the board: *Why did Andrew try to blame Chloe for something that he did? What happened to Andrew? Who showed accountability? Who didn’t show accountability?*

Instruct the students to copy these questions on a piece of paper and keep them in mind as they read the play. Explain that they are going to read a play about being accountable.

Assign character roles to students and have them read the “The Finger of Blame” play aloud.
IDEA #68 Play: “The Finger of Blame”

Cast of Characters:
Andrew: A third-grade boy
Mark: Andrew’s friend
Jack: Andrew’s friend
Tanya: Andrew’s older sister
Mom: Andrew’s mother

Scene One: Kitchen of Andrew’s home.
There is a birthday cake on the counter.

Enter Mom and Tanya
Tanya: Wow, Mom! The cake is so beautiful! I’m going to have a great birthday party tomorrow.

Enter Andrew, Jack and Mark. They are running and bumping into each other. Andrew is holding a baseball bat. Mark has a glove.

Andrew: Hi, Mom. What do we have to drink?
Mom: Slow down. I told you that there is no rough-housing allowed inside.
Mark: Wow, cake!
Tanya: Don’t even think about it! That’s for my party.
Jack: Good, ’cause I wouldn’t want to come anyway.
Andrew and Mark laugh.
Tanya: (whining) Mom!
Mom: OK, settle down. Andrew, there are plenty of cold sodas in the refrigerator. You boys can help yourselves and then go back outside. Tanya, let’s go put up the decorations in the living room.
Tanya: OK, but don’t you guys touch anything.
Tanya and Mom leave the kitchen.
Mark: That icing really does look good. She wouldn’t miss just a little bit down here at the edge. (He sticks his finger in the icing and takes a taste.)

Andrew: Come on. Don’t do that. I’ll get in trouble.
Jack: They won’t even notice. I want to try some. (He reaches out his hand to take a taste. Andrew tries to stop him and the cake topples to the floor.)
Mark: Oh, man!
Andrew: My mom is going to kill me!
Jack: What are we going to do? (A dog barks outside the kitchen door.)
Andrew: We can go back outside to play ball and one of us can “accidentally” let my dog Chloe in.
Mark: OK, let’s go!

Scene Two: The backyard.

Enter Andrew, Jack and Mark.
Jack: Maybe Chloe will eat all the evidence.
Mark: What a waste. That was a really good cake. What’s the matter, Andrew?
Andrew: I was just thinking that Tanya’s really excited about her birthday. I don’t think my mom has time to bake another cake. This will ruin it for them.

Jack: Yeah, but if your mom finds out that we knocked the cake over, you’ll get grounded for a month. And she’ll probably call my mom.

Mark: Let’s not worry about it. Tanya can have a special cake next year. Let’s play ball.

Andrew: I don’t feel like playing right now.

Mom: (from off stage) Oh, no! Chloe, what have you done?

Jack: Uh, maybe we’d better be going.

Mark: See you later.

Mark and Jack run off. Andrew waits for a moment, listening.

Tanya: (off stage) Oh, Mom, look at my cake! Chloe, you bad, bad dog!

Andrew exits.

Scene Three: Andrew’s kitchen.

What’s left of the cake is on the floor.

Andrew enters from stage right. Mom and Tanya enter from stage left.

Mom: Be careful, Andrew. There’s cake all over. Chloe got into the kitchen somehow and must have knocked it down. Your dad took her to the vet.

Andrew: The vet? Why?

Tanya: It was a chocolate cake, Andy. Chocolate is very bad for dogs. She ate a lot of it and might get sick.

Mom: I can’t believe Chloe would do such a thing. She’s usually so good.

Andrew: (softly) She didn’t do it.

Mom: What?

Andrew: She didn’t knock it over, Mom. I did. I was goofing around with Jack.

Tanya: You did this?

Andrew: I tried to blame it on Chloe. Now she’s sick and Tanya’s party is ruined. I’m sorry, Mom. What can I do?

Mom: I’m glad you told me the truth and you’re being accountable for your actions. I’m sure Chloe will be alright. Her tummy might feel a little upset for a day or two. I think I can get another cake at the bakery. But for you to take responsibility for your mistake, I think you should pay for it with your allowance.

Andrew: I will. And I think I’ll have to buy something else.

Tanya: What’s that?

Andrew: A dog treat for Chloe.

Fade.

Give the students time to write answers to the questions you wrote on the board. Then invite them to share their thoughts and opinions.

Adapted from Spotlight on Character: Plays That Show CHARACTER COUNTS!, Grades 2-3, by Q.L. Pearce (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999). This booklet is available from the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
IDEA #69

Responsibly Running a Candy Store

OVERVIEW: To model responsibility, as well as math, reading and writing skills, students make geometric shapes out of gum drops and pretzel sticks and then create a “store” to sell them in at school.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- gum drops, pretzel sticks
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Invite students to think about when they go into a store. Prompt them to describe the kinds of jobs that the people they see in these stores might have. Ask them to guess what their responsibilities might be. List their answers. Discuss the different types of daily tasks performed to run a store and the responsibilities involved with them. Inform them that they will be running a candy store eventually and should start thinking about what tasks they would like to perform responsibly.

Distribute the gum drops and pretzel sticks. Have the students make various shapes. (You may want to assign particular ones to particular students). Discuss the names of the shapes and what defines them (number of sides, edges, etc.). Explain pricing. Decide what prices to charge.

After the shapes have been priced, have students name them. Discuss creative names that will encourage people to want to purchase them. Instruct them to create posters (advertisements) to sell them. Then, name the store and create a sign for it. Next, set up the shop and open it (in an area of the cafeteria to actually sell the candy). Use the profits to benefit the class or school.

Afterward, have the students write out what they learned. Instruct them to explain how they demonstrated responsible behavior and what skills they learned to help them be more responsible.

Adapted from “The Delicious Shape Shop” by Bob Krech in Scholastic Instructor (Nov. 1999).
IDEA #70

“A Fish Tale” Fable

OVERVIEW: Students hear a fable about treating others fairly without regard to physical characteristics. They discuss the importance of being fair in discussion questions related to the story.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students that you’re going to read a short story to them and then ask questions about it. Tell them about the importance of treating all their classmates fairly no matter what each one looks like. Say: Think about this as you listen to the story. Read “A Fish Tale Fable” aloud, then ask the following discussion questions:

1. What lessons can people learn from these fish?
2. Have you ever met someone who seemed odd at first, but turned out to be really nice?
3. Why do we place so much importance on appearances?
4. If we give others a chance, don’t we usually find out that we don’t need to be afraid of their differences?
5. Why was the salmon good at making the two groups treat each other fairly?
6. Is it fair to treat others differently because their skin is a different color? Why not?
7. Is it fair to treat others differently because their eyes are a different color? Why not?
8. Is it fair to treat others differently because their hair is different than yours? Why not?

Adapted from “The Classics Modernized,” by William Roufberg (P.O. Box 432, Kingston, NJ 08528). Used with permission.
IDEA #70 Story: “A Fish Tale” Fable

Every spring, for as long as anyone could remember, melting snow from the mountains would cause torrents of water to rush through the valleys forming a great river that flowed into the sea.

But over time the climate changed and this particular river began to dry up and many freshwater fish eventually were forced to swim out into the ocean.

The saltwater fish were not pleased about having to share their waters with these strange newcomers. “How funny looking these river fish are,” said an old salt. “They don’t belong here.”

He announced to his school, “We have more cartilage, but they have mostly bone. We have live births, but they lay eggs. We can tolerate the cold, but they like warmer waters.”

A huge spray of bubbles was caused when the entire school in unison said, “They must go!”

The freshwater fish were angered by these remarks. They also pointed out how the other school differed from them. One responded, “We eat plant life while you swallow other fish. We rely on our sight, but you judge things by more by smell. We have many pretty colors, but you are gray and drab.”

A huge spray of bubbles was caused when this entire school in unison said, “We belong here. You should go!”

A nearby salmon overheard this arguing and swam closer. Salmon are special fish and have been living in both rivers and oceans for a long time. The wise old salmon, who had known both kinds of fish all her life told them to stop their bickering. “How silly of you to focus on these differences when it’s clear that our similarities are far greater. Can’t you see that? We are all fish. We swim. We live in the water. We travel in schools. We have gills to breathe. We have fins to navigate. We are covered with scales. Let’s focus on these things instead.”

The salmon made everybody think about this and asked all the fish to get to know one another before they made any decisions about those in another group. Though all of them were still aware of their differences, they soon realized that these differences didn’t really matter much. Once they got to know those who looked different from them, they understood that looks weren’t that important. Soon they began to mix, darting about happily among each other.

. . . The next time you go fishing, look closely how the fish puckers his mouth after he is caught. If he seems to say to you, “I am just a fish,” no matter how strange he looks, then you know he has been well schooled.
IDEA #71

Fairness Challenge

OVERVIEW: Children learn to practice fairness and receive ribbons (or other small prizes) for meeting the “challenge” to “SHARE, CARE and be FAIR.” They learn to be more aware of their behavior by being challenged each time a fairness issue arises.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one cut-out ribbon (or other small prize) for each day of the week

PROCEDURE:

Write the following “Fairness Challenge” on the chalkboard: “I DARE you to SHARE, CARE and be FAIR.” Tell the students: This week I have a “Fairness Challenge” for you. Let’s read it together.

After reading the statement together and clarifying it, have them memorize it. Tell them: This is a hard challenge — harder than many of the “dares” your friends might give you. Talk about what each word means. Make it a catch-phrase by repeating it each time a fairness issue comes up. For instance, if two children are arguing over something, ask the rest of the group, What do we say? (“I DARE you to SHARE, CARE and be FAIR.”) At that point they are challenged to resolve the issue fairly.

Make award ribbons with the words “Fair Dare Winner” on them (or provide other prizes). Award one each day of the “Fairness Challenge” week to children who meet the challenge.


Justice is my being allowed to do whatever is whatever prevents my doing so.

— Samuel Butler
IDEA #72

“I Cut, You Choose”

OVERVIEW: Children think about sharing fairly by discussing how to divide a pie equitably.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one pie or cake (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Draw a large circle on the chalkboard representing a pie (unless you have the real thing!). Work together to figure out a way to divide it fairly between everyone. Ask them discussion questions like the following: What if there were five children? Should a larger kid get a larger piece? Would you give an equal share to a toddler?

Ask them to think of some general rules for dividing the pie fairly, then discuss these rules. One such rule might be: “I cut, you choose.” This method forces the cutter to make the parts equal.

Adapted from the “It’s Your Character That Counts: Songs and Activities” booklet, by Paul Tracey (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1994.
IDEA #73

Taking Turns

OVERVIEW: Children reinforce lessons about fairness by playing a cooperative game that involves taking turns.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- empty milk carton
- various-sized playground balls

PROCEDURE:

On the board, draw a chart with two columns: one labeled Cooperation and the other Competition. Ask the children to help you define both. Then have them help you list activities that involve cooperation (e.g., singing in a group, working together on something as a team, etc.). Next, compare those to activities involving competition. Again, list examples. Suggest that both require following rules. Discuss how following rules is part fairness.

Introduce another trait of fairness: taking turns. Ask: How does taking turns show we are fair? Field answers. Suggest that taking turns is part of cooperation. Then say: Now we are going to play a game that will test your cooperation skills and show how well you can follow the rule of taking turns.

Set up an the empty milk carton. Distribute the playground balls to the children. Designate the place from which the children will roll their balls. Explain the game: After the first ball is rolled, each of you will work together to help it hit the milk carton without knocking it over. You will each take a turn rolling your balls to try and gently bump the first ball rolled so it can lightly touch the carton. Remember, we don’t want to knock the carton over. You may want to demonstrate for the children.

Each child takes a turn rolling a ball until the first ball touches the carton. If the carton is knocked over, the child who rolled the last ball begins the next game.

Afterward, ask the children to summarize how they cooperated and why taking turns was important to their success with this game.

Adapted from Developing Character When It Counts: Grade 2-3, by Barbara Allman (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999). This booklet is available from the CCI national office.
IDEA #74

Equality for Everyone

OVERVIEW: Students study the women’s rights movement to develop an awareness of equality for men and women. (This lesson can be incorporated into a whole unit on Civil Rights.)

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- biography of Susan B. Anthony (possible sources: Great Americans by John and Patty Carratello; encyclopedias, including www.britannica.com)

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to define equality. List their responses on the board. Clarify the definition for them. Emphasize fairness for all people. When you feel they understand the concept, discuss the women’s suffrage and civil rights movements. Then introduce Susan B. Anthony. Read selections from her biography aloud.

Discuss unfair judgements that people might make about boys and girls. Discuss what causes people to make unfair judgments and to treat people unfairly (e.g., making assumptions about people without knowing anything about their background or experience, not listening to people, going along with popular perceptions rather than thinking independently, not following rules, “playing favorites,” etc.).

Have them write a letter to Susan B. Anthony, acknowledging her contributions to creating more fairness in the world. When they are finished, have them share their letters and display them.

You might explore this topic in greater depth by comparing the roles of men and women in other cultures or by investigating the current state of women’s rights (in the U.S. and in other countries. Also, invite a women’s activist or leader to your class to discuss the issue of gender inequality.

Inspired by “Civil Rights,” a lesson plan by Sue Hamilton and Staci Matthews (City Heights Elementary School, Van Buren) posted on www.ericir.syr.edu.
IDEA #75

Teams Playing Fair

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the teamwork displayed by athletes, are divided into teams with designated tasks to model the appropriate behaviors discussed and then create logos and posters promoting their team’s fair behavior.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- pencils; markers
- magazines (to cut up)
- scissors

PROCEDURE:

Review with students what it means to be fair. List their interpretations. Invite them to explain why it is important to be fair. Again, note their answers. Ask them to define why acting fair is important in the classroom. Suggest: *When we are in here together, we are like a team, all working together to help each other learn things. Each of us must behave in ways that makes learning possible for everyone.* Ask why it is important for team players to understand how to act fair. Discuss whether or not they think athletes on various sports teams behave fairly with their own teammates. Have them cite examples of their claims such as: “Professional basketball players from a particular team do not pass the ball to their open teammates. Instead, they try to shoot so that their stats look the best, and they can earn more money the following year.” Follow up with the question: *How could these players or teams behave more fairly and promote fairness?*

Next, divide them into teams (groups) of at least three or four.

Explain that they are going to be a team that promotes fair behavior in their class and school. They are to come up with a team name that suggests fairness and then design a logo for it. Once that is completed, they are to put the logo on a sheet of drawing paper and create a poster that promotes fair behavior through words and pictures. After completing the task, each team will share their posters and explain the meaning of their logos. Display them around the room for reminders.

IDEA #76

Kings and Queens of Caring

OVERVIEW: Children discuss the rewards and riches that come with caring for others through their actions.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- pipe cleaners
- colored beads

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children to define reward and to give examples. Field and list answers. Then discuss why people receive rewards and how that makes them feel. Explain the expression “A good deed is its own reward.”

Next, list examples of caring and compassionate behavior. Ask who receives rewards when people show that they care about others. Emphasize that caring is contagious and that both the caring person and the one cared-for receive rewards.

Bring out the beads and pipe cleaner. Hang the pipe cleaner in a permanent spot that is visible to everyone. Then say: Every time I spot one of you performing a caring deed for someone, we will add a bead to the pipe cleaner. Once we have 20 beads on the pipe, we will take a vote and decide who has been the most caring person in the class. If you are chosen, you will be given the caring bracelet to wear for a day. You might designate this person the “King/Queen of Caring” and give him/her a special reward on his/her special day.

Continue the activity with a new pipe cleaner and new beads — and a new “king” or “queen” once the pipe cleaner has collected another 20 beads on it.

Adapted from an idea submitted by Cynthia D. Casselman, fourth grade teacher at Knox County Schools in Tennessee.
IDEA #77

Compliment Tickets

OVERVIEW: Students learn what it means to give and receive compliments and why it’s important. This activity helps them learn to initiate friendships as well as to make others feel good about themselves. It is most effective when done regularly as a 10-15-minute exercise.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- light color or white construction paper

(Cut paper into 3 x 4 “tickets” prior to the activity.)

PROCEDURE:

Begin by finding opportunities to compliment the group of students (e.g., You all did a great job listening quietly when the school principal was here). Each time you compliment them, acknowledge it (I just gave you a compliment! That means I told you something nice about yourselves.).

The next day, remind the class about the compliments they received and make sure all the kids know what it means to give a compliment. Say: Now let’s play the “compliment game.” I’ll start by giving one of you a compliment. When you get a compliment, you get a ticket. First, write your name at the top of the ticket. Then it’s your turn to give a compliment to someone else. Every time you give a compliment, you also give the ticket. Give three or four students compliments which they, in turn, pass on to another child, each one writing his/her name at the top of the ticket each time a compliment is received. When you stop the activity, save the tickets so that the game may be picked up where it was left off.

Resume the activity with the kids who last wrote their names on the tickets. Have them start by reading all the names on their tickets to recognize everyone who has been complimented so far. When the slips of paper are full of names, give new compliments and tickets to those who haven’t received any yet. Make sure all kids are recognized at some point or another. Keep tickets which are filled with names in a jar to show that the compliments remain valid.

Contributed by Laurie Kutcher, Coolidge Elementary School teacher (San Gabriel, CA).

The best portion of a good person’s life is the little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.

— William Wordsworth
IDEA #78

What Does It Mean to Care?

**OVERVIEW:** Children are introduced to the concept of caring and why it is important to be a caring person.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask: *Why is it important to be a caring person?* Field responses and add any of the following which go unmentioned:

- Caring people make others feel like they’re not alone.
- Caring people help others when they are sad, hurt or sick — even if they don’t get anything in return. Without caring people, those who are sad, hurt or sick would not be helped unless someone thought they could make some money or get something else by helping.
- When people care about others, they protect them and make them feel safe.
- People need love, respect and concern — and that’s what caring people give.
- People who care for others end up feeling better about themselves.
- When people have an attitude of “I don’t care,” they do sloppy and incomplete work. Sometimes that can be dangerous for people and the environment.
- If you don’t care about yourself or others, people start caring less about you.
- Our world will become ugly with litter and other pollution unless we care about the environment.

IDEA #79

Caring in Action

OVERVIEW: Children learn that being a caring person must not be limited to feelings — it’s essential to act! In this exercise, they think of ways to practice caring behavior.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell them: Caring isn’t just a matter of how we feel — it’s how we act. When we feel love and concern for others, we have to look for ways to show it. What are some things we can do to show we care about others? Field responses and add any of the following which go unmentioned:

• Ask questions about how others are doing, and listen well when they answer.
• Ask questions about what others think and feel, and listen well when they answer.
• When people tell you about problems they’re having, ask them how you can help. Also, try to think of a way you can help on your own — then do it!
• When you care, you handle things with self-control and gentleness.
• When someone or something is in your care, you understand that it’s your job to help and you give it your best.
• When you care about the things you do, you do them with enthusiasm and excellence, whether it is a job at home or a school assignment.
• When you care about yourself, you treat your body with respect. That means getting enough sleep, eating good food and playing safely.

Ask: What would caring look like if . . .

• You were doing one of your chores at home?
• You noticed that one of your friends looked a bit sad?
• You came in from playing outside and started talking to your mother?

Action is character, right? What a person does is what he is, not what he says.

—Syd Field
• You were in charge of caring for the family pet?
• You felt upset about something that was hard to talk about?
• Your sister let you borrow something she really liked?

One learns through the heart, not the eyes or the intellect.
— Mark Twain

IDEA #80

Secret Service Helpers

OVERVIEW: Children learn that genuine caring is not motivated by selfish gratification and learn to carry out good deeds without expecting rewards or recognition.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the children about the President’s Secret Service. Emphasize how important it is to protect and serve the President of the United States. Then remind them that no one knows who they are — that’s why they are “secret.” Say: Some people do nice things just to show off and make people think they are nice. But the best people do things for others just because they want to — they don’t expect anything in return and they’re not even concerned if anyone notices who did the good deed.

Tell them: Now let’s pretend you all are a Secret Service team on the lookout to serve others who are in need. Remember that because we are a “secret service,” we do our service without looking for rewards.

Discuss who could use your help, then carry out the project without looking for recognition. Your project might be removing trash from a littered parking lot, baking cookies together for nursing home residents, cleaning an elderly woman’s yard for her or collecting toys and clothes to give to a local shelter. Such activities might be incorporated into an existing community service program or you might carry out your activities independently. You may want to make badges that say “Secret Service” on them and wear sunglasses or simple disguises for fun while serving the community as a “Secret Service” team.

Contributed by Janet Gunson, M.S. Ed (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA).

— John Gardner
IDEA #81

Tale of the Four Wishes

OVERVIEW: Students listen to a Native American tale about selfishness and then make a wishing pouch like the main character’s, to place a wish in for someone else.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- a wishing pouch stencil (for students to trace) (optional)
- scissors, 2 sheets of construction paper, yarn, crayons
- paper; pencils or pens
- bulletin board

PROCEDURE:

Share this “Tale of the Four Wishes”:

Four Indian men travel very far to meet a great magical leader who grants wishes. Three of the men wish for selfish things. The first man wishes to have a lot of money; the second wants to be more handsome, and the third wishes to be taller. Only the fourth man wishes for something that will benefit others. He asks to be a great hunter so that he can provide food for the villagers. The magical leader gives each of the men their wishes in pouches but instructs them not to look in the pouches until they get home. But the three selfish men cannot wait; they are too eager. Halfway home, they open the pouches. The first man finds that his pouch is full of money, but he is immediately attacked and robbed by a crowd of other greedy men like himself. The second man finds a mirror in his pouch and looks in it. His reflection proves that he has become very handsome, and he is instantly surrounded by a crowd of women who never leave him alone. When the third man opens his pouch he instantly grows taller, but everywhere he goes his head gets tangled in tree branches. However, the fourth man waits until he returns home to open his pouch. And just as he had hoped, he becomes a great hunter loved by many because he was able to feed them.

Ask the children to explain what this tale teaches about caring. Have them explain how the fourth man showed he was caring. After discussing the story say: The fourth man was thoughtful. What does that mean? Field answers. Then say: Thinking of others before ourselves shows that we care. How else can we show that we care? Again, field answers. Ask: If you could make a wish to help someone else, what would it be? Have students share some of their answers. Then distribute strips of paper on which each of them write a caring wish.

No man is more cheated than a selfish man.
—Henry Ward Beecher
19th-century American preacher
Distribute art materials. Instruct them to make a pouch to put the wish in:

1. Trace (if using stencil) and cut two identical pouch shapes.
2. Punch holes around edges of pouch shapes.
3. Decorate both pouch shapes with crayons. (Have the children try to depict caring with their artwork.)
4. With yarn, match up the holes on each pouch shape and lace them together.
5. Once all the holes have been threaded, tie off yarn close to pouch.

Have the students share their wishes with the class and then take the pouches home and share them with their parents. Tell them that you will be checking to see if they did anything to help make their caring wishes come true.

Inspired by the article “Instructor Theme Unit: Legends of Native Americans,” by Ann Flagg in Scholastic Instructor (Nov. 1999). Story adapted from the retelling of a traditional tale from the Wabanaki people of New England by Joseph Bruchac in Scholastic Instructor (Nov. 1999).

Do good with what thou hast, or it will do thee no good.
—William Penn
17th-century American colonial leader
IDEA #82

Beams of Appreciation

OVERVIEW: Children demonstrate respect by expressing appreciation for each other.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of worksheet with a student’s name written on it (one for each child)
- photo or illustration of a flower
- pencil or pen (one for each child)

PROCEDURE:

Show the students a picture of a flower. Ask them how it grows. Discuss their answers. Once someone offers an answer involving sunlight, say: The sunlight helps make the flower healthy and helps it grow. We too can be like the sunlight and help others feel good. When we show respect for others, we are sharing our light. Give an example, such as: What if Beth offers Joey a piece of candy and Joey says “thank you?” Who is sharing their light? Point out that both are showing respect. Ask how this respectful behavior makes each person feel. After fielding answers, say: Both their actions made the other person smile. They were happier. An important way to show respect is through appreciation — by saying “thank you.” That’s what we are going to do today.

Pass out a copy of the flower worksheet to each child. Tell them that their assignment for the week is to “share their light” with the person whose name is written on their flower. At the end of the week, make time for the children to write words of appreciation in the space provided on the flower.

Invite the children to read aloud what they wrote before giving it to the person named on the worksheet.

Finally, ask the children how they felt hearing the respectful words of appreciation.

Adapted from Developing Character When It Counts: Grades 2-3, by Barbara Allman (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1998).
IDEA #82 Worksheet: Beams of Appreciation

Dear: _________________

You are a ray of sunshine. I appreciate you because:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
IDEA #83

Recycling Responsibly

**OVERVIEW:** To become more responsible about waste management, students discuss which objects to recycle and reuse and then make a chart reinforcing this awareness.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- magazines (to cut up)
- glue
- scissors
- paper; pencils or pens
- bulletin board

**PROCEDURE:**

In front of the class, crumple up a piece of newspaper and throw it in the wastebasket. Ask: *Why was my action not responsible?* After soliciting answers, say: *While it was good that I was throwing my trash away — I was not littering — it was not responsible because my trash was a piece of paper. Paper can be recycled.* Explain what recycling is and what kinds of products can be recycled. (You may want to display actual objects that are recyclable.) Ask the students to name examples of trash that can be recycled. Next, discuss why recycling shows responsibility. Offer examples of how it helps the environment. Discuss ways to recycle and reuse items (e.g., a glass jelly jar can be used to hold marbles, etc.).

Distribute scissors, magazines and glue to students. Demonstrate on the board what you would like them to do on the paper. Have them cut out of magazines objects that can be found in the trash and are reusable or recyclable. Next, have them glue each item to the paper and label it “reusable” or “recyclable.”

Display the items somewhere in the room and designate areas for recyclable items.

You may want to take the children on a field trip to a recycling plant or have them bring in items from home that can be reused in the classroom.

*Inspired by an activity in Pollution, Recycling, Trash, and Litter, by Doris Roettger (Carthage, IL: Fearon Teacher Aids, Simon & Schuster Supplementary Education Group, 1991).*
IDEA #84

Membership in the Community

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the concept of community and various members’ roles in making the community function. The kids learn to appreciate how various people can help make the community a safe and happy place for everyone.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell students: Today, we’re going to talk about community. Ask: Can anyone tell me what a community is? Explain that a community consists of many people who live in one area — a community is many neighborhoods put together. Say: Every community needs different kinds of people who do different things for each other. Everyone’s job is important and everyone has to do their share to make the community run smoothly.

Say: Let’s discuss the different kinds of people every community needs. How do these people help protect our communities? Go over each of the following occupations and have the students discuss how these people contribute to the community:

- police officer
- mail carrier
- store clerk
- dentist
- school counselor
- bus driver
- teacher
- school crossing guard
- firefighter
- electrician
- gas station attendant
- mechanic

Discuss how these roles are interrelated (e.g., the fire fighter needs a gas station and mechanic for the fire trucks, and the mechanic needs a teacher in order to learn how to fix the trucks, and so on).

Adapted from “Life / Liberty / Law,” by Carol Roach (Center for Educational Research and Service, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS). Used with permission.

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

— John Donne
OVERVIEW: Children write out responsible acts and chores they will perform to improve the community and then work together to wrap them in a package, symbolizing the gift of their commitment.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- notecards
- pencils or pens
- magazines (for cutting)
- art supplies, including: scissors, glue, large box, ribbon

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to explain why people give gifts. List answers (e.g., to show they care). Next, ask: What kind of gifts do we give to show we care? Again, list answers, reminding them that gifts don’t have to be objects; they can be favors or acts of kindness.

Discuss the meaning of “citizenship” and say: Part of being a good citizen involves gift giving. The best gift you can give the community is the gift of yourself. What do I mean by that? Field answers and cite examples (e.g., throwing away trash, helping others, participating in community-service activities, etc.). Clarify how these actions help the community.

Introduce the task: We are going to offer our school community gifts of ourselves. Pair students up. Pass out notecards and pencils to each one. Say: First, think of something you can do to help the community. Write it down on the notecard. Once everyone has done that, we are going to decorate this large box and give it to our principal.

When the notecards have been completed, distribute magazines to the pairs. Instruct students to look through the magazines and cut out examples of good citizenship. Afterward have the children take turns pasting their cutouts onto the box. Once it is completely decorated, have the children come up in pairs, read their notecards and place them in the box. When everyone has shared their “gifts,” tie the bow around the box. Present the box to the principal and explain its significance. Then arrange for the students to give their time to the community in the ways they suggested.

IDEA #85

A Gifted Community

Words without actions are the assassins of idealism.

— Herbert Hoover
20th-century U.S. president

IDEA #86

“Our Community” Song

OVERVIEW: Young children seem to love songs that go on and on . . . and on! This activity has them invent lines to a song about roles played by various community members.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Have children sing the following song about being a part of the community. Use the tune for “Farmer in the Dell.” Teach the first part of the song as follows:

Our community, our community,
Hi-ho, the derry-o, our community.
That means you and me, that means you and me,
Hi-ho the derry-o, that means you and me.
And the places that we see, the places that we see,
Hi-ho the derry-o, our community.

For each verse to follow, point to a child to start the verse for the class. Tell him/her to identify — in one brief sentence — a community member and his/her role. An example might be: “The mechanic fixes cars.” To make it easier on them, you might suggest an occupation each time you call on someone.) Sing this line twice in place of the first verse (“Our community, our community”) and skip the third and fourth lines so that the song proceeds like this:

The mechanic fixes cars, the mechanic fixes cars,
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the mechanic fixes cars.
And the places that we see, the places that we see,
Hi-ho the derry-o, our community.

Continue as long as interest holds. Conclude by singing the whole song, starting with “These make our community, these make our community. . . .”

Adapted from “Life / Liberty / Law,” by Carol Roach (Center for Educational Research and Service, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS). Used with permission.
IDEA #87

Citizenship Flag

OVERVIEW: Children create a special American flag which emphasizes individual responsibility in contributing to the community.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- scissors
- crayons or markers
- glue sticks
- lots of butcher paper and white and red construction paper

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children: What’s good about our country? Solicit comments and discuss their observations. Compliment them on their answers and say: The United States is a wonderful place to live! We have many rights and freedoms. But with these rights and freedoms, we have some things we are supposed to do. What are some of those things? Solicit very specific answers (e.g., paying taxes, recycling, wearing seat belts, saying no to drugs, voting when you’re an adult, not littering and keeping your school and neighborhood clean, knowing what’s happening in your community, respectfully voicing concerns, calling the police if someone is in trouble, helping the homeless and hungry).

Tell them that as a reminder of these responsibilities, you are all going to make a “citizenship flag.” Say: We’ll show ways we can give our country a helping hand. First, have them color and cut out stars. (You might have the stars already cut out to save time.) Then, on red and white paper, have them trace the outline of their hands (four hands: two red and two white). When they are finished tracing, have them cut out their paper hands. (Make sure they are careful with the scissors.)

Say: Now that you have two sets of hands, think of four ways you are going to be a good citizen and give our community a helping hand. I want you to write one promise on each hand. Begin each promise with “I will . . .” and write your name after your promise. Distribute the markers or crayons.

As the children complete the paper hands, arrange them on a large piece of butcher paper. As they complete their written promises, glue the hands down in rows of red and white, just like the bars on the American flag.
Follow this with a discussion of ways to make a difference, referring to their promises. Say: *Being good citizens means doing our parts to make this country an even better place to live.*

Adapted from “Exercising Character: Lesson Plans and Activities,” by Peggy Adkins (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995.
IDEA #88

Picture (More) Perfect

OVERVIEW: Children become more aware of global issues and imagine ways to make the world better.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- photos depicting global problems
- paper; pencils or pens
- paste

PROCEDURE:

Show the children photos of global problems from magazines or newspapers (e.g., famine-stricken regions, polluted beaches, property damage from floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.). Ask them to describe what they see. Field answers and then say: These are pictures from different parts of the world — different parts of our global community. Ask the children to help you define “community.” Explain that a community is a larger extension of a family. Ask: What do we learn about our community from these photos? Field answers, then ask: Can you think of things we could do to make these pictures look better? Suggest some answers (e.g., give money to groups working to end hunger, support disaster-relief efforts, take better care of our environment). Ask: What are some problems in our local community? Can you think of things we could do to solve them?

Encourage the children to be aware of their surroundings when they go home during the week. Instruct each of them to take a picture of something that can be improved to make the world a better place. Alternately, they might take (or draw) pictures of people who are doing something to improve the community. If children don’t have access to a camera, instruct them to draw pictures. Have them bring their pictures to class and paste them onto pieces of paper. Instruct them to write “What people could do to make the community better” underneath their pictures. Invite the students to share their pictures with the class.

Display the photos/drawings on a bulletin board with the heading: “Picture a More Perfect Community.”

Inspired by a contest idea sponsored by the public forum for youth “To Make the World a Better Place” in Hope magazine (September/October 1998). To view images or participate in the forum at “To Make the World a Better Place” visit www.liska.com/betterplace.
IDEA #89

“Time Warp” Party

OVERVIEW: Students dress up as outstanding global, national or local civic figures and explain what they have done to make a difference.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- access to resource materials (library, Internet, etc.)

PROCEDURE:

Reiterate how a good citizen acts as a member of different communities: family, town, state, nation and world. Suggest that citizens of these groups have certain rights as well as duties. Have them help you define the term duty. Next say: Good citizenship means that we have to do whatever we can to help make life better for people. That requires knowledge about other members of our communities and about what others have done in the past to contribute to what we have today. Ask them to explain why this is an important step before actually doing something to make a difference. Suggest that if we know what problems someone else faced when trying to make a difference, we might be able to avoid the same mistakes and overcome the same obstacles more effectively. Also, it is important to appreciate what others have done on our behalf.

Inform the students that the class is going to have a “time warp” party. Explain what a time warp is. Make it clear that they are going back in time to learn about people who helped to improve their communities and world. Instruct them to pick an outstanding citizen from the history of their community, state or nation — or even from another part of the world — and find out information about them. (You might want to compile a list of examples beforehand from which students can choose.) Instruct students to state clearly how and why this person made a difference in others’ lives. Explain that once they have researched their figure, they will dress up like him or her on a specific day and play the role of that person for the party.

During the party have each figure formally describe to the rest of the class what “they” have done to make a difference in a community.

Adapted from “Exercising Character,” by Peggy Adkins (Los Angeles, CA: Josephson Institute, 1993-1998).
IDEA #90

The Six Pillar Circle

OVERVIEW: Students use a circle of Six Pillars to randomly pick a core value that they will have to demonstrate in their daily life.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pens or pencils
- crayons or colored pencils or pens
- copies of the “Six-Pillar Pie” handout (one for each pair of students)

PROCEDURE:

Pair up the students. Pass out one “Six Pillar Circle” handout to each pair. Explain that the class is going to review the Six Pillars of Character. Invite students to help you read and define them. Have them offer examples of behavior and tasks that exemplify each value. After you discuss each Pillar, let the students color in the slice of the circle that represents that trait with its corresponding color (trustworthiness is blue; respect is yellow; responsibility is green; fairness is orange; caring is red; and citizenship is purple).

Next, have members of the pair take turns closing their eyes and randomly placing an index finger on the circle. Whichever Pillar it lands closest to is the Pillar that they will have to work on, emphasizing that value in their behavior over the next week. The student of each pair whose eyes are not closed is to write down the Pillar his/her partner chose.

Afterward, have all students write down or share with the group what task they will perform in school or at home to show this core value to others.

To follow up, inform the students that they will have to orally share the results and effects of their actions in one week. (If the students are able, you might have them write a one-page summary of their actions and how things changed as a result of emphasizing the Pillar).
IDEA #90 Handout: The Six Pillar Circle

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Fairness
- Responsibility
- Citizenship
- Caring
IDEA #91

Values Jar

OVERVIEW: Students learn to be more conscious of their day-to-day behavior when the teacher or youth leader formally recognizes those who demonstrate good character. The students track their collective progress as marbles (or other small items) are placed in a jar each time one of them is spotted “practicing a Pillar.”

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- clear glass jar
- marbles, gumballs, beads, jelly beans or buttons in the Six Pillars colors: blue, gold (or yellow), green, orange, red and purple.

PROCEDURE:

Announce to the group that you will be on the lookout for behavior which demonstrates one or more of the six values. If I spot an act of honesty (which isn’t planned just for this activity), a blue marble (or other item) will be put in the jar. If caring is noticed, a red one; gold for respectful acts; green for responsibility; orange for fairness; and purple for an act of good citizenship. When the jar is full, the group gets a reward. Write down and display the color-coding system.

It is important that this activity not be a race. Go for quality over quantity. Look for out-of-the-ordinary displays of good character, and make sure they are genuine. Of course, each time an act of good character is recognized, you should be sure to praise the child. Keep the jar in view of the children and comment periodically on which colors are prominent in the jar and which are not well represented.

Get a small jar so that it will fill quickly — maybe within a week or two — even if there are only one or two additions a day. Make the payoff as significant as possible (e.g., a special snack like pizza for everyone or a good field trip).

Adapted from the YMCA “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).
IDEA #92

Six Pillars at Play

OVERVIEW: Students become more conscious of “practicing the Pillars” in their day-to-day behavior by discussing and identifying examples of how this is done.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

List the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) on the chalkboard. Briefly go over each one to make sure the children understand them. Then say: When you’re playing, you often do things that show whether or not you know how to practice these traits. Let’s see how well you could spot one of the Six Pillars being practiced. (You might consider providing some kind of reward to teams or individual students who identify the correct Pillar first.)

Read the examples on the “Six Pillars at Play” activity sheet aloud, having them identify which of the core values was exhibited in the example. Briefly discuss each one after it is identified. Then conclude the activity by telling them to watch for the Six Pillars of Character in the classroom and on the playground.

Extend this activity by having a daily “Six Pillars Show-and-Tell” time at the beginning of each meeting. Ask the children to describe how they witnessed or were involved in “practicing a Pillar.” Have the child identify which Pillar was demonstrated or have the rest the group guess which one the speaker’s story demonstrates.

Contributed by Michael Salokas (Palos Verdes, CA).

If you want to know how to live your life, think about what you want people to say about you after you die, and live backwards.

— Unknown
Idea #92 Activity Sheet: Six Pillars at Play

Instructions: Read these examples aloud to the students and have them identify which of the Six Pillars of Character is demonstrated:

1. Aziz and Wes are playing during recess. Jim, a new student at their school, happens to walk by and asks if he can play with them. They agree. What Pillar did Aziz and Wes show to Jim?

Answer: RESPECT. You are being respectful when you’re polite and treat others the way you would like to be treated. Aziz and Wes knew that it would be disrespectful and rude not to give the new boy a chance. Aziz and Wes showed respect to Jim.

2. Jan is playing with a group of other girls and she sees Khisa sitting alone by the fence. Jan thinks Khisa looks sad so she goes over to her and asks if she would like to join them. What Pillar is Jan practicing?

Answer: CARING. You are being a caring person when you are concerned about others and you do something in order to help them. By taking the initiative of asking Khisa to join them, Jan showed that she is a caring person.

3. Carol and Rosa make plans to play a game at recess. They promise to meet at a specific time at a specific location. Both Carol and Rosa appear at the agreed upon site on time. Which Pillar did they practice here?

Answer: TRUSTWORTHINESS. You are practicing trustworthiness when you show others that they can rely on you. Carol and Rosa each showed trustworthiness by keeping their promises.

4. During recess Lynn sees Wilson talking to a strange man in a corner of the playground. Lynn sees the man hand Wilson a small package. Lynn immediately goes to the teacher on duty and explains what she saw. Lynn knew that students were supposed to tell a teacher if they saw a stranger on the playground during recess. What Pillar did Lynn practice?

Answer: RESPONSIBILITY. You’re responsible if you know what you are supposed to do and you do it. Lynn knew it was her duty to report the stranger.

5. Susan and Tamani are each drinking a soda at lunchtime. When Susan finishes she throws her can on the ground and gets up to walk away. Tamani tells Susan that everyone must do their part to keep our environment clean. She says that littering is wrong, then picks up Susan’s can and places it in the recycling bin with her own. What Pillar is Tamani practicing?

Answer: CITIZENSHIP. You are practicing good citizenship when you do your part to make the community and the world a better place. Tamani was being a good citizen when she recognized the importance of recycling in order to help the community save resources.
6. Stella, Joyce and Sharon are playing a game. The recess bell is about to ring and end the game. Stella is upset that she is losing and suggests changing the rules of the game. The other girls explain to Stella that although the rules might not be to her benefit because she is losing, they are the rules that everyone agreed to at the start of the game. Stella says she understands that it would be wrong to change the rules just to help her win. What Pillar are the girls practicing?

Answer: **FAIRNESS.** You are practicing fairness when you play by the established rules. The girls understood that it wouldn’t be fair to change the rules after everyone had agreed on them.
IDEA #93

Six Pillars Wheel

OVERVIEW: Students identify the Six Pillars of Character in their day-to-day behavior by discussing and identifying examples of how this is done.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Start by reading a story to the children in which one or more of the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) is a prominent theme. Preface this reading with a brief discussion of the Six Pillars and list them on the chalkboard. Say: *Keep these values in mind when I read this story and look for ways that the characters in the story show — or fail to show — these values.*

After the story, divide the children into small groups and have each group make a “Wheel of Character” (see illustration). Give the following instructions for carrying out this activity:

1. Select one of the Six Pillars which is very important in the story.

2. Make a list of all the examples of this Pillar which were demonstrated in the story. (These should each be no more than five word sentences.)

3. Cut out a circle from a piece of white paper (8½ x 11). Make this circle as large as possible and color the edge of the paper to create an attractive border.

4. On the circle, write five or six of your examples. (Each sentence should start from the center and stop just before the edge of the paper.)

5. Cut out another circle — slightly smaller than the first and on colored paper. Color the border of this circle as well and cut out a small wedge to create a figure resembling “pac-man.”

6. Attach this wheel to the center of the larger wheel with a brass fastener.

When they have completed their “Wheels of Character,” collect them and spin the small circles, reading a few examples from each wheel and calling on the students to identify which Pillar is demonstrated by the other groups’ wheels.

Contributed by Deborah L. Sadler, Souder Elementary School (Fayetteville, NC).
IDEA 93: Sample “Six Pillars Wheel”

Six Pillars Wheel created by Deborah L. Sadler, Souder Elementary School (Fayetteville, NC).
IDEA #94

Six Pillars Song

OVERVIEW: Students invent lyrics based on the Six Pillars and put them to the tune of popular songs.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- tape recorder and a tape of popular music all the kids know

PROCEDURE:

Find out what popular songs are recognizable to the whole group. Tell them you are going to have a song-writing activity based on the Six Pillars of Character which will use the melody from a song everyone knows and likes (see the sample “Trustworthiness” tune on the following page). Decide on a song and have one of the children bring in a tape of it (or buy it and bring it in yourself).

Before commencing with the song-writing, briefly discuss the Six Pillars and choose one or more (maybe all six) to use as a theme for your song. Then get to work! Write it as a group on the chalkboard, replaying the tape periodically to remind them of the melody.

When you have finished, get them to memorize it and sing it together. Be as creative as your imagination lets you. Incorporate background vocals, percussion parts — maybe even hand and body movements. Perform it for others if you have the opportunity.

Contributed by Glenda Ehrig, Chelwood Elementary School counselor (Albuquerque, NM).

I believe that

unarmed

truth and

unconditional

love will have

the final word

in reality.

— Martin Luther King, Jr.
IDEA #94 Song: Trustworthiness
(to the tune of “YMCA”)

Young man!
You’re outstanding and good.
I say young girl!
You always act like you should.
I know,
You’re the best to be found
’Cause you have the best gift around.

Young man!
Your school is so proud of you.
And young girl!
You always know what to do.
You’ll have
A bright future ahead
’Cause you listen to what we’ve said.

Yes we have found in you:
Trustworthiness!
Yes we have found in you:
Trustworthiness!

You know that CHARACTER COUNTS!
Against wrong you will pounce,
And the right thing is easy for you.

Trustworthiness!
Yes we have found in you:
Trustworthiness!
You will have a good life,
’Cause you know wrong from right.
You’re a winner in what ever you do.

Trustworthiness!

Lyrics by Chelwood Elementary School students (Albuquerque, NM)
IDEA #95

Who Do You Look Up To?

Nothing is so contagious as an example.
— Duc De La Rochefoucauld

OVERVIEW: Students think about and discuss what it means to be a “person of character.” They draw someone they consider a good example of the Six Pillars in action and describe why this person is worthy of admiration.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- tape recorder and a tape of popular music all the kids know.

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students: Does anyone know what it means to have good character? Solicit responses, then say: It’s easy to tell if someone is a person of character. All you do is watch to see how well they practice the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. People of character are people we look up to. Who do you think of when you hear “person of character?”

Distribute copies of the “Who Do You Look Up To?” worksheet and have them draw a picture of a person who models the Six Pillars. Then tell them to write a sentence or two explaining why this person has good character.

Contributed by Ken Newbury, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).

On the next page: A worksheet you can photocopy and distribute to children.
Who is someone you can look up to?

Draw or write about a person of character.

Someone to look up to lives by the Six Pillars of Character:

- trustworthiness
- respect
- responsibility
- fairness
- caring
- citizenship

This Is a Real Live Person of Character!
IDEA #96

Pedaling to Character

OVERVIEW: Children perform a skit reinforcing core ethical values.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of skit for each student

PROCEDURE:

The essence of greatness is the perception that virtue is enough.
— Ralph Waldo Emerson
19th-century American essayist, public speaker and poet

Introduce the Six Pillars of Character to students. Discuss these values, then instruct the students to look for instances when these values are and are not apparent in a play that they are going to read.

Select students to read the lines and act out parts in the following play. Assign the following roles:

- Narrator
- Michael
- Judge
- Mother
- Father
- Henry
- Juror I
- Juror II
- Juror III
- Juror IV
IDEA #96 Play: Pedaling to Character

(A courtroom)

**Narrator:** Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

**Judge:** Michael and Henry, please approach the bench. (Michael and Henry step forward.) Michael, Henry is accusing you of stealing his bike from the front porch. How do you plead?

**Michael:** Not guilty, your honor! Not guilty!

**Judge:** (to Henry) What evidence do you have that Michael stole your bike?

**Henry:** My bike was on my porch. When I looked out the window at 8:00 that night, Michael was standing on the porch next to my bike.

**Judge:** Why didn’t you lock your bike and bring it into the house?

**Henry:** I didn’t think anyone would take it since it was on my porch, and everyone knew it was my bike, and the brakes were bad.

**Judge:** Henry, what color is your bike?

**Henry:** Blue with white stripes, and my seat is torn on the side.

**Judge:** Michael did you steal Henry’s bike?

**Michael:** No, your honor, I have a bike. It is blue with white stripes. The brakes are fine.

**Judge:** Michael, would you mind if we take a look at your bike? (Michael brings in a bike). Henry, is this your bike? It looks like the seat has been torn.

**Henry:** It is my bike. Look, here is my name right here.

**Michael:** Judge, I tore my seat, too.

**Judge:** (Judge looks at seat.) Michael, I need to speak to your parents, please.

(Parents approach the bench.)

**Mother:** Yes, Your Honor?

**Judge:** Michael has been accused of stealing Henry’s bike.

**Father:** Michael told me his friend traded the bike for a baseball bat and glove.
**Judge:**  Michael, what do you have to say about this?

**Michael:**  Uh... Uh... I didn’t mean to steal it or lie about not stealing it, but once I had lied it became hard to stop. I had to continue to cover up for the first lie. I am sorry.

**Judge:**  We will see what the jury says.

(Jury leaves room, but soon returns to jury box.)

**Juror I:**  He needs to show *citizenship* by obeying laws and rules.

**Juror II:**  I feel he should learn the meaning of being *trustworthy*.

**Juror III:**  He needs to know what it means to *respect* others and their property.

**Juror IV:**  Whatever happened to *honesty*?

**Judge:**  Michael and Henry, please approach the bench. (To the jurors) You have heard the case. What is your verdict?

**Jury:**  We, the Jury, find the defendant, Michael, guilty as charged.

**Judge:**  Please return the bike to its rightful owner. Michael, I hope you have learned a lesson. Everyone is dismissed.

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Afterward, ask: What lessons could Michael and Henry have learned? Why? What character traits could have been used to avoid this consequence? How? What kinds of good character will Michael and Henry have to practice now? Why?

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*Skit written and submitted by Johnnie Wheeler, a CHARACTER COUNTS! coordinator at the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency in Cooksville, Tennessee.*
IDEA #97

Six Pillar Puzzle

OVERVIEW: Children learn new vocabulary words as they complete a puzzle.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of the puzzle (one for each student)

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the Six Pillars of Character to the students. Discuss these values and some of their aspects, listed below. Instruct the students to look for these words in the puzzle you will hand out to them. You may also want to hand out a sheet with the answers or simply go over the answers together as a class.

These are the words hidden in the letters:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Loyalty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship
- Truth
- Courage
- Courtesy
- Tolerance
- Stakeholders
- Reliability
- Diligence
- Disciplined
- Kindness
- Sharing
- Compassion
- Vote
- Charity
- Volunteer
- Recycle
- Conserve

Puzzle submitted by Debbie Gilbert Taylor, executive director of the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce in Connecticut.

If we only wanted to be happy it would be easy, but we want to be happier than other people, which is almost always difficult.

— Charles-Louis de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu 17th/18th-century French jurist and philosopher
IDEA #97 Worksheet 1: Six Pillar Puzzle

Honesty
Integrity
Loyalty
Respect
Responsibility
Accountability
Excellence
Fairness
Caring

Citizenship
Truth
Courage
Courtesy
Tolerance
Stakeholders
Reliability
Diligence
Disciplined

Kindness
Sharing
Compassion
Vote
Charity
Volunteer
Recycle
Conserve

YOUR 24/7 ONLINE TEACHING RESOURCE: CHARACTERCOUNTS.ORG
IDEA #97 Worksheet 2: Six Pillar Puzzle / ANSWERS
THE SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER

TRUSTWORTHINESS
- Be honest.
- Don’t deceive, cheat or steal.
- Be reliable — do what you say you’ll do.
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country.

RESPECT
- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Use good manners, not bad language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

RESPONSIBILITY
- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere: keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Use self-control.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act — consider the consequences.
- Be accountable for your choices.

FAIRNESS
- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don’t take advantage of others.
- Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING
- Be kind.
- Be compassionate; show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

CITIZENSHIP
- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules.
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment.
IDEA #98

A Monument to Value

OVERVIEW: Students discuss traits related to trustworthiness and then suggest images that represent this value. They build a “monument” to trustworthiness to reinforce the lesson.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- photo of at least one famous monument
- paper; pencils or pens
- drawing paper, markers, crayons
- building materials: scissors, glue, clay, straws, Popsicle sticks, etc. (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Present a picture of a famous monument (e.g., the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial). Discuss with the students what it represents. Offer information and explain the history of the monument. Discuss why it was built and why monuments in general are constructed.

Then discuss trustworthiness. Be sure to explain these four components of the value: honesty, promise-keeping, integrity and loyalty. List these on the board. Then ask: What kind of people, animals or images could represent trustworthiness? Why? List their ideas on the board.

Divide students into groups. Say: Now that we have discussed trustworthiness, you are going to build a monument to celebrate and honor this value.

Encourage them to be creative in coming up with a representation of trustworthiness. You might help them along by reminding them of the four components that you discussed earlier and suggesting that their monument could be an animal, a person or an object.

Distribute building materials (or drawing paper and crayons). Instruct them to design and construct (or draw) an image that represents trustworthiness. Inform them that they will have to present their monument of trustworthiness to the class and explain what aspect of trustworthiness their image represents.

The house of delusions is cheap to build but drafty to live in.

—A.E. Housman
20th-century English poet
IDEA #99

Practicing Integrity

**OVERVIEW:** Students discuss the meaning of integrity, why it is important and how to practice it in specific circumstances.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask: *What do you think of when you hear the word “integrity”? What does integrity mean?* (“Holding yourself to a code of moral values,” “walking your talk,” or “standing up for what you believe is right” are some good answers.)

Talk to the students about what integrity means in the world today, and why it is important. Then offer examples for discussion.

Say: *Now let’s look at some real-life examples of integrity. What would you do if a friend offered you a beer and you felt like accepting the offer, but you had told your parents that you would never do this behind their backs? Solicit comments, then ask: Why did you answer the way you did? What would be the answer that shows the most integrity? Why? (You might note that integrity alone is inadequate since it simply means “walking your talk.” This is important, but the kind of “talk” that is being “walked” is critical!)*

Tell them that people often get hurt in one way or another when we fail to live with integrity. Read the following example:

*A child sits alone in the corner of the playground. He feels uncomfortable joining the other children because he has a speech problem — he stutters. This boy is teased because of it and, to avoid further torment, the child withdraws from the group.*

*Another child feels sorry for the kid, knowing that it’s wrong to pick on people just because they’re different. However, she is afraid to speak to the child, fearing that the other kids will tease her too. So she doesn’t say anything, and the stuttering child remains withdrawn, feeling sad and alone. Isn’t it sad that the girl didn’t stand up for what’s right and show integrity? What would you have done? Solicit comments.*

Say: *Here’s another example: Let’s say you feel strongly that you should never...*
help someone cheat on a test. Your parents have taught you this since you were very small and you have always thought to yourself, “If someone ever asked me for an answer to a test question, I would say no.” But one day your very best friend tells you he/she was unable to study for an exam. Your friend is doing very poorly in class, and will flunk if the next test isn’t passed. During the test he/she asks you for a few answers. What do you do?

Solicit responses, asking what would be the best way to show integrity here. Ask: Why did you answer the way you did? Has this ever happened to you?

To summarize the lesson, say: No one is born with integrity. We all have to learn how to stand up for what’s right. The more you act with integrity, the better you will feel about yourself and what you’ve done — and it the more you do it, the easier it becomes. The more integrity you have, the more respect you’ll get from your friends and family.

Adapted from the American Youth Soccer Organization’s “Take Five” activities.
IDEA #100

Honesty Skit

OVERVIEW: Students perform a skit showing how honesty benefits both the truth-teller and the listener.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the skit for each student

PROCEDURE:

Select students to read the lines and act out parts in a play. Assign the following roles, bringing up a new cast with each scene to include as many students as possible.

- Chris
- Sylvia
- Alberto
- Mr. Mayland

— SCENE I —

(Three students are playing ball. They have two balls and are throwing them to each other. One misses, and the ball goes flying through the window of Mr. Mayland’s house. A brief panic ensues.)

Alberto: Oh, no! Sylvia, you broke Mr. Mayland’s window.

Sylvia: I just threw the ball. You were supposed to catch it, and you missed. It’s your fault!

Chris: Maybe Mr. Mayland isn’t home. He’s such a grouch!

Sylvia: Look! Here he comes, and he’s mad! Let’s run! He can’t catch us.

Alberto: He knows us, and he’s seen us already. We’re in big trouble.
Chris: I’ve got an idea! We still have my ball. Let’s tell him we saw another — a stranger — throw a ball at his window and then run. We’ll say we were tossing this one back and forth when we saw him.

Alberto: I don’t like this. I’m worried this may not work out.

Sylvia: Me too, but Mr. Mayland is really mean. He’ll probably hit us if he knows we did it.

Mr. Mayland: All right, who did it? I want to know who broke my window! You kids are a public nuisance, and now look what you’ve done. You’re going to be sorry!

Chris: Not us, Mr. Mayland. Look! We still have our ball. It was this other kid. He was wearing a blue shirt. We don’t know who he was, but he threw the ball at your window and ran that way. He was tall and had brown hair.

Mr. Mayland: Maybe I can catch him.

(Mr. Mayland runs off in the designated direction, leaving Alberto, Chris and Sylvia relieved and staring after him.)

Sylvia: Wow! That was close.

— SCENE II —

(Several minutes later the students are watching Mr. Mayland return from his fruitless search for the “other kid” who broke his window.)

Chris: I’m not feeling good about what we did to Mr. Mayland.

Alberto: I know. I’m sorry we broke his window, too. It was just an accident.

Sylvia: Me too. I’m the one who threw the ball and I went along with the story we told him. I don’t like Mr. Mayland because he’s always lecturing us and thinks we’re no good. At first I was relieved that we weren’t in trouble. Now I feel like nothing we did was right, especially the lying.

Chris: What do you think we should do?

Sylvia: I broke the window. I’m going to go tell him what I did and say it was my idea to lie to him. I’ll tell him you guys aren’t to blame — just me.

Chris: No way. I’m going with you.
Alberto: Me, too. He’s going to be really mad, but at least we won’t be lying anymore. It was an accident. Let’s hope he believes us now.

Chris: I’m sorry, guys. My idea was stupid, and now we’re in real trouble. Let’s go get it over with. Do you think he will try to hurt us?

— SCENE III —

(They walk up to Mr. Mayland who is staring at his broken window. He looks disgusted and discouraged.)

Sylvia: Mr. Mayland?

Mr. Mayland: What do you want? I didn’t find that guy, and now I’m stuck with this mess. You students are always around when there are problems.

Sylvia: (clearing her throat) Uh, we did it.

Mr. Mayland: What?

Alberto: (rushing his speech) We did it. We’re sorry. It was an accident. I missed the ball when it was thrown to me. We didn’t try to damage your house.

Chris: Please, Mr. Mayland, please don’t be mad. We lied about the other guy because we were afraid of you. We’re sorry.

Mr. Mayland: (looking sternly at the students) You should be afraid. I’m very mad about this, but I’m glad you were brave enough to tell the truth after all. Now, what are you three going to do about this?

Sylvia: Money’s tough in my family. I have about $2 saved that I could give you.

Alberto: We don’t have much money either, and my mom’s car just broke down. But I have $2 or $3, too.

Chris: I also have some money saved. But not much.

Mr. Mayland: Great! $6 or $7 won’t cover the cost of replacing my window.

Sylvia: I broke the window. I could do extra things around your house for you until I’ve made up the difference.

Mr. Mayland: If you’re going to break my window then lie about it, why should I trust you in my house.

Alberto: We could all help. We were all in this together. We could mow your lawn.
and do other chores outside your house. We could bring our own lawnmower. We’d be careful.

Mr. Mayland: I don’t know.

Sylvia: Please, Mr. Mayland. We feel badly about what we did. We’re not bad kids. We’ll even do some weeding too.

Mr. Mayland: All right. Let’s see how trustworthy you really are. Since you broke my large, double-pane, plate glass window, you can each pay me $2 and do two hours of gardening each Saturday morning for the next three weeks.

Sylvia: Three weeks! Okay, we’ll do it. Are you going to tell our parents?

Mr. Mayland: No. I’m trusting you to do that. If you really mean it when you say you’re sorry, then you’ll also have the integrity to tell your families. I’ll be expecting you next Saturday.

(The kids leave.)

Mr. Mayland: (Shaking his head) That was dumb on my part. I’ll never see the money, and they’ll probably get their parents to get them out of the mowing.

(Scenes I-V)

(The three are raking the yard and putting piles of weeds in a garbage bag.)

Sylvia: This is the last week. I didn’t realize Mr. Mayland’s yard was so big.

Chris: Me either. But at least we showed Mr. Mayland we can keep a promise. Remember that look of surprise when we showed up at his door the first weekend to do the yardwork? That was the first time I’d ever seen him smile.

Alberto: That was great! Between that and giving him his money, we had him so surprised he could hardly talk. I think we even surprised him by doing a nice job on the mowing, and pulling all his weeds.

Chris: It’s nice to think he is probably realizing we really are sorry about his window and that we’re not so immature and irresponsible — when we give our word, we mean it. My dad was angry when I told him about the window and our lying, but he said he was proud of us for having the courage to admit it and try to make up for it.

Sylvia: Yeah, same with my parents.
Alberto: It was hard to tell my mom, but I feel good to get it off my chest. I can see how in the long run it’s better to be honest all the way around.

Sylvia: I agree. And I’ll be more careful about where I play so I don’t damage anything else. You know, Mr. Mayland really isn’t such a bad guy. I liked talking to him last week when he came out to work with us. Did you know he collects all kinds of fossils and loans them to museums all over the country?

Chris: Really? Yeah, he does seem nicer now. I guess we just never took the time to get to know him. We should visit more with him. He’s all alone. Hey, I have another idea!

Alberto: Please! Not like the last one.

Chris: No, I’m never going to lie like that again. I was thinking . . . why don’t we go next Saturday and work in his yard just because we care?

Sylvia: That’s not a bad idea. Imagine what his expression will look like this time!

(They exit, class applauds, and all actors return to stage for bows.)

Contributed by Vicki Mirabal, Chelwood Elementary School teacher (Albuquerque, NM).
IDEA #101

Promise-Keeping Skit

OVERVIEW: Two students perform a short skit demonstrating promise-keeping and integrity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Select two students to read the lines and play the parts of Pat and Martin.

(Pat is snacking at home when the phone rings.)

Pat: Hello?

Martin: Hi, Pat. It’s me — Martin. My mom’s taking me to Planet Fun tonight and she said I could bring two friends. Would you like to come?

Pat: I’d love to, but I already promised Susan I’d go to the movies with her tonight.

Martin: Well, call Susan and tell her you can’t make it. Then you could come with us.

Pat: I hate situations like this! I want to go with you, but I already said “yes” to Susan. I guess I could tell her that something else came up. No, I’d feel terrible lying like that. My mom always says everyone needs to live up to any commitments they make. So, I’m sorry, but I can’t go with you tonight. But thanks for asking.

Martin: That’s okay. My dad says the same thing as your mom: “When you make a deal, you need to follow through on it.” He gets upset when people say they’re going to do something, and then don’t. He’s talking about adults, but I guess we need to learn to keep our deals, too. Maybe you can come with us the next time. I’ll ask you sooner, so if anything comes up, you’ll have made the first deal with me.

Pat: Thanks, Martin. I’m glad I’ve done the right thing. It’s what my grandmother calls “integrity.” So enjoy the movie, and thanks for the invitation.

Contributed by Vicki Mirabal, Chelwood Elementary School teacher (Albuquerque, NM).

What

loneliness is

more lonely

than distrust?

— George Eliot
IDEA #102

When People Steal From Me

OVERVIEW: Students learn that stealing robs people of much more than their property. Seeing a theft through the eyes of the victim helps the students understand that stealing is wrong for more reasons than just the possibility of getting caught and being punished.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- writing paper for each student
- one index card, cut into six pieces and numbered from one to six

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students: Most of us know someone who has had something stolen, or maybe we know someone who has stolen something. Each of us may fit into one or both of these categories ourselves. Today we are going to talk about how it feels to have something stolen and what it means to steal from other people.

None of us likes to have things stolen, especially if the stolen items have special meaning to us. Everyone has special things — some are gifts from friends or relatives. These things may or may not be worth much in money, but we care about them very much. Others are things for which we worked hard and saved our money. We may be very proud of them because they represent something we earned.

Today I want you to make a list of six of your favorite things — things that are really special to you, things you would miss a lot if someone were to take them. Write down six things you own that would make you most upset if they were stolen. Do not number them yet. Next to each one, briefly tell why it is important to you. Don’t let anyone else see what is on your list. (Give the students time to complete their lists.)

Now go back and number the items in the order of their importance to you. Put a number “1” by the thing that you would hate to lose the most. Then put a number “2” by the next most important thing, on down to number six. (Give the students time to complete their numbering.)

Now I’m going to call on you individually. We are going to pretend that a thief is going from person to person, stealing things. First, I will shuffle these six pieces...
of paper that are numbered from one to six. Pick any card. Whichever number you pick will be the number of things that are stolen from you. For example, if you pick the number two, you will lose two items.

Then I will shuffle the cards again and let you pick the top or bottom card to see what items are stolen. If you pick card number six, you will lose the item you put a six by on your list. Then I will put that card on the desk, shuffle the remaining cards, and let you draw a second time to pick the second item taken.

After each student picks the cards, ask what was taken and why it was special to him or her. Ask each student to tell how he or she would feel if those items had really been stolen. What would he or she feel like saying to the thief?

After all the students have chosen their cards and expressed their feelings about their losses, ask them the following questions:

1. How does the person who has something special stolen feel about the loss?
2. What are some things you might want to say to the thief?
3. Wouldn’t you feel bad about making someone else this angry and upset by stealing from them? (Emphasize that what may seem like an insignificant item to the thief may have a special meaning to the victim.)

Tell students: If you ever think about taking something from someone without asking, think of what we talked about today. Taking things from people hurts them and makes them angry. Think hard about how you would feel, and you’ll know it’s the wrong thing to do in any situation.

Adapted from “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.
**IDEA #103**

**Loyalty Lesson**

**OVERVIEW:** Students discuss the meaning of loyalty, why it is important and what limitations should be placed on it.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Say: *The word loyalty can mean many things — from sticking up for a friend in a disagreement to supporting your school's basketball team. When you think of the word loyalty, what comes to mind?* Talk about what loyalty means and why it is important. Then offer examples for discussion.

If you heard someone saying mean things about your younger brother — things you knew weren’t true and made him look bad — what would you do? (Possible answers: walk away and not say anything; tell that person to quit spreading lies; beat the other person up.) *Why did you answer the way you did?* Solicit comments before reciting the following anecdote:

*A young girl decided she wanted to run for class president. She asked her best friend to help make posters and campaign with other classmates for support during the election. Another child wanted to compete for the same position, but didn’t have anyone helping. So he decided to offer the friend part of his allowance in return for making posters for him. Although the girl was counting on her best friend for help, the thought of more money for clothes, candy and toys was too much for the best friend to pass up. She decided to switch sides, which eventually cost her friend the election. Isn’t it disappointing that the friend valued money more than her friendship and being loyal? Encourage the class to discuss.*

Now say: *Pretend your best friend said to you, “If you were my best friend, you’d go over to that guy and take his lunch.” How would you respond?* (Possible answers: “No. You’re my best friend, but you’re asking me to do something that’s wrong”; “OK, I’ll grab it when he’s not looking”; “Uh, I think someone’s calling me. Gotta go. Bye.”)

Ask: *How can you show loyalty and still do the right thing?* Solicit comments, making sure they understand that loyalty should have limitations.

Summarize the lesson: *Loyalty is generally a good quality. You should be loyal to friends and family members because they count on your support. But if a brother,
sister, friend, or neighbor asks you to do something you know is wrong in the name of loyalty, don’t do it.

Adapted from the American Youth Soccer Organization’s “Take Five” activities.
IDEA #104

Sweet Honesty

OVERVIEW: Students read and discuss a story about a dishonest merchant, then write their own moral tale about trust.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of “Ali Coglia and the Merchant of Baghdad” (for each student)
- jar of sweet olives, jar of bitter olives (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Display two jars of olives. Invite a student who likes olives to taste one of the sweet olives. Have the student share his or her reaction with the class. Next, invite a student to try a bitter olive. Again, solicit the student’s reaction. Ask the student to describe the difference in taste between the two olives. Point out to the class that the first olive was sweet and the second bitter.

Assure the students that the bitter olive you offered wasn’t old or rotten, but that food items that have gone “bad” often taste sour or bitter. Discuss why this happens. Use the following explanation, tailored to the developmental level of your students: Food decomposes as microorganisms such as bacteria attack it. This changes its chemical makeup and produces various acids and alkalis. Acids are substances that taste sour; in fact, the word acid comes directly from the Latin word acidus, meaning “sour.” The process of decomposition also can produce alkalis, which are characterized by a bitter taste and are slippery to the touch.

Draw a comparison between the decomposition of food to the decomposition of a person’s trustworthiness as a consequence of lying. Note how a bad spot on an apple, for instance, will eventually cause the whole fruit to rot. Also explain how certain measures can be taken to protect one’s character (e.g., being honest and keeping promises), just as we must take certain safeguards to keep food fresh. Ask: How can trust turn “sour”? What kind of behavior attacks our trustworthiness? Discuss their answers and list them on the board.

Introduce “Ali Coglia and the Merchant of Baghdad.” Suggest that the story shows the effects of dishonesty. Before reading the story, explain where the story originated. Point out where Iraq is located and that Baghdad is the country’s capital. (You may want to give an overview of Iraq’s history and provide some general information on the Arab world.) Also, you may want to discuss these vocabulary...
words, which are used in the story: obliging, caravan, summon, meddled, unfounded, caliph, vizier, rogue and monarch.

Read the story aloud. Stop before the merchant makes his decision to steal the money and ask them what they would do in the same situation. After he steals the money, stop again, and ask the students to explain what they would do if the merchant were their friend, and they knew what he had done. Encourage them to be specific. Then finish reading the story.

Discuss the consequences of the merchant’s behavior. Then have them write their own tale focusing on trustworthiness and honesty.

*Inspired by an idea posted on “Absolutely Whootie: Stories to Grow By” (www.storiestogrowby.com).*
IDEA #104 Folk-Tale: “Ali Coglia and the Merchant of Baghdad”

Over a thousand years ago, in the reign of the famous Caliph Harun al-Raschid, there lived in Baghdad a merchant who needed to travel on an extended journey. He sold nearly all of his household goods and sold his home. The only thing left for him to do was to find a safe place to leave his private treasure — one thousand pieces of gold. Finally, he decided to put the thousand pieces of gold into a large jar and cover the gold with olives. When he had closed the mouth of the jar, he carried it to a friend of his, who was also a merchant, and said to him, “You know, my friend, that in a few days I plan to depart on my journey. I beg you to take charge of a jar of olives, and keep it for me until I return.”

The merchant promised that he would, and in an obliging manner said, “Here, take the key of my warehouse and set your jar where you please. I promise you shall find it there when you return.”

Ali Coglia’s journey was extended much longer than he had expected. In fact, he was seven years absent from Baghdad, when he finally decided to return. All this time his friend, with whom he had left his jar of olives, neither thought of him nor of the jar. One evening this merchant was eating dinner with his family and the conversation happened to fall upon olives. The merchant’s wife mentioned that she had not tasted any for a long while.

“Now that you speak of olives,” said the merchant, “you remind me of a jar that Ali Coglia left with me seven years ago. He put it in my warehouse to be kept for him until he returned. What has become of him I know not, though when the caravan came back, they told me he had gone to Egypt. Certainly he must be dead by now, since he has not returned in all this time, and we may go ahead and eat the olives, if they are still good. Give me a plate and a candle. I will fetch some of them and we’ll taste them.”

“Please, husband,” said the wife, “do not commit so base an action; you know that nothing is more sacred than what is committed to one’s care and trust. Besides, do you think the olives can be good, after they’ve been kept so long? They must be all moldy and spoiled. Besides, if Ali Coglia should return and find that they had been opened, what would he think of your honor? I beg of you to let them alone.”

Nevertheless, after supper, the merchant entered the warehouse, found the jar, opened it and found the olives moldy. But to see if they were all in the same condition to the bottom, he shook the jar. This caused some of the gold pieces to tumble out. The merchant noticed at once that the top only was laid with olives, and what remained was gold coins. He immediately put the olives into the jar again, covered it up, and returned to his wife. “Indeed, wife,” said he, “you were in the right to say that the olives were all moldy for I found them so, and have made up the jar just as Ali Coglia left it. He will not notice that they had been touched, if he should ever return.”

In the days ahead the merchant thought often about how he might use Ali Coglia’s gold for his own purposes, and yet escape detection in case his old friend should return and ask for the jar. The next morning the merchant went and bought some olives of that year, and then secretly went and emptied the jar both of the old moldy
olives and of the gold. Then, filling the jar entirely with new olives, he covered it up and put it in the place where Ali Coglia had left it.

About a month later, Ali Coglia arrived in Baghdad. The next morning he went to pay a visit to his friend, the merchant, who expressed great joy at his return after so many years away. After having chatted a while, Ali Coglia asked the merchant to return him the jar of olives which he had left with him, and thanked him for having kept the jar safely for all this time. “My dear friend,” replied the merchant, “your jar has been no inconvenience. Here is the key to my warehouse. Go and fetch your jar; you will find it where you left it.”

Ali Coglia went into the merchant’s warehouse, took his jar, and after having returned the key, and thanking his friend once again for the favor, he returned with the jar to the room where he was temporarily staying. But on opening the jar, and putting his hand down as low as the pieces of gold had lain, he was greatly surprised to find no gold pieces in the jar. At first he thought he might perhaps be mistaken, and to discover the truth, he poured out all the olives, but without so much as finding one single piece of gold. For some time, he stood motionless. Then he cried out, “Is it possible?”

Ali Coglia immediately returned to the merchant. “My good friend,” said he, “be not surprised to see me come back so soon. I know that the jar of olives is the same one I placed in your warehouse, but with the olives I put into the jar a thousand pieces of gold, which I do not find. Perhaps you might have used them in your business; if so, they are at your service till it may be convenient for you to return them. Only give me an acknowledgment of my loan to you, after which you may repay me at your own convenience.”

The merchant, who had expected that Ali Coglia would come with such a complaint, was prepared with an answer. “Friend Ali Coglia,” said he, “when you brought your jar to me, did I touch it? Did I not give you the key of my warehouse? Did you not carry it there yourself? And did you not find it in the same place, covered in the same manner as when you left it? And now that you have come back, you demand one thousand pieces of gold. Did you ever tell me such a sum was in the jar? I wonder you do not demand diamonds or pearls! It is easy enough for you to storm into my house, make a crazy accusation, insult me, and tarnish my good name. Be gone!”

These words were pronounced in such passion that those in the warehouse started to gather around. Neighboring merchants came out of their shops to learn what the dispute was about. Ali Coglia shared with one and all the injustice done to him by the merchant, and the merchant continued to hotly deny any wrongdoing.

Ali Coglia speedily summoned the merchant to court. To the judge, Ali Coglia accused the merchant of having stolen his thousand pieces of gold, which he had left with him. The judge asked him if he had any witnesses, to which he replied that he had not taken that precaution because he had believed the person he entrusted his money with to be his friend, and always took him for an honest man. Then the merchant made the same defense he had before, saying that though it’s true that he had kept Ali Coglia’s jar in his warehouse, he had never once meddled with it. The merchant swore that as far as he knew, the jar contained only olives. Once again, he strongly objected that he should be brought to court on the basis of such unfounded...
accusations. He proposed to make an oath that he never had the money he was accused of taking, and to swear that he did not know such a sum ever existed. The judge agreed to take his oath. After the merchant swore his ignorance of the entire matter, the judge dismissed the case for lack of evidence.

Ali Coglia, extremely upset to find that he must accept the loss of so large a sum of money, returned to his room and drew up a petition to seek justice from the Caliph Harun al-Raschid himself. He forwarded his petition to the officer of the palace, who presented it to the caliph. The caliph told the officer to notify Ali Coglia that an hour would be scheduled for the next day for the complaint to be heard at the palace. The officer was also told to summon the merchant.

That same evening the caliph, accompanied by the grand vizier, went disguised through the town as it was his custom occasionally to do. On passing through a street, the caliph heard a noise. He came to a gateway through which he saw ten or twelve children playing by moonlight. The caliph heard one of the children say, “Let’s play courtroom.”

As the affair of Ali Coglia and the merchant was widely discussed in Baghdad, the children were familiar with the case and quickly agreed on the part each one would assume.

The child who played the judge asked the make-believe Ali Coglia to speak. The child playing Ali Coglia, after bowing low, related every particular and begged that he might not lose so considerable a sum of money. The pretend judge turned to the merchant and asked him why he did not return the money. The child playing the part of the merchant gave the same reasons as the real merchant had done. Then he also offered to give an oath that what he had said was the absolute truth.

“Not so fast,” said the pretend judge, “before you give your oath, I should like to see the jar of olives.” The child playing the part of Ali Coglia bowed low, walked away and in a few moments returned. He pretended to set a jar before the judge, telling him that it was the same jar he had left with the merchant. The supposed judge turned to the child playing the merchant and asked him to confirm that it was in fact the same jar. He confirmed this. Then the judge ordered Ali Coglia to take off the cover, and the pretend judge made as if he looked into it. “They are fine olives,” said he, “let me taste them.” Pretending to eat some, he added, “They are excellent, but I cannot think that olives will keep seven years and be so good. Therefore we must call before this court some olive merchants, and let me hear what is their opinion.”

Two boys, posing as olive merchants, presented themselves. “Tell me,” said the supposed judge, “how long will olives keep fit to eat?”

“Sir,” replied the two merchants, “no matter how great the care taken of them, olives will hardly be worth anything the third year, for then they have neither taste nor color.”

“If that is so,” answered the judge, “look into that jar and tell me how long it has been since those olives were put into it.” The two merchants pretended to examine and to taste the olives, and told the judge that they were new and good. “But,” said the judge, “Ali Coglia himself said he put them into the jar seven years ago.”
“Sir,” replied the merchants, “we can assure you they are of this year’s growth, and we will maintain that any olive merchant of repute in Baghdad will say the same.”

The pretend judge pointed an accusing finger at the merchant. “You are a rogue,” he cried, “and deserve to be punished!” The children then concluded their play, clapping their hands and seizing the actor playing the criminal, they pretended to carry him off to prison.

Words cannot express how much the caliph admired the boy who had passed so just a sentence in an affair which was to be pleaded before himself the very next day. “Take notice of this house,” said the caliph to the vizier, “and bring the boy to me tomorrow, that he may appear in court with me to try this case himself. Take care also to remind the real Ali Coglia to bring his jar of olives with him. And bring two olive experts as well.”

The next day Ali Coglia and the merchant pleaded one after the other at the palace before the boy, whom the caliph had seated on the throne beside him. When the merchant proposed his oath to the court as before, the child said, “It is too soon. It is proper that we should see the jar of olives.”

At these words Ali Coglia presented the jar and placed it at the caliph’s feet. The boy asked the merchant whether this was in fact the jar that had been left in his warehouse for seven years, and the merchant agreed that it was so. Then the boy opened the jar. The caliph looked at the olives, took one and tasted it, giving another to the boy. Afterwards the merchants were called, who examined the olives and reported that they were good, and of that year. The boy told them that Ali Coglia had said that it was seven years since he had put the olives in the jar. Therefore, the boy concluded, the jar must have been tampered with since that time.

The accused saw plainly that the opinions of the olive merchants would convict him. He confessed to his crime, and revealed where the thousand pieces of gold were hidden. The fortune was quickly located and returned to Ali Coglia. The caliph sternly told the merchant that it was good for him that he decided to confess and to return the gold; that otherwise he would have received one hundred floggings in addition to his sentence of ten years in prison. The caliph turned to the judge who had tried the case before and advised him to take a lesson from the child so that he would perform his duty more exactly in the future. Embracing the boy, the monarch sent him home with a small pouch full of gold pieces as a token of his admiration.

IDEA #105

Role-Playing with Papier-Mâché Puppets

OVERVIEW: Students write a scene involving a character who displays trustworthy behavior, create papier-mâché puppets, and use the puppets to role-play the scene.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- wheat paste
- newspaper
- scissors
- dishpan
- balloons
- paints
- paintbrushes
- petroleum jelly

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students you are going to have a discussion about trustworthiness. Ask them what makes a person worthy of trust. List their answers on the board, making sure to include these fundamental components of trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, reliability and loyalty.

Invite the students to name people in their lives who are trustworthy. Ask them to explain how others know these people are worthy of trust. If they cite scenarios that proved someone was trustworthy, list these examples on the board. Then ask them to think of other examples (hypothetical scenarios) that would serve to demonstrate someone’s trustworthiness. Add these to your list.

Divide the students into groups of at least three. Instruct them to write a skit for one of the situations on the board.

After they have written their skit, have them make papier-mâché puppets to represent the characters in it. Supply each group with balloons, petroleum jelly, dishpan, wheat paste mixture, scissors and newspaper strips.

Have them follow these steps to create the puppets:

1. Blow up a balloon and tie the end.
2. Cover the balloon with petroleum jelly.
3. Dip newspaper strips into wheat paste and put strips on the balloon until it is covered.
4. Add four or five layers of strips leaving the tied end uncovered.
5. Let balloons dry overnight.

One man with courage makes a majority.

— Andrew Jackson
19th-century American military hero and fifth U.S. president
6. Cut hole at tied end as big as second finger after the balloons are dried.
7. Supply each group with paints and brushes.
8. Paint puppet head to look like characters in skits.
9. Add materials to represent the puppets’ clothing.

Set up an area where the students can perform the skits in front of the class. If possible, arrange for the students to perform their skits for younger children.

Procedure to make puppets from “Newsworthy Papier-Mâché Puppet Heads” lesson plan by Mary Beth Lewison, posted on the “AskERIC Lesson Plans” website (www.ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Lessons/Interdisciplinary/INT0049.html).

— Mary Wollstonecraft
19th-century English novelist (“Frankenstein”)
IDEA #106

Identifying Respectful Behavior

OVERVIEW: Students identify examples of respectful and disrespectful public behavior. In cases of disrespectful behavior, they suggest how one could have shown respect under the same circumstances.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Respectful or Disrespectful Act?” worksheet for each group of three or four students

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students: Respect comes from how we feel, but how we act is what is important. Sometimes we have to hold back feelings in order to act respectfully.

Divide the class into small groups of three or four students each. Give each group a copy of the “Respectful or Disrespectful Act?” worksheet. Go over the instructions and have them fill out the worksheets together. Go around the room facilitating the discussions and encouraging all students to participate.

Discuss and elaborate on the groups’ answers, asking them why they responded the way they did.

IDEA #106 Worksheet: Respectful or Disrespectful Act?

Names: __________________________________________________________
Date: ________________________________

Directions: In groups of three or four students each, identify the following as either respectful or disrespectful. For each disrespectful act, explain how you could have shown respect under the same circumstances. For each one you consider respectful, indicate why you think so. As a group, be ready to report your answers to the class.

1. You are screaming as loud as you can for your team at a ball game. Two elderly people sit quietly in front of you, covering their ears every time you yell.

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Your sister is trying to read and having a hard time concentrating because you are playing loud music on your radio. You can’t suggest that she go outside (it’s raining), so you just ignore her when she asks you to turn it off.

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Someone you don’t get along with very well sees you on the playground and calls you a name. You feel like telling him he’s an idiot but you hold back because you know that name-calling doesn’t solve anything.

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

4. You’re sitting through a really boring lesson at school. To entertain the class, you stand up and make a funny face every time the teacher turns his back.

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
IDEA #106 Worksheet (cont.)

5. You are playing baseball and the umpire calls you out when you know you were safe. You tell him that you know you beat the tag, but he disagrees. You feel like calling him a blind bat, but you quietly walk off the field.

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

6. You see an old friend at the grocery store. She is at the other end of the store so you scream and throw a can of soup at her to get her attention.

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

7. A new girl at school always wears old, faded clothes. You tease her because it makes your friends laugh.

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

8. You are at the bus stop in the rain. You have an umbrella and a heavy coat so you let those without rain protection get on the bus first.

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

9. You are returning to class after recess and your friend throws his candy wrapper and soda can on the ground. You tell him that it’s rude to expect others to clean up your mess. He says he doesn’t care, so you pick it up and throw it in a nearby trash can.

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

10. You are cursing loudly in the lunchroom because your friends think it’s funny.

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________
IDEA #107

Respectful Rides on Roads and Rails

OVERVIEW: Students identify examples of respectful and disrespectful behavior of passengers using public transportation.

PREPARATION/ MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Respectful Rides . . .” worksheet for each small group

PROCEDURE:

Divide the class into small groups of three or four students each.

Tell students: When we are using public transportation services — like riding a bus or train — we have to behave differently than we would if we were just with our friends. When we are in public with people we don’t know, we have to make an extra effort to show respect.

Say: What is the rule that helps us remember how to show respect in all situations? Tell them that it’s the Golden Rule. Then discuss the meaning of this rule and tell them to keep it in mind when they’re filling out their worksheets.

Distribute copies of the “Respectful Rides . . .” worksheet to each group. Tell them to follow the directions on the sheet and complete the exercise together. Then read through these worksheets with the whole class, discussing items which raise questions.

IDEA #107 Worksheet: Respectful Rides on Roads and Rails

Names: ____________________________________________
Date: ____________________

Directions: Circle the number in front of each correct statement.

1. It’s respectful to play your tape recorder loudly on a public bus.
2. You should check with the person behind you before you open the window.
3. If you see a friend at the front of the bus, it’s O.K. to yell at him to get his attention.
4. You should never stick your hands or head outside the window.
5. To keep the bus clean, you should throw your trash out the window.
6. Once in your seat, you should stay there.
7. On overnight trips you should be as quiet as possible.
8. It is O.K. to run around on the subway train.
9. You should offer your seat to elderly passengers and pregnant women if there are no seats left for them.
10. When on a bus or subway, it is alright to throw things at your friend as long as you pick up your mess before you get off.
IDEA #108

Role-Playing Respectful Behavior

OVERVIEW: Students differentiate between respectful and disrespectful behavior through role-playing exercises.

PREPARATION/ MATERIALS:
- one copy, cut apart, of the “Role-Playing Respect” worksheet

PROCEDURE:

Say: Today we’re going to demonstrate how we act respectfully — and disrespectfully — in a few different situations. Usually there are several ways to respond to any situation. Some show respect and some don’t.

Divide the class into small groups of four or five students. Then divide the slips equally so that each group role-plays four scenarios, two showing respectful behavior and two showing disrespectful behavior. (You might alter this number depending on the size of the entire group. Or you may reuse or duplicate the slips.)

Distribute four slips from the “Role-Playing Respect” worksheet to each small group. (Have them draw the slips from a container if you wish.) Read the instructions aloud and make sure everyone understands them.

After each role-play, have the students identify it as respectful or disrespectful. Then ask why they made these judgments and discuss their answers.


If a man has good manners and is not afraid of other people he will get by, even if he is stupid.

— David Eccles
IDEA #108 Worksheet: Role-Playing Respect

Directions: Each group is to do a short skit based on the situations on their slips of paper. Do two of them with respect and two of them without respect. The rest of the class will decide which ones are which.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

You are watching an opera with your family and your little brother tells you he has to use the restroom. He is squirming around and says he can’t wait much longer.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

You are waiting in line at the cafeteria and someone throws a handful of potato salad at you. It hits you in the side of the head.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

You are at a wedding and you notice the man next to you has fallen asleep. He begins to snore loudly.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Several people are pushing to get on a crowded subway train.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Your mom’s friend comes over to visit and brings her daughter. You don’t enjoy spending time with this girl, but your mom asked you to play with her.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

You are playing with a baseball and accidentally throw it through a neighbor’s window.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

You want to know the price of an item at the store. The only person working there is at the cash register with a long line of customers.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Someone at a party spills grape juice on you and doesn’t apologize.
IDEA #108 Worksheet (cont.)

You spill grape juice on someone at a party.

An elderly woman carrying a baby can’t find a seat on the bus.

While waiting for the bus, a boy who is not very popular comes and sits beside you. You notice the other kids laughing when they see you both talking.

You are brushing your teeth when your older sister says she’s late and needs to use the bathroom right away to put on makeup.

Your father says he’s expecting an important phone call. Five minutes later the phone rings. It’s a friend of yours from school.

You’re in front of a bank selling raffle tickets for your school club. A man with crutches is struggling to open the door.

You’re walking your dog and when you accidentally drop the leash he runs in front of a car. The driver skids to a stop to avoid hitting the dog.

When waiting in the school cafeteria line, you accidentally step on the shoe of a girl in front of you. She turns around right away with an angry look on her face.
IDEA #109

To Fight or Not to Fight

OVERVIEW: Students learn that conflict is inevitable, but that it can be more easily and effectively resolved if the conflicting parties show respect for one another. A nursery rhyme and other hypothetical scenarios are read and discussed to teach this lesson.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the word “conflict.” Make sure everyone understands what it means before proceeding. Remind children that people often overlook things they have in common and usually don’t listen well when they disagree on something. Say: Sometimes those who are in conflict try to win the conflict by fighting. But fighting is for animals — humans are supposed to be smart enough to work out a disagreement with words. When we show respect for other people’s ideas and remember that we don’t always have to make everyone else think like us, working things out is a lot easier. Think about this when I read this nursery rhyme:

There once were two cats from Kilkenny.  
Each thought there was one cat too many.  
So they fought and they fit,  
And they scratched and they bit,  
Until, except for their nails  
And the tips of their tails,  
Instead of two cats, there weren’t any.

Ask the following questions to make sure everyone understands the story:

1. What did the cats disagree about? (Each wanted to be the only cat in Kilkenny.)
2. What did they do about their disagreement? (Fought each other.)
3. Then were they happy? (No, they both ended up in terrible shape.)
4. Did this kind of action solve their problem? (No, it made their problem worse.)

Then lead a discussion about two people who have a disagreement. Suggest that they, like the cats, could try to solve the problem by fighting. Ask the children if they think this is a good idea. Guide the discussion to include the following points:

If we remain non-violent, hatred will die as everything does, from disuse.  
— Mahatma Gandhi
1. Usually when the fight is over the problem still isn’t solved.

2. If one person wins the fight, he/she may feel the problem is solved, but the other person will probably be even more upset and new problems may have been created. (One or both people may be injured, clothing stained or torn, objects broken, etc.)

3. Does this make sense? Usually the bigger, stronger person will win the fight, but the smaller person may be just as “right.”

Ask the students how each disagreement below might be easier to resolve if the conflicting parties showed respect toward each other. Some sample situations are listed below. Read each one to the group and allow them to discuss ways to solve the problem described. In each case, ask the students what they think would happen if the participants were to have a fight about the problem.

1. Phyllis and Greg are brother and sister. They both like to have a snack after school. One day there was one piece of chocolate cake in the cupboard. Both of them wanted the piece of cake. What could they do to show respect for the other?

2. Eric is in Ms. Gomez’s second grade class. Reggie is in Ms. Smith’s second grade class. One day during recess, both boys ran to the soccer field at the same time. Eric said, “Our class is going to play soccer this recess. We need the playing field.” Reggie said, “But our class is going to play soccer. We need the field.” What could they do to show respect for each other?

3. The school principal came to the classroom with a box of stuff from the Lost and Found. In the box was a really nice black jacket. Juanita and Chris both said it belonged to them. What could they do to solve this problem and show respect?

4. Mr. Larson’s class was studying animals. He told the students they would take a trip to see some animals. The class could choose whether to visit the community zoo or Mr. MacGregor’s farm. Some of the children really wanted to go to the zoo. Some of them really wanted to go the farm. What could both sides do to show respect for each other?

Allow discussion, then add, What would you suggest if you knew that ten children wanted to go to the zoo, and eight children wanted to go to the farm? Allow responses, then add, And what if you knew that all of the children in the class had been to the zoo at least once before, but most of the children who wanted to go to the farm had never been to a farm before?

You might also try having the children role-play these and/or other conflict situations they might come up with.

God looks at the clean hands, not the full ones.
— Publilius Syrus
Roman leader

Adapted from “Life / Liberty / Law,” by Carol Roach (Center for Educational Research and Service, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS). Used with permission.
IDEA #110

No-Taunting Pledge

OVERVIEW: Children discuss the problem of taunting, develop rules against it, and adopt them.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one felt-tip marker
- one large sheet of white paper

PROCEDURE:

Ask the children: What is taunting? Why is it hurtful to others? Through class discussion, help them understand that taunting is a form of bullying and that it not only hurts the victim, but degrades the perpetrator.

Ask them to think about the things they can do about it. Ask: What should you do if you see someone taunting? And: What should you do if someone is taunting you? Write down all the suggestions.

Then ask the children to choose the most important — those resolutions they can all agree to abide by. Stress that each child has the responsibility to offer changes if he or she doesn’t agree with the suggestions.

Then write: “I will follow these rules at school,” and ask each child to sign it. Post it in a prominent location to remind everyone of the commitment.

Educators at Harnett Primary School in Dunn, North Carolina, submitted this idea.
IDEA #111

Pointing Out Difficult Information Respectfully

OVERVIEW: Students examine ways to respect someone even though they have an opinion or habit (smoking is the example here) with which they don’t agree. (Note: Be clear with students that smoking is not only harmful to their health, but illegal at their age as well.)

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
• resources to learn about the effects smoking has on the body
• paper; pens or pencils

PROCEDURE:

Write “respect” on the board. Tell the students that this is one of the Six Pillars of Character, and ask them to share examples of how we show respect to others (following the Golden Rule, being tolerant of differences, using good manners, being considerate of the others’ feelings, and dealing peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements). Encourage students to offer examples of specific actions that show respect.

Explain to the children that modeling these traits may be easy when we agree with the way a person acts and thinks, but that it becomes more difficult when others are behaving in a way we don’t agree with. Discuss the difference between liking someone and respecting someone. Mention that sometimes respectful behavior means “agreeing to disagree” with others. Discuss what this means and list possible examples when this might be true. You might suggest: When actions are clearly harmful or wrong — like vandalism or cheating on a test — we should have the courage to tell others that their behavior is wrong. However, in some situations someone may be doing something we don’t agree with, but they may have a right to make that choice — even if we know it isn’t good for them.

Introduce the dilemma of dealing with an adult who smokes. Discuss the following:

• If we know about the harmful effects of smoking, do we have a responsibility to give this information to friends and family members who smoke? How do we do this while still showing respect for these people?
• Why do people smoke and how can this help us determine how we should respond to it?

Morality, when formal, devours.

— Albert Camus
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning French novelist
Next, explain how we might respond respectfully to people who act in a way that we don’t agree with.

1. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes and think about how you would want someone to treat you if you were the one acting questionably.
2. Express your concern and show that you care about the person even if you don’t agree with him or her.
3. Be as informed as you can about a topic or situation.
4. Offer constructive alternatives to the person.

To emphasize the importance that understanding an issue has in being respectful and in helping others whose behavior might be destructive, instruct students to research the effects of smoking and present their findings to the class.

My son,

these maxims make a rule /
An lump them ay thegither:

/ The Rigid

Righteous is a fool, / The

Rigid Wise

anither.

— Robert Burns
18th-century Scottish poet
IDEA #112

Respectful Listening

OVERVIEW: Students watch the instructor model good and bad listening skills and then attempt to emulate the positive ones.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Ask students to explain why it is important to listen to other people. List answers. Suggest that listening promotes respect, tolerance, and helps to resolve problems between people. Ask the students to help you explain how listening accomplishes these things. Have them help you cite examples to back up your claims.

Tell them that you are going to demonstrate bad and good listening skills. Invite a student to join you in front of the class. Instruct the student to talk to you about a particular topic that he or she is interested in (and one that is appropriate for a class forum). Before he or she starts, instruct the students to pay attention to your behavior while the conversation is taking place.

As the student talks to you, display negative listening skills: let your eyes wander; show signs of being distracted and impatient (look at your watch if you are wearing one); interrupt frequently; reply to the student’s comments with irrelevant responses; look fidgety; etc. Afterward ask the students to share what they observed about your example of disrespectful listening. List observations. Then ask the students to describe how your behavior affected the speaker and how it made him or her feel. Invite them to offer suggestions of how you could have been a better listener.

Next, have another student come up and talk to you. This time display positive listening skills: make direct eye contact; stand still; acknowledge comments; lean closer to the speaker at times; let the student finish speaking before asking a question; be sure your questions are relevant and follow the issue that the student addresses before you start speaking.

Have the students share their observations about how you were a respectful listener. Ask them how your good listening affected the speaker this time. Suggest that a good listener makes the speaker feel comfortable and confident and encourages him or her to share information.

— Robert Smith Surtees
Divide the students into groups of three. Assign one person the role of speaker, one the role of listener, and one the observer role. Tell them that the observer’s job is to note examples of respectful and disrespectful listening. The observer should also coach the listener. Walk around the room and try to facilitate the process for each group.

After a specified amount of time, have the members of each group rotate positions and do it again. Continue this until each group member has had a turn being the speaker, observer and listener.

Once the activity is completed, instruct each group to write down what was hardest and what was easiest about being a respectful listener, and have them share these with the class.

Adapted from “Conflict and the Story of Our Lives,” by Barbara Stanford. This activity is posted in the “Lesson Plans” section of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock College of Education website (www.ualr.edu/~coedept).

It is the characteristic of the magnanimous man to ask no favor but to be ready to do kindness to others.

— Aristotle
Greek philosopher
IDEA #113

The Art of Peacemaking

OVERVIEW: Students discuss how negotiation can solve conflict and then come up with solutions to problems in real life.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to share examples of when they had a disagreement with a family member or friend and acted in respectful ways to solve the problem. Offer examples like sitting and talking, not yelling, not fighting, looking at things from the other person’s point of view, etc.

Suggest that resolving disagreements often involves compromise. As a class, define what compromise means. Then explain that these are all examples of respectful peacemaking.

Discuss when we need to be peacemakers. Cite and list examples. Emphasize that respectful peacemaking involves “talking things out with each other” to create a peaceful solution. List and discuss these types of solutions:

- **Win-Win Solution** — both people talk things out so that each gets something they want. There is no “loser.” It is peaceful.
- **Win-Lose Solution** — one person gains something at the expense of the other person. It reflects competition instead of compromise.
- **Lose-Lose Solution** — no one gets what they want. This isn’t really a “solution,” but sometimes this outcome is inevitable. As long as the conflict is settled peacefully and respectfully, then something has been achieved.

Pair the students up. Invite them to discuss conflicts that may occur at school or that they’ve heard about in the news. Instruct each pair to imagine one of these situations was peacefully resolved. Have them write how a solution was reached, who helped, and if it was a “win-win” outcome. Afterward, have them share their solutions. Suggest that we must act respectfully if we want to gain self-respect and earn the respect of others.


— Samuel Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain)

19th-century American humorist and novelist

A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.
IDEA #114

Responsible Pet Owners

OVERVIEW: Students identify responsible behavior and create rules to model it when caring for a pet.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens
- activity worksheet

SETTING: classroom, animal shelter or humane society (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Ask which students own pets, then ask: Why do people own pets? Discuss and list answers. Say: For people to receive love and loyalty from their pets, they also have to give it. Having a pet, like having a family, takes a lot of responsibility.

Discuss the different stages in the life of a dog or cat (e.g., puppy, full-grown dog, old dog). Discuss the different needs the pet has in each stage. Invite the students to list how the pet owner can meet those needs responsibly. Ask: Why does caring for a pet take a lot of responsibility? Discuss how being a responsible pet owner involves reliability, dependability and self-control (not losing one’s temper when the pet misbehaves).

Say: We have to follow certain rules to take good care of our pets. Divide students into pairs. Pass out one activity worksheet to each pair and instruct them to write down rules that responsible pet owners should follow.

When the students have finished, have them share their answers with the class.

Plan a field trip to a humane society or animal shelter to reinforce the lesson.

Inspired by information on the website of the National Association for Human and Environmental Education (www.nahee.org).
IDEA #115

What Are Our Responsibilities?

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the concept of responsibility and cite specific duties they are charged with carrying out in their own lives.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Ask: What does it mean to be responsible for something? Solicit comments and discuss. Then say: Being responsible is like being in charge. It means it’s your job to take care of something. Ask: Do any of you have pets? Do you have to do anything to care for your pet? Allow for responses, then tell them: If you say you will wash, feed, or walk your pet, then that chore is your responsibility.

Say: One of the most important things you are responsible for is yourself. You are responsible for what you do. So if you make a mess, guess what? It’s your job — your responsibility! — to clean it up. It may be tempting to blame someone else, but you are in charge of you and what you do.

We are also responsible for other people and things. Have you ever had to watch a younger brother or sister? What about caring for the earth? Solicit comments and affirm that we all have to protect ourselves, others and our environment.

To reinforce this discussion, have each youngster draw up and sign a “Positive Pledge” emphasizing personal responsibility. Post these on the wall or tell them to post their pledges at home as a reminder to be responsible.

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL). Eric Lewis, Bunker Hill Elementary School (Washington, D.C.), also contributed to this idea.

— Sidney Smith
IDEA #116

“Accept the Challenge!” Pledge

OVERVIEW: By discussing and signing a self-improvement “challenge,” students focus on developing personal responsibility. They are reminded of their commitment by periodically evaluating how well their behavior corresponds to the “challenge” they have accepted.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one copy of the “Accept the Challenge!” pledge for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Distribute copies of the “Accept the Challenge!” pledge. Then begin by asking: Does anyone know what a “challenge” is? Allow for responses, then say: A challenge is like a dare. It’s like when someone says, “I dare you to eat something disgusting.” Have you ever been dared to do something? Solicit a few comments, then say: Today I’m going to dare you to take charge of your own education.

How about “accept” — can anyone give me a definition for that? Allow for responses. For our purposes, that word means to understand and agree to do something. What about “demonstrate?” Allow for responses. That word means to show that you understand something by actively doing it.

Tell them: If we put all that together, the dare is to understand and promise to behave a certain way. Now let’s make sure we all understand each part of this challenge. Have them read parts of the “Accept the Challenge!” pledge and discuss any sections that may be unclear. Say: This is not just for you, but for me and even your parents. After we accept this challenge, we will get together once in a while to see how well we are living up to it. Take this “Accept the Challenge!” pledge home and tell your family what we talked about today. Have one of your parents sign it, then bring it back. Collect and periodically redistribute these sheets, asking for examples which demonstrate how well they are “walking their talk.”

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL). “Accept the Challenge” worksheet adapted from Sweet Home Central School District’s “Values Education Handbook” (Amherst, NY). Used with permission.
IDEA #116 Pledge: Accept the Challenge!

MY PLEDGE:

1. I realize that one of the greatest opportunities I have is to receive a good education. I know that people want to help me do this, but that it’s really up to me.

2. I want to be smart. It is difficult for misinformed and uneducated people to help others — plus, they miss out on so much for themselves.

3. I will learn my basic skills at school, and will work to be an expert in them.

4. I will think about which subjects interest me most and will read about these subjects on my own. I will also read about other matters just to become more aware of what is happening in the world around me.

5. I will discuss at dinner time what I have learned or questioned at school.

6. I will think about the ideas and dreams we all share so I can do my part to make them come true.

7. I will think about my future and discuss it with people I respect.

8. I understand that others care about me and want me to succeed. Just as important, I care about myself and others, and accept this challenge because I want to do the right thing.

Student Signature ___________________________________________

Teacher / Youth Leader ______________________________ (I’ll help you)

Parent / Guardian __________________________ (endorsed with love)
IDEA #117

Pursue Excellence!

OVERVIEW: Students discuss what it means to pursue excellence and why it is important.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Ask: What does “pursuit of excellence” mean?

Field answers and tell them: It means giving your best to any task you do or to any relationship you have. Each of us has unique talents. And we each have a responsibility to develop these talents — to find out what we can do well, and then to use our special skills to help others. When you practice excellence, you aren’t necessarily competing with others to be better than them. You are trying to be the best that you can be. No matter what you’re working on, excellence means you’re doing all you can to do your job well.

Tell them that pursuing excellence is being and doing our best with big things and little things, with the jobs we do and the people we know. Conduct a discussion on what it means to pursue excellence, making sure to include the following:

- striving to learn from mistakes
- not being content with giving less than what we’re capable of giving
- paying close attention to all parts — both small and large — of any task we accept
- not leaving a task unfinished
- finding what we can do well and then learning to do it even better

Ask: Why is it important to pursue excellence?

Solicit responses and conduct a discussion on why doing one’s best is important. Mention the following points in your discussion:

- Excellence is what leads to success. But it takes courage to pursue excellence. People who are afraid they might not succeed sometimes don’t try very hard. Then if things don’t turn out well, they say, “It doesn’t matter. I wasn’t really trying that hard.” But they never find out what was really possible.
• People who give up easily don’t have very exciting or fruitful lives. They act as if nothing matters very much — as if they don’t matter very much.

• Doing your best helps you find out what talents you have. Doing your best helps you find out who you really are.

• When you pursue excellence, you can make a difference in the world. And that feels good!

To conclude the activity, tell them: When you pursue excellence, you keep working at your task until you’ve got it right. If you stick with it, you will be amazed when you look back and see how much you’ve done. Sometimes it takes a long time . . . but don’t give up! Often the best rewards are the ones you have to wait for.


We have more power than will; and it is often by way of excuse to ourselves that we fancy things are impossible.

— Duc Francois de La Rochefoucauld
IDEA #118

What It Means to Do Your Best

OVERVIEW: Students cite specific examples of pursuing excellence in their lives and identify ways that this could be demonstrated in a variety of hypothetical situations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Say: Lots of people use the word “excellent.” But what does it really mean to “pursue excellence?” It means you do your best at whatever you’re doing. Solicit responses, asking them to think of real opportunities to pursue excellence.

Ask them: What would doing your best look like if . . .

• You were cleaning your room?

• You were learning something new, like playing an instrument?

• You were studying for a test in a subject you found very difficult?

• You felt as if nothing you tried was successful?

• You got tired in the middle of a job you were doing?

• You started comparing yourself to others?

• You discovered that you had made too many promises or had too much to do?

• You were setting goals for yourself?

• You were helping organize a party?


All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.

— Martin Luther King, Jr.
Nobel Prize-winning 20th-century American civil rights leader
IDEA #119

Responsible Choices

OVERVIEW: Students learn about acting responsibly, identifying the most responsible options in a few hypothetical situations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students what it means to be responsible. Include the following points in your description:

• Not expecting others to do your work for you
• Not blaming others for your shortcomings and mistakes
• Doing your best

After clarifying these concepts, say: Now I’m going to read some situations to you. After each one, you’ll hear three possible reactions. You tell me which is the most responsible and why. (With each situation, go over the three concepts above to explain why a reaction was or wasn’t responsible.)

1. You’re sitting at your desk ready to start work on a report, but you can’t find your pencil. What do you do?
   a. Yell to your teacher, “Hey, somebody stole my pencil! I need a new one!”
   b. Forget about it and just sit there without doing your work.
   c. Ask a classmate, “Could you please help me find my pencil?”

2. Your teacher finishes explaining your math assignment, but you’re still a little confused. What do you do?
   a. Stay at your desk and hope that your teacher will come to help.
   b. Yell out in class, “I don’t know how to do this!”
   c. Raise your hand to get your teacher’s attention and then explain the problem.

3. You’re in line for lunch in the cafeteria. You have just paid for your lunch, but when you count your change you notice that it is not enough. What do you do?
a. Say nothing and quietly walk to your table with the change given you.

b. Say, “What’s the matter, can’t you count? You need to give me more money!”

c. Say, “Excuse me, I think I have more change coming. Could you please check?”

4. You’ve worked long and hard writing a special story. When you get your paper back from the teacher, the grade is lower than you think you deserve. What do you do?

a. Feel sad and upset with your teacher, but say nothing.

b. Angryly tell your classmates, “I hate my teacher; she is totally unfair!”

c. Go to your teacher’s desk and ask, “Can you please explain to me why I got this grade on my story?”

Adapted from “Developing Character-Building Values,” by John Gust (Good Apple, Carthage, IL), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #119 Worksheet: Responsible Pet Owners

Rules for Responsible Pet Ownership

Complete each statement with a different “Rule of Responsibility.”

1. **Every good pet owner should:**

   Why?

2. **Every good pet owner should:**

   Why?

3. **Every good pet owner should:**

   Why?

4. **Every good pet owner should:**

   Why?

5. **Every good pet owner should:**

   Why?

6. **Every good pet owner should:**

   Why?
IDEA #120

Preparation, Perseverance, Patience ... and Butterflies

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly and create a butterfly garden as an exercise in preparation, perseverance and patience.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Consult books on the life cycle and habitats of butterflies, or visit these useful online resources: The Butterfly Website (www.butterflywebsite.com), Ask Jeeves for Kids (www.ajkids.com), The Butterfly Pavilion and Insect Center (www.butterflies.org) and Insect Lore (www.insectlore.com).

- flowers to plant
- planting trowels
- empty milk jug
- scissors
- (optional) drawing paper and markers for students to make charts, diagrams, etc.

SETTING: Outdoor area protected from the wind, with moist soil and plenty of sunlight.

PROCEDURE:

Begin by discussing how responsible people approach a task. Write these words on the board: preparation, perseverance and patience. Explain these terms and discuss the importance of taking a long-term look at a project — preparing an area to make it easy for things to fall into place, persevering to get the job done, and being patient about reaping the rewards of your labor.

Offer the example of how teachers teach a lesson: they first must prepare by doing research, by organizing the material, making handouts, etc. Then they must teach it, persevering even when they find it difficult to reach some students. If their first attempt at explaining something doesn’t work, they have to come up with a second, and maybe even third or fourth lesson, incorporating new ways to present and share the information. They may have to add certain details to help students understand the subject.

Next, use the caterpillar-to-butterfly metamorphosis as an example. Explain how the caterpillar must prepare by finding the right environment for the metamorphosis...
to take place. (Most caterpillars are specific about the plants they feed on, so female butterflies must find a suitable caterpillar food plant on which to lay their eggs. Also, there must be enough sun, not too much wind, etc.) Photos and diagrams may help you illustrate this. Once the caterpillar hatches from an egg, it must prepare for the metamorphosis by consuming enough nutrients and finding a safe environment for the process to take place. Explain that the caterpillar has only a limited time to do this, so it must work hard and persevere if resources are not immediately available. Finally, encased in its cocoon, it must be patient for the process to reach completion.

You might provide reading and writing assignments to familiarize students with the butterfly, then present the task of preparing a garden for butterflies. Find a sunny, moist area that is protected from the wind. Have students plant different types of flowers and plants that provide food, shelter, and can act as a host for an adult female butterfly to lay eggs. To provide a drinking-water source for butterflies, cut the tops off a few milk jugs and fill them each with one to two inches of water.

After you’ve created the garden, tell the students that it is time for them to demonstrate patience, as they wait for butterflies to come. If the garden succeeds in attracting caterpillars and butterflies, offer the students time to observe the behavior and growth of the creatures. If no caterpillars or butterflies are found, discuss the need to accept circumstances that are not ideal. Assess why the butterflies did not come and offer students the chance to display their perseverance by taking measures to improve, or even replant, the garden.

— Anonymous

Things work out best for those who make the best of the way things work out.
IDEA #121

Responsibility in Sports

OVERVIEW: Students discuss responsibility in team sport activities and then demonstrate it in a class relay-race.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- slips of paper from activity sheet (one copy of all slips for each group)
- 4 baseball caps
- pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Prompt a discussion about responsibility in team sports. Ask: What does it mean when people say we are good “team players”? Field answers, then ask: What responsibilities does a player have to the team he or she is playing for? List answers. Then ask them what responsibilities a player has to the team he or she is playing against, and list answers. Be sure to include these components of responsibility in your discussion: pursuit of excellence, accountability and self-restraint. Ask students to offer examples displaying these qualities.

Next, introduce the relay race. Say: Now, it’s your turn to demonstrate some of the examples we’ve suggested. We’re going to have a relay race.

Divide them into two teams. Place two caps on each side of the room. Fill one cap with the slips of paper from the activity sheet. Instruct each team to stand next to the cap with the slips of paper in it.

Explain the rules: When I say “responsibility,” someone from each team will draw a slip of paper out of the cap, read it to his or her team and write the team’s answer on the slip. Then this person will run to the opposite cap, drop it in, run back and tags another teammate to pick a new slip of paper from the cap. The first team to go through all the slips of paper is the winner.

When the race is over discuss the process. Possible questions to ask include: How did you show responsibility in the relay race? Why is being responsible important when playing sports? Why can you feel good even if you don’t win?

Adapted from an idea submitted by Mary Jo Williams, 4-H youth development specialist (4-H Youth Programs, University Extension, University of Missouri), based on an activity in the CHARACTER COUNTS! “Exercising Character” lesson plans.
IDEA #121 Responsibility in Sports Activity Sheet

Responsibility in Sports: Pursuing excellence — doing your best
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Persevering — finishing what you start
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Being informed
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Being on time
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Being careful and safe
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Modeling good habits
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Working to do better
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Doing what is right
Example:
IDEA #121: Responsibility in Sports Activity Sheet

Responsibility in Sports: Being accountable — taking the blame when it’s due
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Controlling your words
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Controlling your temper
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Waiting for rewards
Example:

Responsibility in Sports: Thinking long-term
Example:
IDEA #122

“It’s Not Fair!”

OVERVIEW: Through discussion, each child learns that what is fair for him or her doesn’t have anything to do with what is in his or her best interest.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Ask: *Who knows what it means to be fair?* Solicit comments, noting that most everybody thinks they know what is fair. Be sure the students understand that what is fair isn’t just what’s most desirable for them. Tell them that this is what many people are thinking when they say, “That’s not fair.”

Then ask: *What do you do if you see something that’s not fair? You try to fix it to make it fair, right? Do you do this even if you don’t get anything out of it?* Solicit comments.

Ask them students to imagine what would happen if they just discovered they got an “F” on their latest math test even though they answered most of the problems correctly. Acknowledge that it may not be fair, but the question is, “What are they going to do?” Take suggestions. Encourage the group to come up with as many responses to their predicament as possible.

Then ask: *What if you saw someone erase the name on another exam and write in their own?* This surely isn’t fair, but would you be just as dedicated to finding fairness here, even if it didn’t directly affect you? *What could you do to make things fair here?* Solicit comments, then tell them that fairness is important regardless of who benefits or loses.

Adapted from “The American Promise Teaching Guide” (made possible by Farmers Insurance Group), 1996. This idea originally comes from Doug Miller, Fremont High School (Sunnyvale, CA).

*All virtue is summed up in dealing justly.*

— Aristotle

Ancient Greek philosopher
IDEA #123

The Big Book of Judgment

OVERVIEW: Through discussion and by making a book with written examples and artwork, each child learns about judging fairly, weighing the difference between a good judgment and a poor one and practicing fairness.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- bulletin board
- paper (one sheet for each student to create a page of his/her own)
- crayons, colored pencils or marking pens for each student
- large photo album or three-ring binder (You may also make your own binder using cardstock for front and back covers and metal rings to bind pages together.)
- laminating machine (to laminate book pages)

PROCEDURE:

Prepare a bulletin board titled “Making Fair Judgments” with words and phrases like “good judgment,” “poor judgment,” “equal treatment” and “unjust decision.” Discuss these words and solicit comments from students to arrive at definitions.

Then assemble a book focusing on these words and phrases. Use a large photo album or large three-ring notebook which can accommodate work from each student (or make your own binder). Use these guidelines:

1. Reserve one page for each youngster in the classroom or group.
2. Divide the page in half with “good judgment” on one side and “poor judgment” on the other. Have each youngster produce a statement and illustration about fairness under both headings. Suggest that they use examples of fair or unfair treatment they’ve witnessed or have been involved in.
3. Write “Big Book of Judgment” on the cover. If possible, have it laminated.
4. Go around the room discussing each example. Ask why each was fair or unfair and how better judgment might have been exercised.
5. Display the book on a table under the bulletin board in a prominent location and include a comment sheet in the back and encourage readers to make comments.

Adapted from the Sweet Home Central School District’s “Values Education Handbook” (Amherst, NY). Used with permission.
IDEA #124

Unfair Advantage Game

**OVERVIEW:** By altering the rules of a game, children see how important rules are to ensuring fairness and equal opportunities.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- soccer ball (or other equipment depending on game chosen)

**SETTING:** soccer field (or other setting depending on game chosen)

**PROCEDURE:**

Divide the group into teams to play soccer (or some other game). Help them get set up, then tell one team they don’t have to obey any of the rules. They can do anything they want (without hurting anybody) to win the game. The other team must still obey the rules. Begin the game and let them play long enough to demonstrate what happens in an unfair arrangement.

Bring the children together again and talk about what happened. Discuss the frustration, anger and resentment the obedient team members might be feeling. Ask them why we have rules in games, then use the experience to discuss why we have rules at home, in class, and in society, and what would happen if we disregarded these rules. Tell them that some rules are set up to keep us safe, but others are in place to help ensure fairness.

Remind them what the term “good sport” means. Explain that a good sport is not necessarily good at sports, but is someone who plays fairly and recognizes that winning isn’t everything. Be sure to praise the “good sports” during and after games or activities.

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*Contributed by Janet Gunson, M.S. Ed (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA).*
IDEA #125

Fairness Discussion Points and Survey

OVERVIEW: Students learn to examine aspects of fairness as they discuss real life situations.

PREPARATION: none

PROCEDURE:

Review with students the “do’s and don’ts” of fairness (listed at the front of this section). Ask students some or all of the following questions:

- Does fairness mean everyone gets the same amount, like an equal piece of pie? Does fairness mean enforcing the rules for everyone, even if it means losing a game? Is it possible to treat everyone fairly?
- What does it mean to treat people equally? Give examples of equal and unequal treatment.
- What does it mean to be open-minded? What does it mean to be impartial? What do these things have to do with fairness?
- Is it possible to be fair without considering everyone who will be affected by your decision? Give an example.
- Think of yourself as a coach. What would be the benefits of having athletes who played fair and treated others fairly?
- Can you think of a situation in which it might be right to give someone a special advantage? Are there ever good reasons why there should be different consequences for the same offense?
- How should you treat people who are not fair with you?
- What are the benefits of people treating each other fairly?

Direct students to conduct a survey in your school or community, asking questions such as: Do you think people are fair enough? What are some unfair acts that annoy you? What are some fair acts that you appreciate? Compile the results into a report and discuss.

Adapted from the discussion points and group activity ideas in the discussion guide for “In Search of Character,” a video series produced by Elkind + Sweet Communications in association with CHARACTER COUNTS! See www.goodcharacter.com for more ideas from “In Search of Character.”

—Reinhold Niebuhr
20th-century American theologian and pastor

Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.
IDEA #126

A Tall Order of Fairness

OVERVIEW: Working as a team to complete a competitive task with limiting rules, the children learn what skills are necessary to play fair.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- 40 straws (for each group)
- 20 paper clips (for each group)
- adhesive tape (for each group)
- scissors (one pair for each group)

PROCEDURE:

Explain that the lesson will focus on fairness. Reiterate key qualities of fairness. Then ask: How do rules affect fairness? Offer the students examples and have them come up with more. Next ask: What types of situations make sets of rules hard to follow? Why? Lead the discussion to the importance of teamwork and the influence of competition on fairness. Ask them to explain why people cheat. Then solicit examples of consequences for such behavior.

Introduce the task. Say: We are going to complete a competitive task today to see who can build the tallest tower out of certain materials. However, there are certain rules and limitations. Distribute materials and divide the students into four or five groups. Say: Your group will have five minutes to design a tower and five minutes to build it. Every person in the group must be involved in the planning and building of the tower. Finally, you can only talk while you are designing the tower. Once you start building it, you cannot talk to one another. If you talk during the building stage, your group will have to start over and will lose any materials that have been used up to that point.

Finally, ask: What is the most important thing to remember? After fielding answers say: The most important thing is not to win but to play fair.

Once the game is over, discuss the role of fairness in their tasks and what this taught them about solving problems fairly.

Adapted from an idea submitted by Mary Jo Williams, 4-H youth development specialist (4-H Youth Program, University Extension, University of Missouri System), based on an activity in “Boomerang! Character Education Program” (4-H Youth Development, Iowa State University, University Extension). Used with permission.
IDEA #127

Unfair Feelings

OVERVIEW: Students experience unfair treatment and then react, leading to a discussion about the feelings of unjust actions and the process of arriving at fair solutions.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing fairness, implement several unfair activities or rules over the course of the day, such as:

1. Divide the class into two teams for a question-and-answer contest in a particular subject, but rig the contest so that one team gets all the easy questions and handily beats the other.
2. Allow one set of students to participate in an independent study period while requiring the other set of students to complete a laboriously specific worksheet or activity for a class period.
3. Pass out stickers or some other form of reward for good behavior, but purposely have less than the number needed for all students in the class.

Once students begin to notice and object to the unfair treatment, explain that these activities were designed to be unfair. Have the students express why they feel they were treated unfairly, and how it made them feel. Discuss the importance of fairness in school, and how this lesson might be applicable in other contexts (e.g., a workplace, a professional sports activity, a political matter, etc.).

Then discuss what kinds of problems result from unjust treatment. List them. Next, put the students into groups and have each group write a step-by-step solution to redress one of the resulting problems you listed. Have the groups share these with the class.

Ask the students to name specific types of behavior that are necessary for the solutions to be effective — and for the problems to be avoided altogether. Finally, invite them to offer one way they can help ensure a fairer environment in their school.

IDEA #128

Kindness Letters

**OVERVIEW:** Students recognize their peers’ good qualities and learn to express compliments in a written “kindness letter.”

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- container (coffee can, hat, etc.)
- small slips of paper
- one writing implement for each youngster
- one sheet of paper for each youngster

**PROCEDURE:**

Have the students neatly write their names on slips of paper and deposit the slips in a container (coffee can, hat, etc.). Periodically select a youngster to draw a name from the container and write a letter to the chosen person.

Tell them that their letters should recognize positive things about the person, especially specific acts of kindness that the writer has noticed (not just, “you have really cool shoes,” etc.). Also, remind the group to watch for caring behavior exhibited by others in the group. Then say: Remember, this means others will be watching you to see if you are being a caring person or not. You will find that children often are surprised to read what a classmate notices about them.

Adapted from the Sweet Home Central School District’s “Values Education Handbook” (Amherst, NY). Used with permission.

**Good words are worth much and cost little.**
— George Herbert
IDEA #129

Caring for All in the Family

OVERVIEW: Students interview a family member and draw parallels between the growth and change of a family and the way we care for ourselves.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens
- markers
- glue (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Display a green tree leaf and a brown or multi-colored tree leaf. Ask: How are these two leaves different? Field answers. Why do the leaves of certain trees change in different seasons? Summarize their responses: The leaves change because the conditions, including the weather, change. In order for the tree to keep growing, it has to adjust to the different conditions. It has to take care of itself in different ways. Cite examples (e.g., when it is dry, the tree must store more water).

Next, say: Families also work this way. As they grow and change — or the people in them grow and change — the way they care for themselves and others changes. What are some ways families grow and change? Ask the students to cite examples (e.g., a child is born, a sibling leaves home, families move).

Ask: When you were younger, what did your parents have to do to care for you? How did you care for yourself? List answers. These days, how do your parents care for you? How do you care for yourself? Again, list answers. Reiterate that over time families change and grow along with the way we care for each other.

Instruct the students to interview a parent or guardian. Make sure they have their interview subject answer the following questions: What main event — or events — have helped the family grow? How did you care for the family before the event? After the event? Why? Instruct them to write a summary of the interview and to supplement it with photos, letters or artwork related to the event(s).

When they have completed the assignment, invite them to share their answers orally. (Of course, some of the information may be sensitive, so don’t insist on this.)

— James Freeman Clarke

Seek to do good and you will find that happiness will run after you.

— James Freeman Clarke
IDEA #130

Caring Versus Greed

OVERVIEW: Children think about the different ways we use the word caring and learn that caring stands in opposition to greed and selfishness.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell them: Today we are going to talk about what caring means. Another word that means about the same thing as caring is love. Love might be used to talk about loving our parents or a boyfriend or girlfriend. It can also be used to talk about food or activities. For instance, we say “I love pizza” or “I love to play soccer.” What do you love to eat? What do you love to do? Allow for responses.

Then say: When we talk about loving members of our family, we’re talking about caring — we care about what happens to them and we care about how they feel. So in this sense, caring and loving mean thinking about and wanting the best for others, not just looking out for ourselves.

What are some examples of being selfish? How about some examples of being greedy? Allow for responses, then ask if these can also be examples of caring. When they say no, explain that being caring and loving is the opposite of being selfish and greedy.

Say: It’s important to think about how we can help others, not just about what we want to do for ourselves. When you see the color red, think about a heart and let that remind you to care about others. When you go home tonight, tell your family what we talked about today and remember to do at least one thing that shows you care. The next time we meet, I’ll ask each of you what that caring thing was. You may want to make some notes so you don’t forget.

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).
IDEA #131

Caring Coupons

OVERVIEW: Children think of caring acts which they commit to in the form of coupons for a parent (or parents).

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- photocopied and cut out “caring coupons” (enough for each youngster to assemble a book of 5-10 coupons)
- pencils or pens
- stapler and staples

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students: Would you like to get your mom or dad a gift that they’ll love — and not have to spend a dime for it? Here’s an idea: make a book full of “caring coupons” for them. Distribute the sample coupons (already photocopied and cut out) on the following page or have the kids make the whole book themselves.

Tell them to think of caring acts that their parent(s) would appreciate. Then have them list these acts on the coupons. For example, they might make a coupon redeemable for one dishwashing job. Or they might commit to keeping the TV or stereo off one morning so their parents could sleep in. And let’s not leave out yard work and extra house cleaning chores! Even a good hug and kiss will do.

When they have completed their coupons and stapled them together with a creative cover, suggest that they might want to save their books for a special occasion (e.g., a parent’s birthday, an anniversary, Mother’s or Father’s Day, or some other holiday).

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).

—I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance and meaning. —Pablo Casals
IDEA #131: Sample Caring Coupons

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

**CARING COUPON**

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:
I will . . . _____________________
____________________________

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IDEA #132

Helping Those in Need

OVERVIEW: Students learn about the importance of volunteering their help when they spot others in need. They are presented with a variety of scenarios in which the assistance of a caring individual could make a difference.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one photocopy with cut-out slips from the “Helping Those in Need” activity sheet

PROCEDURE:

Photocopy and cut out the statements on the “Helping Those in Need” activity sheet and distribute the slips arbitrarily to a few students (one statement each). Ask them to read the statements and have the class respond accordingly.

After all the statements have been read, ask the whole group: *What do all of the people in these situations have in common?* When the students conclude that assistance by another individual was needed, ask who could have volunteered to help. Field responses, praising them for their good ideas. Then ask them to propose how the people in these situations could have been helped.

Inform the students that any time they provide assistance or help to another person, they are performing a service. Some people call this volunteering. Tell them: *Whenever you help in a situation such as those we discussed, it makes you feel good inside. Remember, if you ever want to feel good about yourself, try helping those who are having a hard time. You might be surprised at how this helps you too.*

Challenge the students to watch for opportunities to help others. Say: *The best people do this simply because they see a need — not because they expect anything in return.*

Tell them that the next time you meet, you will be asking them how they helped someone in need. Say: *Watch for those who could use a helping hand. You don’t have to be a hero — small deeds can go a long way. When we meet again, we’ll talk about what you did.* Follow through with this and commend them for their efforts.

*Adapted from “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.*
IDEA #132 Activity Sheet: Helping Those in Need

Raise your hand if you have ever seen a mother who was having a difficult time trying to manage several kids by herself.

Raise your hand if you have ever seen a crowd of kids watching a fight between two other kids where nobody did anything to try and stop the fight.

Raise your hand if you have ever been to a recreational center where there were too few workers for the number of children.

Raise your hand if you have ever seen children trying to play a game where there was no umpire or referee to resolve an argument.

Raise your hand if you have ever heard about a child who got lost in a public place and couldn’t find his parents.

Raise your hand if you have ever seen someone burdened with several grocery sacks who was having a difficult time getting up stairs or opening a door.

Raise your hand if you think there are adults who would like to learn English but don’t have enough money to take a class.
IDEA #133

Smile, You’re on Caring Camera

**OVERVIEW:** Students focus on their actions and learn to model respectful behavior. To reinforce the lessons, their actions are documented.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- camera (a polaroid or disposable camera may be easiest)
- copies of worksheet certificate
- bulletin board

**PROCEDURE:**

Discuss what it means to be caring and compassionate. (For a listing of the components of caring behavior, see definitions of the Six Pillars at the beginning of this book.)

Introduce the “caring camera.” Say: *Now that we know how to show this kind of behavior, I thought it would be nice for us to document, as well as celebrate, the caring and compassion we show to one another each day. This camera is to be cared for and shared by all of us.* Discuss appropriate sharing behavior.

Ask the students if any of them is familiar with the TV show “Candid Camera.” Discuss the concept of this show, then tell them that the “caring camera” will be used in much the same way: to catch people in the act when they don’t know they’re on camera.

Have the students take turns being “caring camera operators.” Secretly designate a student to take three or four pictures in a predetermined amount of time (depending on how long you want to conduct this activity). Tell him or her to try to secretly take pictures of other students engaging in caring acts. Inform them that you will be keeping track of which pictures the students took. (You will probably want to keep a log for this purpose.)

Have the film developed and share the photos with the class. Discuss what kind of respectful, caring action is taking place in each photo. Then display them on a bulletin board. Present each child captured on the “caring camera” with a copy of the handout certificate.

*Inspired by an idea in Lesson Plans for Character Education, by Sharon Fincham, et al. (Manhattan, KS: The MASTER Teacher, Inc., 1998).*
Certified Caring
in action
was displayed by:

__________________________

__________________________
IDEA #134

Collecting Duffle Bags for Foster Children

OVERVIEW: Students are encouraged to appreciate aspects of their lives that they may take for granted. They show caring by organizing a duffle-bag-and-stuffed-animal drive for foster children.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- empty duffle bag or suitcase (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Hold up an empty duffle bag or suitcase. Ask the students what purpose it serves and what kinds of items are often carried in it. List answers. Ask how people acquire a duffle bag or suitcase.

Ask how a homeless person would acquire a duffle bag. Discuss why owning one might mean a lot more to them. Also mention to them that many foster children who have to move frequently don’t have duffle bags to move their possessions. Discuss what possessions many of us take for granted — not only all the items that we own, but the backpacks and bags we use to move them around. Tell the students that they can do something to help homeless people and foster children keep their possessions with them.

Share one girl’s success story: When nine-year-old Makenzie Snyder of Maryland heard that many foster children who are forced to move frequently use trash bags to transport their few possessions, she decided to do something about it: collect used suitcases and duffle bags and donate them to young people in need. So far, 1,000 kids in the area around Washington, D.C. have received suitcases (with a nice note and a stuffed animal inside) from Makenzie’s brainchild, “Children to Children.” The program recently received a grant to fund the purchase of duffle bags — and Makenzie was invited to the White House.

After the discussion, help the students organize a duffle-bag-and-stuffed-animal drive for foster children. After you have collected the bags and stuffed animals, have the students write letters to the young people and include one in each bag. Finally, contact Children to Children to arrange a pick-up or drop-off.

Children to Children
Attn: Makenzie Snyder
3262 Superior Lane, PMB #288
Bowie, MD 20715

Visit the Children to Children website at www.childrentochildren.org.

Indifference is the essence of inhumanity.
— George Bernard Shaw
20th-century Irish dramatist
IDEA #135

Random Notes of Kindness

OVERVIEW: Children offer a note of appreciation to a fellow classmate’s guardian after discussing random acts of kindness.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- envelopes (one addressed to each student’s guardian)
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Have the students sit down in two or three rows and perform “the wave” by standing and sitting in sequence. After they have successfully performed it, say: At sporting events like football and baseball games, it’s common for the spectators to do “the wave.” At first it may just be a few people, but eventually almost everyone catches on and joins in. It’s like a chain reaction. One person does it, and then another, and another, and so on.

Doing nice things for other people can work the same way. You might say that kindness is contagious. You treat someone with kindness, they feel happier, and then they treat someone else nicely. When have you seen this happen? Solicit responses and cite examples.

Next, ask the students to define the word “random.” When they understand this word, ask them for examples of random acts of kindness. List their answers.

Show them the envelopes addressed to their guardians. Explain that once a week, you will randomly select an envelope, and each of them will write a brief note describing one nice thing they noticed about the student whose guardian will receive the envelope through the mail. (They do not have to sign their names.)

Pick one envelope and begin the process. Provide a few examples of the kind of appreciative words they might say in their notes.

Inspired by an idea from Larry Miller, Tennessee’s state coordinator of National Random Acts of Kindness Week. His idea is posted on www.edmktsol.com/rak, one of several Random Acts of Kindness websites.

Men can starve from a lack of self-realization as much as they can from a lack of bread.

— Richard Wright
20th-century American novelist

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IDEA #136

History’s Heroic Citizens

OVERVIEW: Students discuss various historical figures and explain why these people can be considered “heroic citizens.”

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- slips of paper with names of historical figures on them
- a hat
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to define a “hero/heroine.” Field and list answers. Then ask the students to define “good citizen.” Compare the similarities between the traits involved in each definition. Discuss what famous people in history could be considered “heroic citizens” and why.

Divide the class into groups. Pull out the hat with slips of paper in it. Explain that each slip of paper contains the name of a historic citizen on it. Instruct each group to agree on and list three traits that prove the person was heroic. Make sure they explain why. When everyone is finished, have each group play charades to describe their figure’s heroic traits.

Afterward, have each group read their actual answers.

Instruct them to research and write about the heroic citizens to more thoroughly prove their claims.

Submitted by Nat Cooper, director of the Center for Character Development at Lubbock Christian University (Lubbock, Texas).

*If men were angels no government would be necessary.*

— James Madison

18th-century American Founding Father; 19th-century U.S. president (from the Federalist Papers)
IDEA #137

Collage of Civic Responsibility

OVERVIEW: Students cut out pictures and assemble a collage depicting acts of civic responsibility. They then discuss the significance of the actions represented.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- scissors
- current newspapers and magazines
- glue or paste

Instructor may want to ask kids beforehand to bring in current newspapers and/or news magazines on the day of the activity.

PROCEDURE:

Have the kids collect and make collages of people exercising their citizenship responsibilities (e.g., recycling, voting, showing respect for the law, and speaking out against social injustice.)

Tell them: Each of you must contribute at least one piece to the collage. When the work is complete, I will go around the room asking each student to identify his/her contribution and explain its significance.

Discuss what these actions represent, how they affect us, and how and why we should each be involved in similar activities. Use current events to punctuate the discussion.

Discuss the responsibilities of each person directly involved in the judicial system: the judge, the jury, the legal counsel (prosecuting and defending attorneys), the bailiffs, the stenographer, etc.

Emphasize that it is necessary for everyone to do their part to make the court system run smoothly. Pose questions such as What would happen if the custodians didn’t do their part? What if everyone made up an excuse to get out of jury duty?

Contributed by Janet Gunson, M.S. Ed (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA).
IDEA #138

Community Calendar

OVERVIEW: Students discuss community membership and work together to create a calendar focusing on good citizenship. This calendar might be printed and sold for school fundraising, emphasizing a commitment to the school community.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- legal-sized paper; pencils; markers; crayons;
- rulers
- paints and other art supplies (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the importance of caring for one’s community, and the different needs of communities. Suggest that one of the communities students need to be responsible for and care about is their own school community. Have the students list ways these needs are met: by whom, how, etc. Mention the fiscal responsibilities associated with meeting all these needs. Ask students what improvements they would like to see at their school. Settle on an issue (by popular vote, if necessary) that the class will focus on to improve the school community.

Explain that the class is going to show their commitment to the school and make a calendar about good citizenship that can be sold to help raise money to support your school improvement project.

Divide the students into groups and have each group come up with a list of at least 10 things residents can do to improve the community. Develop a comprehensive list and divide these items evenly among the small groups.

Assign each a particular month (or months) of the calendar to create. Distribute several sheets of legal-sized paper to each group. Make sure they save one sheet for their final draft.

Have them place the paper vertically and divide it in half. Explain that the top half will display artwork that represents good citizenship, and the bottom half will display the calendar. (You might want to give them a sample page from a calendar to use as a model.)

Tell each group to incorporate the community-improvement tips from their list.

This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in.

—Theodore Roosevelt
19th/20th-century American adventurer and politician; Nobel Prize-winning U.S. president
in the boxes of the calendar. Have them show you a rough draft before they finish.

Compile all the groups’ work and piece together the calendar. You can either photocopy it or make arrangements with a printing company to produce a large quantity to be sold to the entire school and community.

Use the funds you raise from the sale of these calendars to carry out your school-improvement project.

Inspired by the “Garden of Virtues” calendar by Christina Bondurant Keffler and Rebecca Ott Donnelli from Homegrown Inc. (www.virtuescalendar.com).

Without civic morality communities perish; without personal morality their survival has no value.

— Bertrand Russell
20th-century English mathematician and philosopher
IDEA #139

Good Citizen Interviews

OVERVIEW: Students interview adults whom they consider good citizens. They share their interviews with the others and reflect on what it means to be a good citizen.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- paper and a pen or pencil for each youngster to record important points of his/her interview

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the meaning of good citizenship with the students (e.g., working for the common good, volunteering one’s services to others, protecting the environment and obeying laws and rules). When they are familiar with this concept, ask each youngster to think of an adult he/she knows who is a good citizen. This person may model good citizenship in their personal or professional life.

Tell them that their assignment is to conduct an interview with that person and write down some of the points this person thinks are important to being a good citizen.

Have them practice interviewing each other to familiarize them with this concept. Ask for student volunteers who are willing to be interviewed by their peers. Give the volunteer an imaginary adult role (e.g., police officer, teacher, judge, volunteer at a homeless shelter, etc.). Suggest that the students ask questions like the following:

- Do you think you are a good citizen? Why or why not?
- Do you do anything at work which shows good citizenship?
- How do you think young people can show good citizenship?
- Do you do any volunteer work?

After they have all conducted their interviews with their designated adults, ask them to share what they learned with the rest of the group. Re-cap your discussion on good citizenship and add any new insights revealed by the interviews.

See “100 Ways to Enhance Values and Morality in Schools and Youth Settings,” by Howard Kirschenbaum (Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA), 1995.
IDEA #140

Protecting Public Spaces

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the benefits to the community of parks, natural preserves and other public lands. They learn that all members of the community share a responsibility for maintaining these spaces. They then turn these words into action by organizing a cleanup project in a local park or other public land.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- trash bags
- transportation plans and a means of disposing of the collected litter

PROCEDURE:

Have the students read articles about preserving parks and other public lands. Tell them that many people enjoy these areas, but that many are irresponsible and don’t “pack out what they pack in.” Say: It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that these spaces aren’t destroyed by these irresponsible people. What would happen if nobody cared about these areas? Solicit responses and discuss this issue.

Then tell them that even young people can do something about these problems. Tell them that it’s time to turn the talk into action and help them organize a litter removal project at a local park or other neglected area. Designate certain students to gather recyclable items (aluminum cans, clear-glass bottles, colored-glass bottles, etc.).

Do your best to make them proud to be a part of this team effort. It may help to bring along a camera to get “before-and-after” shots of the area as well as pictures of the students in action. Note the mess at the beginning and point out the difference they made when they are finished. Put the recycling money toward a celebration (you might also seek the support of a local eatery which could provide free milkshakes for all).

“Keep America Beautiful,” a nonprofit organization devoted to the preservation of public lands, will send free materials, including a 15-page booklet (“Preserving Our National Heritage”) focusing on the responsibility of the community to ensure the survival of public lands. Also available is a guide (the “Keep-America-Beautiful System”) with practical information on organizing a cleanup campaign. (Keep America Beautiful, 9 West Broad St., Stamford, CT 06902)
IDEA #141

Shared Symbols and Values

OVERVIEW: Children reflect on and discuss the power of symbols and how they can be used to bring people together.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the subject of symbols and the functions they serve. Say something like: It would be hard to function efficiently as a society without signs and symbols. They represent values we share as a group. We are members of various groups — some very large like the nation, some very small like a club. Some symbols remind us of rules we are expected to know and follow. Some proclaim the authority of a particular office or government department (e.g., presidential seal, law-enforcement badge). Other signs, like product logos, are designed so that we remember a product and associate it with some positive feeling or characteristic. Religious communities have symbols that remind the faithful of their beliefs. And there are political symbols, like the flag of a country or a state.

Ask: What are some signs and symbols that you can think of? (Write students’ responses on the board; you might find it useful to organize these into categories.) Say: What do these symbols and signs represent? What are the values they suggest?

Then ask: What about the Six Pillars of Character? What are those? Is there a symbol for those? Draw on the board or otherwise display the CHARACTER COUNTS! logo:

Discuss how symbols can be used to unite a people. Discuss both the positive and negative effects of this. You might cite the example of the Tibetan flag, which the Chinese government has outlawed because this symbol legitimizes the idea of an independent Tibet.
Discuss citizenship as it relates to national symbols. Introduce the words *patriotism* and *jingoism*, which may involve blind allegiance to a national symbol such as a flag. Try to explain in simple terms the differences between these two words. Compare these with *citizenship* and *civic virtue*, which connote a deeper and more meaningful commitment to helping a community — even a global community.

Direct the students to create a symbol for good citizenship. When they are done, ask them to share their good-citizenship symbols with the whole class. Display these for all to see.

*A*rt, like *morality*,
*consists of* *drawing*
*the line*
*somewhere.*

— G.K. Chesterton
19th-century English essayist and poet
IDEA #142

Solution-Hero

OVERVIEW: Students analyze the decision-making skills of their favorite comic book superhero before creating their own.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
• paper; pencils, crayons and/or markers
• comic books (for students unable to acquire any)

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the topic: Today we are going to discuss comic book superheroes. Who are some of your favorite superheroes? List answers. Why? Discuss and list reasons. Even though most of you suggested in one way or another that you liked these superheroes because they saved people from harmful individuals, I would like you to think about the ways they did that. What are some of the most common ways? Again, list answers. Point out that many used violence or fighting to help others. Ask: Why does this kind of action lack character? Emphasize the long-term negative effects and consequences that can result from the choice to solve a conflict with violence.

Discuss how other people not involved in the fighting could have been affected. Ask what could happen as a result. Suggest that violent solutions have a domino-effect: violence begets more violence. Discuss the steps people can take to make good decisions without utilizing violence. Have the students jot down the core ideas:

1. Treat people the way you want them to treat you.
2. Make sure that when making a decision on how to act, these values are the primary consideration: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. These should come before any other value.
3. Choose the action that offers the greatest good to the most people.

Next, instruct the students to analyze the character and decision-making skills of their favorite comic book superhero. Instruct them to list the values the superhero models. Then have them describe a particular action their superhero took that did not show any of the Six Pillars. Ask what the superhero could have done to demonstrate one or more of the Six Pillars. How could he or she have used the three keys to good decision making?

Once the students have completed the written task, instruct them to create their own superhero — a “solution-hero” — one with special “Six-Pillar powers” that exemplify good decision-making. Invite them to draw these solution-heroes and explain their Six-Pillar powers.
IDEA #143

Family Coat of Arms

OVERVIEW: Students discuss how they can improve their behavior in the areas represented by the Six Pillars. Drawing a “coat of arms” to symbolize this helps to reinforce the lesson.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

• one large piece of posterboard or construction paper for each youngster
• colored pencils, crayons or markers

PROCEDURE:

Explain what a coat of arms is and that it once was commonly used to represent a family or some other institution. (Show an example if you have one available.) Then give each youngster a large piece of posterboard or construction paper and some colored pencils, crayons or markers. Ask them to draw a large, medieval shield that covers most of the poster. The shield should be divided into six roughly equal parts (with three horizontal lines and one down the middle).

Instruct them to write each of the Six Pillars of Character in or next to each section: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Say: In each section, I want you to draw a picture of what you could do to practice the Pillar.

When they have finished this, discuss their drawings, asking them to think of ways they might improve their behavior in each of these areas. Then say: Now write one sentence under each Pillar describing something you could do to improve in that area. Make sure you describe what YOU are willing to do instead of proposing that others change.

Tell them that each of them now has a family coat of arms. Tell them to take their shields home and talk to their parents about how they could make the values on their shields their family goals. Encourage them to put these coats of arms in a prominent place at home.

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).
IDEA #144

Six Pillars Skits

**OVERVIEW:** Students learn to better understand the Six Pillars by differentiating between them. Groups of two devise and perform skits demonstrating one of the Six Pillars which their classmates try to identify.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Describe and discuss the Six Pillars of Character to the children if they are not already familiar with them. Make sure everyone understands the meaning of each of these core ethical values.

Then have them divide into groups of two and tell them: *Now we are going to do short skits about these Six Pillars. You can do a pantomime or a scene with dialogue.* (Ask if anyone knows the game “charades” and explain that a pantomime is what one does in this game.) Provide further clarification and a demonstration to be sure that everyone understands how this is done.

Then tell each pair to pick one of the Six Pillars and to keep their selections a secret. Say: *The object of this game is to see how fast you can get the others to guess which of the Six Pillars you are acting out. Arrange a little skit with your partner which in some way shows how someone might practice one of the Six Pillars.*

Demonstrate one of the core values as an example (e.g., act out a scene showing courteous behavior until someone guesses “respect”). Then give them a few minutes to come up with something. Walk around the room assisting the pairs. Then . . . let the show begin!

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*Contributed by Lisa Rolfe, Clegg Park Elementary School teacher (West Des Moines, IA).*
IDEA #145

Six Pillars Rap

OVERVIEW: Students learn to better understand core ethical values by differentiating between them. Groups of two devise and perform skits demonstrating one of the Six Pillars which their classmates try to identify.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- tape recorder and a tape of instrumental music the kids could “rap” to (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Describe and discuss the Six Pillars of Character to the children if they are not already familiar with them. Make sure everyone understands the meaning of each of these core ethical values. Discuss the importance of living with character and solicit examples of how these values are manifested day-to-day.

Then have them divide into small groups and tell them: Now your assignment is to develop a “rap” together. Select one of the Six Pillars and write a rap song about this Pillar. Have them alternate, with each child offering a line until the rap song is completed. Or have them collectively compose the piece.

When they’re finished, have them perform the songs for each other and/or for younger children.

“Caring Rap”

A friend is what we want to be,
We’ll treat each other respectfully.
We can help each other grow,
Caring, sharing, it will show.
Differences develop us — not divide,
Making us stronger, side by side.

You be you and I’ll be me,
Together we’ll get along famously.
Happy or sad, we don’t care.
We’re your friend and we’ll be there.

Activity idea and “Caring Rap” contributed by El Toro Marine Elementary School (Irvine, CA).

In matters of principle, stand like a rock; in matters of taste, swim with the current.
— Thomas Jefferson
IDEA #146

Six Pillars Bingo

OVERVIEW: Students learn to better understand the Six Pillars by differentiating between them. They write definitions and examples on slips of paper and use them to play bingo.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- cardboard or cardstock suitable for making bingo cards (or photocopy handout on next page)
- pens and cut-out slips of paper on which kids list definitions and examples

PROCEDURE:

Describe and discuss the Six Pillars of Character to the children if they are not already familiar with them. Make sure everyone understands the meaning of each of these core ethical values.

Have the kids make bingo cards with these six core ethical values randomly distributed in squares on the card (see example on next page). None of the cards should be identical. Distribute several slips of paper to the students and have them place a “B,” “I,” “N,” “G” or “O” on one side of each slip of paper. On the other side, tell them to list an example or definition of one of the Six Pillars. Collect the papers and distribute the bingo cards to each youngster. Have one child be the “caller”; he or she draws a slip of paper, reads the definition or example and the players call out the Pillar that is represented and place markers in the squares with the correct Pillar and the correct letter.

Use the definitions and examples to foster a discussion about character and ethics. Make sure they know there’s more to this than fun and games!

Contributed by Nebraska 4-H Youth Development, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension.
Sample bingo card for game involving definitions and examples of the Six Pillars of Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRUST:</strong> WORTHINESS</td>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>CARING</td>
<td>FAIRNESS</td>
<td>CITIZENSHIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td><strong>FAIRNESS</strong></td>
<td><strong>TRUST:</strong> WORTHINESS</td>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>CARING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRUST:</strong> WORTHINESS</td>
<td>CARING</td>
<td><strong>FAIRNESS</strong></td>
<td>CITIZENSHIP</td>
<td><strong>TRUST:</strong> WORTHINESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAIRNESS</strong></td>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td><strong>CITIZENSHIP</strong></td>
<td><strong>TRUST:</strong> WORTHINESS</td>
<td><strong>RESPECT</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IDEA #147

Acronyms of Attributes

OVERVIEW: To reinforce the attributes of a person with good character, students create acronyms made up of words associated with the Six Pillars.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils; markers or crayons
- copies of worksheets (one for each small group)

PROCEDURE:

Parents wonder why the streams are bitter, when they themselves have poisoned the fountain. — John Locke 17th-century English philosopher

Have the students help you create a couple of other acronyms from words related to the Six Pillars (don’t use the same words as those that appear on the worksheet).

Then, divide the students into groups. Distribute an acronym worksheet to each group. Have them work together to create sayings for the acronyms and write them in the spaces provided. Tell them to see how many of the Six Pillars they can incorporate into each acronym.

Once you’ve reviewed their acronyms, instruct them to select one and make a poster of it to hang in the hallway.

Afterward, invite students to share their acronyms with the rest of the class.

Inspired by a greeting card created and distributed by Keep Coming Back (Del Mar, CA).
IDEA #147 Worksheet: Acronyms of Attributes

S.H.A.R.E.

K.I.N.D.

J.U.S.T.

L.O.Y.A.L.
IDEA #148

Steps to Non-Violent Behavior

OVERVIEW: Students discuss nonviolent behavior and learn to solve conflicts without resorting to violence.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of worksheets (one for each student)

PROCEDURE:

Discuss why choosing not to fight can be difficult for some students. Then ask why it is important to avoid fighting. List answers. Invite the students to suggest ways people can avoid being violent. Again, list answers.

Next, distribute the worksheet and review the seven steps to help students handle violent behavior. You might want the students to write down the steps as you go over them to help them retain the information.

Have the students complete the worksheet. Once everyone has completed it, divide them into groups. Have them share their answers with each other and write down the answers they felt were best based on consensus. Inform them that they will have to share their group answers with the class.

Afterward discuss how these steps may have helped them in past situations and how they will use them in the future.

Adapted from a lesson in Developing Character When It Counts: A Program for Teaching Character in the Classroom (Grades 6-8), by Anne L. Steele (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999). This booklet is available from the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office, (800) 711-2670.
IDEA #148 Worksheet: Non-Violent Behavior

1. Don’t lose your temper.

2. Learn to recognize “triggers” for fights.
   List words or phrases that can start fights:

3. Keep calm, and say to yourself: “The person is upset about something, and he or she is trying to use fighting to solve the problem.”
   List things you could do to avoid fueling this person’s anger:

4. Remember that part of this person is a decent person.

5. Try to talk calmly to the “decent side” of the other person.
   List things you could say to this person:

6. Recognize that sometimes you have to walk away.

7. Decide if the fight is really over.
   List other people who could help settle this without violence if the fight isn’t over:

Reprinted from Developing Character When It Counts: A Program for Teaching Character in the Classroom (Grades 6-8) (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999).
IDEA #149

The Road to Character

OVERVIEW: Young people discuss the Six Pillars, then try to display them on the school grounds. Successful students earn certificates.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- colored markers
- one large sheet of white paper, plus sneaker-shaped paper cutouts
- numerous printed certificates

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the Six Pillars with the children. Ask them to describe each one and give examples of them. Make sure all the students understand.

Then have the children draw a road on a large sheet of paper, with a starting line and a finish at the “Coliseum of Character.” Have them divide the road into three segments and color one red, another blue and third green. Tell them this is the Road to Character, and they are going to see how far they can travel on it in the next nine weeks.

After three weeks, choose those students who have shown good character. Write their names on a sneaker-shaped piece of paper and place it on the first segment of the road. Do the same for each of the next two three-week periods. Give students chosen once a bronze certificate, those twice a silver, and those three times a gold. After nine weeks, take a photo of the gold students and submit it to the local newspaper.

An aim in life is the only fortune worth finding.
— Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Adapted from an idea by Kris Kennedy and the P.E. Department, Ballenger Creek Middle School, Frederick, Maryland.
THE SIX PILLARS
OF CHARACTER

TRUSTWORTHINESS
■ Be honest.
■ Don’t deceive, cheat or steal.
■ Be reliable — do what you say you’ll do.
■ Have the courage to do the right thing.
■ Build a good reputation.
■ Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country.

RESPECT
■ Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule.
■ Be tolerant of differences.
■ Use good manners, not bad language.
■ Be considerate of the feelings of others.
■ Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone.
■ Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

RESPONSIBILITY
■ Do what you are supposed to do.
■ Persevere: keep on trying!
■ Always do your best.
■ Use self-control.
■ Be self-disciplined.
■ Think before you act — consider the consequences.
■ Be accountable for your choices.

FAIRNESS
■ Play by the rules.
■ Take turns and share.
■ Be open-minded; listen to others.
■ Don’t take advantage of others.
■ Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING
■ Be kind.
■ Be compassionate; show you care.
■ Express gratitude.
■ Forgive others.
■ Help people in need.

CITIZENSHIP
■ Do your share to make your school and community better.
■ Cooperate.
■ Stay informed; vote.
■ Be a good neighbor.
■ Obey laws and rules.
■ Respect authority.
■ Protect the environment

GOOD IDEAS

to Help Ages 11-13
Develop Good Character
IDEA #150

Loyalty Story

OVERVIEW: Students hear a story about trustworthiness and loyalty. They discuss these concepts with questions at the end of the story.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students that you’re going to read them a short story and then ask them questions about it. Advise them that loyalty and honesty sometimes conflict. Tell them to think about this as they listen to the story. Read “A Public Scene with Eugene” and tell them that this story shows how doing the right thing isn’t always easy. Then ask them the following discussion questions:

1. What would be the most trustworthy thing for Eugene’s boss to do at this stage?

2. It’s been said there are two types of loyalty: “dog loyalty” and “cat loyalty.” The first kind is about being loyal only to your master; the second means being loyal to the house. How does this relate to the story? Is one kind of loyalty more trustworthy than the other?

3. What could the townspeople do to uncover the truth and reach a fair solution?

4. After hearing Eugene’s explanation, do you think the townspeople admired Eugene for doing the right thing?

5. Should employees be loyal to their companies? How far should this go?

6. What would you say to Eugene?

7. What would be the most trustworthy thing for the president of Sawmill to do?

8. What would be the fairest outcome overall?

Idea #150 Story: A Public Scene With Eugene

The local townspeople could hardly believe the rumor that Eugene was going to testify against his boss, Mr. McGee, the owner of a large nearby tobacco plantation. The other farmers in town liked Mr. McGee, and since Eugene helped manage the operation, they were perplexed at how the young man could betray his boss.

Eugene, who found himself surrounded on the steps of the county courthouse, tried to explain his position to the small, angry crowd of townspeople.

"Friends, I'm not a lawyer, but I do know this: If a man is guilty, his lawyer is likely to defend him as though he were innocent. And the prosecuting attorney, on the other hand, usually seeks to convince the jury that the defendant is guilty no matter what. So justice often depends on witnesses who will come forward like good citizens and tell the truth."

"We know that," said a man in faded overalls, "but what's that got to do with testifying against McGee? He's a good man and has helped this town in many ways. You should be defending him. You wouldn't have a paycheck if it weren't for him."

"You're right in some respects," Eugene responded. "Mr. McGee is a good man in many ways. He pays fair wages to his workers. For years he has taken good care of his migrant tenants who return each year to work for him. But as you probably know, several of the field hands got sick and one died. The hospital report indicated that all of them had been poisoned. The police said one of the wells from which the workers drank was polluted with toxic chemicals.

"Mr. McGee hired an engineer to test the well. The engineer confirmed that it was polluted and ensured us it was the result of toxic runoff from Sawmill, a textile company three miles upstream from the farm.

A woman in the crowd shouted, "Sure, they got their reports. You don't have to tighten the rope around McGee's neck. Plus, it ain't Sawmill that's on trial — it's just poor ol' McGee."

Eugene continued. "When Mr. McGee and I approached Sawmill about this several months ago, they insisted they had not violated any environmental regulations and that the contamination must have come from somewhere else. But when I suggested going to the Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. McGee told me he would handle it."

Eugene shifted his weight on the steps. Above him, framed between two white Doric columns, was an engraving which read, "Hall of Justice." He paused for a moment, then said, "I'm going to tell the truth. That's the only way we can find justice."

"I suppose you mean well," said the man, "but you're just plain stupid. A man's duty is to his company. If that's who allows you to put food on your family's table, you lie to help them. You don't join the prosecution."

"The truth is that we all knew Well #4 was contaminated," Eugene explained. "But the real reason I feel I have to testify against my boss is that I discovered he has taken a lot of money from Sawmill in exchange for promising not to report them to the E.P.A."

The crowd gasped.

"Mr. McGee told the workers not to drink from that well. Still, that's not enough. If he were a trustworthy man with real integrity, he would not have taken Sawmill's
Idea #150 Story: A Public Scene With Eugene (cont’d)

bribe, and he would have had something done about the contamination. I feel partly responsible for not contacting the proper authorities on my own. Hopefully this case will help prevent future tragedies and provide a record for us to hold Sawmill accountable. They certainly bear responsibility for this tragedy too.”

The group was left speechless as Eugene made his way up the courthouse steps.
IDEA #151

Cheating Hurts (part 1)

OVERVIEW: Students discuss why cheating is wrong and examine the harm it does. Their ideas are posted on the classroom walls to reinforce the lesson.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- large sheets of “butcher paper” (one for each group of 3-4 students)
- drawing paper
- colored marking pens or paints

PROCEDURE:

Ask students for some definitions of “cheating” (“getting something dishonestly,” “not earning a reward but still getting it by being sneaky,” etc.) Discuss these definitions, trying to arrive at one which is applicable to a variety of different situations.

Then ask them to think of some examples of cheating in school. List their suggestions on a chalkboard, adding ideas of your own. The list should include:

- “copying answers from someone else’s paper instead of doing your own work”
- “erasing someone’s name from a paper and putting your own name on it”
- “taking the teacher’s answer book and getting answers to an assignment”
- “getting someone else to do your work for you”

Have the students form groups of three or four. Give each group a sheet of butcher paper and a colored marker. Tell them to select someone to record the group’s ideas in large lettering on the butcher paper.

Say: The object is to list as many reasons as possible explaining why cheating is wrong. Remember to look beyond superficial self-interest — a response like “I might get in trouble” is acceptable, but there’s more to it than that. When time is up, one member from each group will report to the whole class.

While the students are generating their lists, make your own. You might
include the following points:

• You lose the teacher’s trust that you will do your own work.
• Your friends learn that you can’t be trusted — if you can’t be trusted in school, why should they trust you to keep a secret or tell the truth?
• You lose your self-respect and pride — do you really want to think of yourself as a cheater?
• When you cheat you are lying to other people about how much you know — do you really want to be a liar?
• If you can justify cheating, you’ll probably end up lying more about other things.
• “Once you tell one lie, you need to create a whole bodyguard of lies to protect it.”
  — Winston Churchill
• Cheating is like robbing from students who are honest.
• If you get into the habit of cheating when you’re young, you’ll find it easier to cheat when you’re older.
• Cheating is taking something that you haven’t earned — is this any different than stealing?

For additional discussion questions, see the end of “Cheating Hurts, Part 2.” When the discussion is finished, post all the lists around the room. To reinforce the lesson, make note of items on the lists whenever a related topic comes up.

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #152

Cheating Hurts (part 2)

OVERVIEW: Students offer their perceptions on why cheating is wrong. Their ideas are reinforced by expressing them with artwork.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- drawing paper (one sheet for each youngster)
- colored marking pens or paints

(This activity serves as an ideal follow-up to “Cheating Hurts, Part 1”)

PROCEDURE:

Announce that you want them to express their ideas about cheating in poster form. Distribute the art materials. If you have done the “Cheating Hurts, Part 1” activity, say: Choose one of the reasons why cheating is wrong from our posted lists and express it concisely. Then draw a picture illustrating your point. Otherwise, have a brief discussion about cheating, and go straight to thinking up “catch-phrases” such as the following:

- Choose to cheat? Lose self-respect!
- Cheating makes you a liar.
- Cheating is like robbing from honest students.
- If you cheat in class, why should we trust you out of class?
- Young cheaters become old cheaters.
- Character is how you behave when no one is looking.
- What’s right is right, even if no one is doing it. What’s wrong is wrong, even if everyone is doing it.

When the posters are finished, invite the students to share them with the class. Then display the artwork in the school hallway, auditorium or library under the heading “Cheating is Wrong Because . . . .”

Unless these issues already have been covered, conclude the activity with the following discussion questions:

1. How would you feel if someone cheated on a test and, even though you studied all night, they got a better score than you?
2. How would you feel if someone took your work and put his/her name on it?

3. How do other forms of cheating hurt the community? the country? the world?

4. How does cheating hurt the cheater?

5. “You get out of it what you put into it.” How does this statement relate to cheating?

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #153

Why Is Honesty the Best Policy?

OVERVIEW: Students discuss why it is important to be consistently honest and how even “white lies” are not so easily justified.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Begin by asking: What does honesty mean? Solicit examples and allow for a few responses, then say: Basically, honesty means telling the truth — not lying with either words or actions. Why is it important to be honest? Allow for responses. Praise them for their good answers, then say: There are lots of reasons:

- It is important to be honest because you want people to always believe you and trust you. They may not if they find out you have been dishonest. (Mention and discuss this aphorism: “Trust, like the soul, never returns once it is lost.”)

- Lies can hurt people. (Mention and discuss this quote by ethicist Michael Josephson: “Lies look a lot worse in the eyes of the person lied to than in the eyes of the liar.”)

- Also, it is much easier to stick to the truth instead of trying to come up with lies to explain previous lies. (Mention and discuss this quote by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: “Once you tell one lie, you need to create a whole bodyguard of lies to protect it.” Or share this one by Michael Josephson: “Every lie you tell litters your life with land mines that could explode at any time.”)

Ask: What about “white lies” — can anyone tell me what they are? Can anyone give me an example of a “white lie” which seems okay to tell? Solicit comments, then share this “white lie” test with them: “When you lie to someone for their own good, will they thank you for caring or feel betrayed if they found out you lied?” Think about it from your own perspective: Would you want people to tell you the truth, or would you want them to tell you a lie if they thought it was for your own good? After discussion, conclude by saying: Remember the “true blue” motto: honesty is always the best policy.

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).
IDEA #154

Are You Worthy of Trust?

OVERVIEW: Students learn that trustworthiness means being honest even when it costs more than we would like to pay. They respond to a list of hypothetical scenarios, identifying the course of action that would be most trustworthy, then announcing what they actually would do.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell them you’re going to read some statements aloud. Emphasize the importance of making honesty a ground rule for life — even in matters that seem trivial. Tell them to keep this in mind as they hear each statement: Trustworthiness is something that we all have to earn. We show others we are worthy of trust especially in these two cases:

• When we’re honest even when it costs us more than we would like to pay,
  and
• When we’re honest even when it would be easy to lie or hide the truth.

Say: This is an integrity test. If you do what you think is right — especially if it isn’t easy to do — then you show you have integrity. When I read these statements, first tell me what you think is the right thing to do. Ask yourself, What would be the best way to show I am worthy of trust. Then tell me honestly what you would do.

1. Your teacher has miscalculated your test score, giving you a higher grade than you deserve.

2. You are grading your own paper in class. There are opportunities to change minor, careless mistakes that, in your estimation, don’t have anything to do with what the test is designed to measure.

3. Your teacher has praised you for homework well done. But your older sister helped you with most of it.

4. You see students having a food fight in the cafeteria. No one is hurt, but the custodian will have to clean up a huge mess. A teacher takes you aside and asks if you know who was involved.

The power of man’s virtue should not be measured by his special efforts, but by his ordinary doings.

— Blaise Pascal
5. You’ve said before that you think picking on other students is wrong. You’re with some friends who are joking and laughing about a handicapped student at your school.

6. You don’t like your assigned seat in the classroom. You could make up an excuse in order to move to another seat next to your friend.

7. You stayed home during the summer while most of the other kids went on interesting vacations. Your teacher asks you all to write an essay about what you did over the summer. You would like yours to sound as exciting as the others.

8. The teacher is in the hall and you need a pencil. There are pencils in the teacher’s desk drawer.

9. You have said you want to organize a school newspaper which will cover issues that are important to students at your school. You approach a friend about this. He says only a nerd would want to be involved with that.

10. You are very active in sports, your school play, and setting up a school dance. You want to cheat on a test because everyone else had more time to study than you.

11. Your friend is laughing as he tells you that he got an “A” on his research paper even though most of it was copied from other sources.

12. You hate the novel you’re supposed to be reading for an English class. At the bookstore you see a simplified outline of the novel.

IDEA #155

What’s the News?
Articles of Deception

OVERVIEW: Students analyze a current event involving some form of deception, and contemplate the far-reaching and long-term effects of dishonest behavior.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of current news articles about an event in which some form of deception was involved (one article for each group of five or so students)
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Divide the students into groups and distribute a news article to each group. Instruct students to read the headline and first paragraph of their group’s article. Then have them list questions and thoughts that come to mind based on the information just read. Share questions. List some of the better questions on the board.

Instruct them to discuss the questions listed on the board. Also, have them answer and discuss the following questions: What motivated the accused to be dishonest? How did the accused carry out their dishonest actions? What resulted? Who was affected? How?

Regroup as a class. Share and synthesize the answers, listing them on the board. Ask the students to explain what readers of this article can learn about honesty and why.

Then assign each group to monitor this story over the next several days to document and explain: Who in the long run will be affected by the accused’s behavior and what kind of impact will it have on society? Have the students cut out or photocopy any articles that they read to answer these questions. Also, inform them that they will be presenting their answers to the rest of the class.

(You also could instruct the students to research a historical event involving dishonest behavior, having them explain the incident, answer questions and present his or her research to the class.)


Courage is being scared to death — and saddling up anyway.
— John Wayne
20th-century American actor
IDEA #156

Dishonesty: Clues and Consequences

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the kinds of dishonest behavior that their peers might display outside of school and then create hypothetical “whodunit” crime scenes of dishonesty. After the mysteries are solved, the students discuss the consequences of the crimes for all stakeholders (persons who were affected).

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to list types of crimes that occur in their community. Share answers. Then ask students to list types of crimes that young people often commit. Again, share answers.

Then suggest that another, less newsworthy type of infraction that occurs regularly: dishonesty. Ask the students to share examples of dishonest behavior. Have them explain what makes one act of dishonesty worse than another. Discuss the effects and consequences of the lies on the liar and on the ones being deceived.

Divide the students into groups of three. Instruct them to write an imaginative “whodunit” tale involving dishonesty. When they have finished, the rest of the class will have to figure out which character was dishonest. Instruct them to leave clues throughout their story that can help the other students identify the dishonest person. Remind them of the examples of dishonest actions you discussed earlier; these might be useful in helping them create scenarios.

On a separate sheet of paper, have them list who the liar is, how he or she was dishonest and why he or she acted that way. Also, have them list ways the dishonest behavior could have been avoided. Tell them that everyone in the group must contribute to the story.

Collect all the stories and redistribute them to different groups. Have each group do the following:

- Solve the caper and identify the dishonest culprit.
- Explain how the group arrived at its conclusions.
- List how events might have unfolded if the liar had been honest.
• Offer ways that characters in the story could have helped the liar be honest.

After collecting and reviewing the stories and responses, have each group share their “crime” and its solution.

(Optional) Have a law-enforcement official speak to the class about the types of consequences for certain dishonest actions. Have the speaker discuss methods that are used to help keep the individuals from repeating these offenses.

Inspired by the lesson plan “Fingerprint Detective” posted on the AskERIC Lesson Plans website (www.ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Lessons/Interdisciplinary/INT0021.html).

Silently and imperceptibly, we grow strong or weak, and at last some crisis shows us what we have become.

— Bishop Westcott
IDEA #157

Myths Worthy of Trust

OVERVIEW: After reading and discussing the myth of Phaethon, students create their own myth to teach a lesson about character.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens
- crayons or markers (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Define a myth. Discuss the purpose myths serve. Explain that one of the reasons cultures create myths is to provide a code by which people can live. Suggest that myths serve to impart lessons about right and wrong.

Ask the students to share their knowledge of myths. Have them name gods and goddesses, describe stories, etc.

Share the myth of Phaethon with them, reading all or parts of the myth aloud.

In this story, the sun god Helios has a son named Phaethon who wants to drive his father’s fiery chariot across the sky. Helios had promised his son anything he wanted, and the father realizes that making this offer was a mistake: flying the fiery chariot is dangerous and Helios fears for his son’s safety.

Still, he does not want to renege on the promise he made to his son. He warns Phaethon of the dangers. Phaethon listens to his father, and Helios trusts that his son will be cautious and fly safely.

As Phaethon flies the chariot into the sky, he encourages the horses to go dangerously fast until they begin to careen out of control. He failed to heed his father’s warning. The chariot races toward the stars and then dives toward the earth and sets it afire. To save the world, Zeus strikes Phaethon down with a thunderbolt and kills him and the horses.

After reading the myth, discuss what lessons this teaches about trustworthiness: If his son had lived, would Helios been likely to trust Phaethon in the future? Who were the “stakeholders” in Phaethon’s choice to fly recklessly through the sky (i.e., who suffered the consequences of his behavior)? The stakeholders include: Helios, who lost a son; the horses, who were killed in the accident; Zeus, who was forced to strike Phaethon down; and those who were injured or lost property as a result of...
the fire on the earth. Ask the students to suggest ways the fatal outcome could have been prevented.

Have the students create a myth of their own to teach a lesson about trustworthiness. As part of this assignment, you might have them research myths from different cultures that teach lessons about trustworthiness. Also, you might have them draw illustrations to accompany their stories, and then compile all of their work into a book.

No one ever became extremely wicked suddenly.

— Juvenal
Roman writer
IDEA #158

Respect for Non-Native Students

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the birthplaces of those who were born outside of the country. They are encouraged to develop greater respect for people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and those born in other countries will be shown that their backgrounds deserve respect and appreciation.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- large world map
- dark felt-tip marker
- yarn
- blank index cards

This activity will be enhanced if the instructor is prepared to share a few pieces of interesting information about the non-native students’ homelands with the class. Prior to the activity, determine which countries are represented and spend 15-30 minutes jotting down notes from a set of encyclopedias or a world atlas.

PROCEDURE:
1. Post a large world map on the wall and identify the birthplaces of non-native students. If almost all the students are native-born, ask for volunteers who know their ancestors’ origin.
2. Write each student’s name and country of (ancestral) origin on an index card.
3. Post the index card above the map.
4. Place a piece of yarn between the index card and the location on the world map.
5. Briefly discuss some notable points (history, cultural characteristics, famous figures, etc.) about each country, soliciting comments from the students whose (ancestral) homelands are under discussion.

Adapted from the Sweet Home Central School District’s “Values Education Handbook” (Amherst, NY). Used with permission.
IDEA #159

Objects of Diversity

OVERVIEW: Based on a Native American tradition, students share objects from various cultures in a circle discussion.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- one object/photo from a specific culture (for each group)
- resource materials about a particular culture (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Ask students what defines a social group or a “culture.” Mention customary beliefs and shared attitudes, values, goals, rituals and traditions. Then ask them to list various cultures from around the world. Field answers, and ask: What makes each different and unique? Solicit answers. Next, ask: Do some individuals show a lack of respect for these cultural differences? How? Why? How can we properly show respect for cultural differences? Why is this important? List answers on the board. Discuss ways to encourage respect for cultural diversity.

Present several objects (or photos of objects) from a particular culture (e.g., a Native American arrowhead, Jewish menorah, Greek or Turkish “worry beads”). Explain the significance of these objects to the particular culture being discussed.

Divide the class into groups. Ask them to sit in a circle. Distribute an object to each group. Say: Each of you is to hold the object. While you are doing this, speak your mind about what the object means to you. What does it make you think of? How does it make you feel? The other participants in the group will model respect by listening carefully. No one is allowed to criticize, bicker, laugh or make other comments while the designated person speaks.

Once everyone has had a chance to speak, discuss what the individuals learned from others in the group. Compare different points of view. Have the students suggest ways to use their new knowledge to foster respect.

Adapted from an idea submitted by Tommy E. Laughlin, a counselor at Crystal Boarding School in Navajo, New Mexico.

An overdose of praise is like 10 lumps of sugar in coffee; only a very few people can swallow it.

— Emily Post
20th-century American etiquette advisor
IDEA #160

Being a Respectful House Guest

OVERVIEW: By listing examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior when visiting a friend’s house, students learn how circumstances can influence what behavior is respectful in a given situation.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Discuss respectful behavior and how social circumstances can influence whether or not a given behavior is appropriate or inappropriate. Ask the students to suggest examples of this and discuss them with the class.

Then distribute the “Being a Respectful House Guest” worksheet. After the students have completed the worksheet (either as a homework assignment or as an in-class activity), call on them separately and have them share their answers with the rest of the class. Encourage them to comment (respectfully!) on each other’s answers.

You are not what you own.

— Fugazi

Contributed by Ruth Eichler, Naples Central High School teacher (Naples, NY).
Idea #160 Worksheet: Being a Respectful House Guest

Directions: Make up four rules for showing respect when visiting another person’s home. After each rule, list one example of how the rule might be broken and one example of how the rule might be followed.

1. Rule:
   How it might be followed: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   How it might be broken: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

2. Rule:
   How it might be followed: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   How it might be broken: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

3. Rule:
   How it might be followed: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   How it might be broken: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

4. Rule:
   How it might be followed: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   How it might be broken: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
IDEA #161

Respect Journals

OVERVIEW: Children reflect on the issue of respect in journal writing exercises and subsequent discussions.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one small notebook for each youngster
- one pen or pencil for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Either as a take-home or in-class assignment, have the students write short entries in a “respect journal.” First, discuss what it means to be respectful. Write down the following points on the chalkboard and tell them to list these on the first page of their journals as a reminder of what respect means:

- upholding the Golden Rule (treating others as you would like to be treated)
- resolving conflicts nonviolently
- showing courtesy and consideration to everyone

This activity should be done with regularity (every day, every other day, once a week) and followed by a discussion about what they have written. Have them make journal entries about respect beginning with the following sentence stems:

1. When talking with other people, I can show respect by . . .
2. I can be a better listener by . . .
3. When people make fun of me, I feel . . .
4. People show their respect for me when . . .
5. Insulting others is . . .
6. My parents know I respect them when . . .
7. My parents respect me by . . .

Adapted from “Developing Character-Building Values,” by John Gust (Good Apple, Carthage, IL), 1995. Used with permission.

In times of stress, be bold and valiant.

— Horace
Roman poet
IDEA #162

Bully Busting

OVERVIEW: Tolerance, respect and proactive behavior are modeled when students work to create a plan of action to eliminate the conflict between school bullies and their victims.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

A good resource for helping young people learn about and deal with bullying is How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies, by Kate Cohen-Posey (Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, 1995).

- paper; pencils or pens
- Bullies Are Pains in the Brains, by Trevor Romain (Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publications, 1997) or another book or article about bullying

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to offer examples of common conflicts that arise in school (without using specific names). Ask and list on the board how these issues are best resolved. Have the students identify how these issues involve a lack of respect. List their answers on the board.

Introduce Bullies Are Pains in the Brains. Say: One particular issue I would like to spend more time discussing is bullying. Ask the students to help you define bullying. Then have them offer reasons why this behavior takes place between students. Ask: What makes bullies pick on others? List their answers. Be sure to mention these points:

- Bullies are often the victims of other bullies.
- Bullies pick on others because they feel strong and respected when they are putting others down. This may be their way of trying to regain the respect they lost when they were victims of another bully.
- People who tease others may do this because they feel like others ignore them; making others angry is their way of getting attention.
- Sometimes people act mean because they are angry, hurt or afraid.
- It may be hard to like someone who bullies and teases, but showing them respect and kindness may help them learn how people should be treated.

Next, read Bullies Are Pains in the Brains (or similar book on bullying). Instruct them to note suggestions the book makes for handling the issue. Afterward, go through each item and discuss ways to effectively combat bullying. Also discuss and promote solutions that offer positive outcomes for both parties.

— T.S. Eliot
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning American poet

Half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important.... They are absorbed in the endless struggle to think well of themselves.

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Divide the students into groups. Instruct them to create a plan to discourage and resolve bullying issues in the school community. Explain that the solution must be positive for the bully and his or her victim. Have them explain in detail who would be involved in the solution, all the steps needed to actually implement it at the school, ways to enforce it, and how everyone involved would be affected.

Once everyone has completed the assignment, have each group present their bully-busting solutions. Take a class vote as to which seems most effective. Have the class work together to redefine the plan and prepare a detailed step-by-step plan for implementation. You may want to actually have the students work with faculty and administration to initiate the solution.

Inspired by How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies, by Kate Cohen-Posey (Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, 1995) and by ideas posted on www.familyeducation.com.

We are

the people our parents warned

us about.

— Jimmy Buffett

20th-century American songwriter
IDEA #163

Respect Discussion Points and Survey

OVERVIEW: Students learn to examine aspects of respect as they discuss real life issues.

PREPARATION: none

PROCEDURE:

Review with students the do’s and don’ts of respect at the front of this section. Ask students some or all of the following questions:

- Are put-downs, name-calling, trash-talking, insults, or other verbal or non-verbal conduct ever appropriate in sports? When?
- Is it ever appropriate to cheer when an opposing team makes a mistake?
- How should we respond after a victory? After a loss?
- What is the difference between respecting and liking someone?
- How do you feel when someone judges you without knowing you or giving you a chance? How do you feel when someone calls you a name?
- How do you feel if you treat someone with respect and that person responds with rudeness? If someone insults you, should you insult that person in return?
- Do you think that people in our society are respectful enough? Why?
- Do you consider yourself to be a respectful person? Why, or why not? In what ways do you show respect to others?
- What are the benefits of people treating each other with respect?

Direct students to conduct a survey in your school or community, asking questions such as: Do you think people are respectful enough? What are some disrespectful acts that annoy you? What are some respectful acts that you appreciate? Compile the results into a report.

Adapted from the discussion points and group activities ideas in the discussion guide for “In Search of Character,” a video series produced by Elkind + Sweet Communications in association with CHARACTER COUNTS! Please see www.goodcharacter.com for more ideas from “In Search of Character.”

— Pablo Neruda
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning Chilean novelist

All paths lead to the same goal: to convey to others what we are.
IDEA #164

Cooperative Learning Duties

OVERVIEW: Students learn about being accountable and responsible for part of a cooperative project. This exercise can be incorporated into any type of cooperative learning activity (i.e., one requiring student participation in small groups).

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: Have slips of paper cut out from photocopies of the “Cooperative Learning Duties” activity sheet prior to the activity (one for each student).

PROCEDURE:

Cut out slips of paper with a specific duty listed on each one. You may photocopy the suggestions on the following “Cooperative Learning Duties” activity sheet or write up your own depending on the activity to which this is applied.

Say: Members of each group are going to be given certain duties to see that this activity goes smoothly. Each of you will randomly select a responsibility from this container and when the activity is finished, we will see if you carried out your duty or not. Put one of each slip in the container and let each group choose separately so that two members of the same group do not draw the same responsibility. Allow them to trade with other members of their group if they wish.

When you are finished with the activity, hold each member of the group accountable. Thank and praise those who conscientiously did their part. Note where improvements could have been made, but be careful not to let this turn into a finger-pointing session.

Compliment those who accept responsibility for their behavior — even if they didn’t perform their duties perfectly. Make sure everyone understands that blaming others for one’s own shortcomings is never the answer.

Contributed by Laurie Kutcher, Coolidge Elementary School teacher (San Gabriel, CA).
IDEA # 164 Activity Sheet: Cooperative Learning Duties

TIME KEEPER: You are responsible for seeing that the group stays on schedule and attends to all parts of the activity in the time allotted. Keep an eye on the clock!

RECORDER: If there’s group writing that needs to be done, you are responsible for getting it down on the page.

SPEAKER: If your group must give an oral presentation of its work to the rest of the class or to the instructor, you do the talking.

MODERATOR: You are responsible for making your group’s discussion orderly and fair. If everyone is talking at the same time, you decide whose turn it is to speak. It’s your job to see that everyone contributes and nobody dominates the discussion.

CLEAN-UP DIRECTOR: You are responsible for straightening up after the activity is finished. If it’s a big job requiring some help, you’re the boss of your group — but that doesn’t mean you get to just sit there and give orders!
IDEA #165

Responsibility Journals

OVERVIEW: Students become more aware of their behavior by documenting and discussing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of personal responsibility.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one small notebook for each youngster to use as a journal
- pen or pencil for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Have the kids keep a “responsibility journal” for two or three days. Tell them that the journal should have three sections:

1. “Being Dependable”
2. “Being Accountable”
3. “Doing My Best”

Discuss these concepts until you feel everyone understands and can differentiate between them. Tell the kids to pay close attention to their own behavior over the next few days and document challenges in these areas. To explain the exercise, suggest the following examples:

- “Avoided someone I didn’t want to see because I failed to do a favor I promised them.” Ask which category this would fall under (“Being Dependable”).
- “Made a mistake, but took responsibility for it and attempted to fix it.” Ask which category this would fall under (“Being Accountable”).
- “Didn’t pay attention and almost fell asleep in class.” Ask which category this would fall under (“Doing My Best”).

Stress that they will not be penalized for recording irresponsible actions. Say: The idea is to become more aware of your behavior, and to work on the areas that give you trouble.
When these few days are up, have the students bring in their journals and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. Ask how situations might have been handled differently — for better and for worse. Throughout the discussion, praise their good observations and challenge everyone to become more responsible.

Contributed by Janet Gunson, M.S. Ed. (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA).

All power is trust.

— Benjamin Disraeli
IDEA #166

Responsible Youth in the News

OVERVIEW: Students become more aware of their behavior by documenting and discussing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of personal responsibility.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- newspaper or magazine articles about young people demonstrating — or failing to demonstrate — responsibility (These should be short and not too difficult for the students to read.)
- one copy of “Youth Responsibility Story” worksheet for each small group

PROCEDURE:

Cut out and collect stories from news magazines and newspapers about teenagers epitomizing responsible or irresponsible behavior. When you have gathered enough clippings for groups of 3-4 students to each have one, bring the clippings to class. (Or assign this task as homework to the students.) Divide the students into small groups and distribute one article to each group.

Discuss the meaning of responsibility. Tell them: Each student will be responsible for reading one small section of an article, but all of you will be responsible for understanding and answering questions about your group’s story. Help the groups divide their articles into sections so each student has the opportunity to read an equal share aloud to the group. When the whole class is finished reading the articles, have the groups discuss and answer collectively the questions on the “Youth Responsibility Story” worksheet.

Contributed by Ruth Eichler, Naples Central High School teacher (Naples, NY).
Idea #166 Worksheet: “Youth Responsibility Story”

Directions: After reading your story, discuss and write down answers to the following questions:

1. What was the most important way the young person in your story was responsible or irresponsible?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

2. Did this person’s actions help or hurt other people? How?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

3. Do you think this person realized how his/her actions would affect others?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

4. What are the important lessons we can learn from this story?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
IDEA #167

Seeing More Than the Tip of the Iceberg

OVERVIEW: Students discuss various facts and circumstances surrounding the Titanic disaster to better understand the importance of foresight and the role it plays in being responsible.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- video and/or resource materials about the sinking of the Titanic (scenes from the James Cameron film “Titanic” may be useful, but the language and sexually explicit nature of some scenes may be inappropriate for younger viewers)
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Ask students to define “foresight.” Field and list answers. Emphasize that “foresight” requires thoughtful preparation for the future. Then discuss and list what is required to “thoughtfully prepare” (e.g., listening, researching, observing, considering causes and effects of actions). Think of an example relevant to students’ lives (e.g., doing schoolwork, protecting your health, planning social events) and ask students to list the consequences of having and not having foresight. Discuss why having foresight plays an important role in being responsible.

Say: One of the most famous examples of a lack of foresight is the sinking of an enormous ship called the “Titanic.” Briefly describe this historical event.

(If you will be showing excerpts from the video “Titanic”) Say: We are going to watch a few excerpts from the film “Titanic.” But first I am going to divide you into groups and give each group the name of a character from the film. As you watch the film, it is your responsibility to look for examples of how your character showed foresight or a lack of foresight. List your examples on a sheet of paper. When we’re finished watching the film, each group will share its observations. Play excerpts and monitor the groups’ efforts. (Pause the film to discuss scenes as necessary.)

Invite each group to share their examples. Then discuss the specific situations leading up to the sinking of the ship and how these could have been handled differently to avoid the disaster. Further research can be assigned on the topic.

Adapted from an idea submitted by Diane Young, a teacher at Gaithersburg Middle School in Gaithersburg, Maryland.
IDEA #168

Bill of Responsibilities

OVERVIEW: Reviewing the Bill of Rights, students name responsibilities that accompany these rights and then compose a “Bill of Responsibility.”

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Explain the Bill of Rights and its historical basis: The Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which were adopted as a single unit in 1791. These amendments guarantee individual rights and place limitations on the power of federal and state governments. Forerunners to the Bill of Rights include England’s Magna Carta (1215), the English Bill of Rights (1689) and Virginia’s Declaration of Rights (1776). The Bill of Rights has binding legal force; the Supreme Court may void congressional acts or state initiatives if they conflict with the Bill of Rights.

Read through the amendments (see next page). As you go over each right, have students discuss the following:

1. Who can enforce the right?
2. Toward whom is the right directed? How are they affected?
3. What responsibilities do the enforcers have to ensure the right? How?
4. What responsibilities do the citizens have to ensure the right? How?
5. What responsibilities can you take to ensure the right is not jeopardized?

After you have covered each amendment and shared and listed answers to the above questions, ask the students to clarify the difference between a right and a responsibility for that right. List observations.

Divide the students into 10 groups (or five groups, if you don’t have enough students). Assign each group an amendment (or assign two amendments to each of five groups). Have them list and discuss the key responsibilities individuals and good citizens can take to help ensure the right. Instruct them to write a “responsibility amendment” for a class “Bill of Responsibilities.”

Collect each group’s finished product and type up a final draft listing all of the “responsibility amendments.” Copy and distribute to the class. (Depending on the quality of the finished product you may want to distribute it school-wide, or invite other classes to participate in drafting a Bill of Responsibilities for the school.

IDEA #168 Handout: The U.S. Bill of Rights

Amendment I. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II. A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III. No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V. No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

Amendment VI. In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining Witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defence.

Amendment VII. In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII. Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment IX. The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.
IDEA #169

Monitoring Negativity

OVERVIEW: Made aware of the power of negative thoughts, students become more responsible for the effects that emotion has on their actions. (Note: If you want to incorporate a journal-writing activity into this assignment, be aware that sensitive information may be conveyed — and may require your responsible intervention.)

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Inform students that the class is going to figure out ways to avoid negative thinking in difficult situations. First discuss how thoughts and feelings influence actions.

Explain that thoughts and feelings are not done to us; each individual is responsible for his or her own outlook. Say: It's our responsibility to be aware of what we think and feel, because thoughts and feelings are powerful. Of course, we have to be careful, because our thoughts and feelings influence our words and behavior.

Part of being responsible is exercising self-control — not just over what we do, but over what we think and say. Unfortunately, many people don’t know that, or they often forget it when their emotions get the best of them.

Discuss how we are responsible for our attitudes and behavior, and for cleaning up our environments by getting rid of negativity, in thought and word. Say: It's not bad or wrong to be angry or have a negative thought about some situation or person, but the best way to deal with that is to confront the situation or person respectfully and directly. Don’t let these thoughts eat away at you and cause you to treat others unkindly.

Next, have the students highlight and discuss possible ways to constructively combat negative feelings in specific situations. Here are some quotes you might use to enrich and enliven the discussion:

“Anger is never without a reason, but seldom a good one.” — Benjamin Franklin

You can tell

the size of

the man by

the size of

the thing

that makes

him mad.

— Adlai Stevenson II
20th-century American politician
“Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way — this is not easy.” — Aristotle

“You can tell the size of a man by the size of the thing that makes him mad.”
— Adlai Stevenson

“I shall allow no man to belittle my soul by making me hate him.”
— Booker T. Washington

Direct the students to make more of an effort to notice persistently negative thoughts or feelings that they have, what prompts them, and how they react to them. Instruct them to seek out constructive ways to deal with anger and other negative feelings, such as keeping a daily journal to monitor their negative emotions: what affects them, when, why and how they can turn them into positive thoughts (see note in overview).

We tend to think that being unhappy leads people to complain, but it’s truer to say that complaining leads to people becoming unhappy.

— Dennis Prager
20th-century American radio host and author
IDEA #170

Diversity Movements

**OVERVIEW:** Students develop a better understanding of and respect for diversity by highlighting their own unique qualities. This activity is most appropriate in a group characterized by ethnic diversity.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- instrumental musical selections on tape or CD
- tape recorder or CD player

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask: *What are all the ways you can think of that people are the same?* List their ideas on the board. Some suggestions might pertain to basic human needs (air, water, food, sleep), our ability to communicate, physical characteristics, and the five senses.

Next, ask: *How are people different?* Possible answers include: gender, age, cultural background, race, language, talents, physical appearance (color of hair, eyes and skin, height, and weight) and disabilities. List these on the board, too. Tell them: *Some people treat others unfairly just because they are different. Sometimes they even say and do mean things to them just because of the way they were born. In order to live peacefully together and learn from each other, we must accept our differences — even celebrate them!*

Announce that the students are going to participate in a physical activity where each person will creatively express what makes him/her unique and different.

Divide the students into groups of three or four, ensuring a diversity in each group with respect to gender, culture, talents, personalities, size, etc. Ask each group to discuss their differences and think of creative movements that represent each person’s uniqueness. Announce: *Be sure to develop several unique movements for each member of your group. The movements should fit special qualities like those we’ve discussed. Practice a “dance” or “pantomime” in which each person performs his/her representative movements while the other members of the group hold positions that spotlight or support the featured person.*

While the groups are creating their movements, play instrumental music that

---

Sharing

money is what gives it value.

— Elvis Presley
20th-century American entertainer
can later be used to accompany the dances. Suggest that they practice to the rhythm of the music. Circulate and give support and suggestions as needed.

Invite each group to perform its completed dance before the entire class. Ask the audience to notice how each individual expressed his/her uniqueness and how group members demonstrated their support. After each performance, discuss these observations. Conclude the activity by asking discussion questions like the following:

1. Why are people treated rudely for differences like those you showed in your dances? Is this fair?
2. How did it feel to acknowledge and support each other’s differences and to have your own differences celebrated?
3. How can celebrating diversity, or people’s differences make the world a more enjoyable place in which to live?
4. What would the school be like if we were all the same? What would our community be like? Our nation?
5. Why do you think people are afraid of differences? Is this a fear of the unknown? How can we get rid of this fear?

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #171

Fairness in the Classroom

OVERVIEW: By discussing the rules of the class, children see how important rules are to ensuring fairness and equal opportunities. By suggesting new rules and offering ideas about those currently in place, the students learn that they have a responsibility to work for fairness in the classroom.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Say: *Let’s make a list of some of the rules of this class and the consequences of not following them.* After you have written several on the chalkboard (related to talking out of turn, chewing gum, turning in late assignments, etc.), ask them what their rules would be if they were in charge of making them. List these next to the actual rules.

Tell them you might consider revising some of the current rules if the students can demonstrate how their rules are fair. (Make sure you are willing to follow through if you make this offer! Let them know about any school-wide policies that are non-negotiables.)

Then go through their rules one by one asking, *Is this one fair? Why or why not? What would happen if we adopted this rule?* Compare these to the first list in terms of fairness. Add new rules or eliminate existing ones as you see fit. The children should decide, with the teacher’s help, what rules are necessary and what will happen if these rules are broken.

Stress the importance of taking responsibility for the rules they have come up with. Tell them: *What is most unfair is to agree on a rule and then break it!*

**IDEA #172**

**Fairness Journals**

**OVERVIEW:** Children reflect on the issue of fairness in journal writing exercises and subsequent discussions.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- one small notebook for each youngster
- one pen or pencil for each youngster

**PROCEDURE:**

Either as a take-home or in-class assignment, have the students write short entries in a “fairness journal.” First, discuss what it means to be fair. Write down the following points on the chalkboard and tell them to list these on the first page of their journals as a reminder of what fairness means:

- playing by the rules
- not changing the rules to suit your purposes
- giving everyone a chance
- not treating others differently because of the way they look

This activity should be done with regularity (every day, every other day, once a week) and followed by a discussion about what they have written. Have them make journal entries about fairness beginning with the following sentence stems:

1. The way older people are treated is . . .
2. The way young people are treated is . . .
3. I am treated fairly when . . .
4. When I am an adult I will make things more fair for others by . . .
5. To make things more fair at home this week I can . . .
6. One example of how people are not treated fairly is . . .
7. Everyone deserves . . .
8. It’s important to play by the rules because . . .
9. Every person is important because . . .
10. All children are important because . . .

*Adapted from “Developing Character-Building Values,” by John Gust (Good Apple, Carthage, IL), 1995.*
IDEA #173

Pen Pals

OVERVIEW: By corresponding with another group of students in another country, students learn that they share many things in common with people from other parts of the world. Through this exercise, they are less inclined toward xenophobia and learn that all people deserve to be judged fairly.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper, pens and envelopes for writing letters

PROCEDURE:

Have the kids become pen pals with a group of students in another country. (International English-language schools can often be located in the job-listings section of the Journal of Higher Education or on the Internet — see the section on Internet resources.) This group might be another school class of the same age, a YMCA (or equivalent) youth group, or a Little League (or equivalent) sports team.

Discuss how the other kids’ letters reveal their differences as well as similarities. Use this activity to show how certain characteristics are universal and how it is unfair to discriminate against people simply because they are from another part of the globe. Emphasize that all people should be treated fairly regardless of where they are from, where they live and what they look like.

IDEA #174

Through the Eyes of Another

OVERVIEW: The children read a story with a situation that involves an issue that various characters might perceive differently. They reflect on and discuss the importance of seeing an issue from all sides before making a judgment.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of a short story that teaches a moral lesson (the story should involve several characters who might have different perspectives, but it should be told from the perspective of one character)
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Present this scenario: A student is playing catcher in a softball game. Another student on the opposite team runs to home plate after his teammate hits the ball. As the runner slides into home plate, the catcher catches the ball and tags him. The runner says he is “safe.” The catcher says he is “out.” Fans sitting on one side agree with the runner. Those on the other side agree with the catcher. Who is correct?

Solicit answers. Then explain: Either of the players might be correct because they saw the throw from different points of view. Ask the students to help you define “point of view.” Then ask: How could each player act more fairly if he had considered that everyone has a different point of view? Field answers. Suggest: The players might have been more willing to accept the other’s opinion. Or they could have decided to have the hitter bat again.

Say: Everyone has his or her own view of things. Sometimes things are clearly right or wrong, but it is important to learn as much as possible about an issue and look at it from all angles before making a judgment. Tell them you are going to read a story that is told from one point of view, then say: Afterward, I am going to ask you to write the same story from the point of view of another character in story.

Read the story aloud and then discuss what was learned from the experience. Decide who was treated most fairly and why. Discuss what was right and what was wrong in the story.

Next, instruct each student to write the same story from another’s point of view. Tell them to explain what the character learned from the experience. Invite students to share their stories with the rest of the class.

— Albert Schweitzer
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning German mission doctor and theologian

Until he extends his circle of compassion to all living things, man will not find peace.

Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character © Josephson Institute
IDEA #175

Mediation Matters

OVERVIEW: Students learn and role-play a mediation procedure to learn about resolving conflicts fairly.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens
- copies of handouts (one for each student)

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to explain the purpose of medicine. List answers. Say: *Medicine can make people feel better, but it is not the only way to heal them. What are some other ways people can be healed?* Again, list answers.

Write the word *mediation* on the board. Have the students help you define the word. (To help them out, you might think of some sentences using this word.) Explain that mediation is a process by which one party helps other parties who are in conflict resolve their differences. Ask the students to cite examples.

Distribute the handouts. Explain that the handout is a step-by-step guide to mediating. Read it aloud together. Ask students what they notice about these steps. Suggest that the process requires good listening, fair opportunities to voice opinions, compromise, signed contracts, and follow-up to see if people are adhering to the bargain. Ask the students how this type of problem-solving might be more fair than other ways. List answers. Discuss how mediation can help prevent future conflicts.

Divide the students into groups of three. Have two students in each group portray characters from a popular book or movie who have a conflict needing mediation. (They can also role-play scenarios that arise in the school setting.) Have the third person act as the mediator. Instruct the groups to script their mediation process and perform it in front of the class. Invite the rest of the class to offer feedback about resolutions.

*Adapted from ideas in “Conflicts and the Story of Our Lives,” a teaching unit by Barbara Stanford (University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Teacher Education Department, 1996) posted on www.ualr.edu/~coedep/bs/AHCLIT.html.*

*If we are to reach real peace in this world, we shall have to begin with the children.*

— Mohandas Gandhi
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning Indian civil rights leader
IDEA #175 Handout: Mediation Matters

Use the following guidelines for mediating conflicts:

(The mediator and both parties must understand and agree to these three conditions if the mediation process is to be productive.)

1. The mediator will make sure both parties want to solve their problem.

2. The mediator will make sure both parties listen carefully and stand in the other’s shoes.

3. The mediator makes sure both parties are willing to explain what they want the other to do differently.

(The mediator needs to help the parties offer positive language and solutions throughout the rest of the steps.)

4. The mediator asks one person to explain what he or she wants the other person to do differently.

5. Once this person has finished speaking, the mediator asks the listener to summarize the speaker’s explanation.

6. The mediator then follows the same two steps for the other party.

7. The mediator then has each party come up with solutions to the problem. (Keep them practical and realistic).

8. Discuss what compromises each party must make, and try to reach an agreement. Once an agreement has been reached, write it out and have both parties sign it.

9. The mediator reminds the parties that there is often no quick fix to disputes, and changes in behavior take time.

These steps based in part on ideas in “Conflicts and the Story of Our Lives,” a teaching unit by Barbara Stanford (University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Teacher Education Department, 1996) posted on www.ualr.edu/~coedep/tts/AHCLIT.html.
IDEA #176

Fair Game: Playing by the Rules

OVERVIEW: After discussing the function that rules play in society, students create their own games with specific rules.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- various small objects from your classroom or activity area (e.g., erasers, chalk, pens, paper clips, staplers, etc.). Note: these should be different for each group.
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

On the board list several types of games the students might play. Have the them explain the object of each game. Ask: What helps you have fun while you are playing? After soliciting answers, say: One key element is a set of rules that all the players must follow. Discuss the rules for one of the games. Ask: How do these rules help? List their answers. Say: Rules allow everyone to start from the same place, so no one has an advantage. They also help promote a safe, orderly and respectful atmosphere enabling players to concentrate on having fun and winning. What happens when players don’t follow the rules? Have the students cite specific examples from the games you listed on the board. Discuss the conflict and disrespect that can result when players violate rules. On the board, list the effects of breaking rules (e.g., mistrust, resentment, fighting, winning unfairly, etc.).

Next, divide the students into groups. Distribute various objects to each group. Explain: Rules are not created quickly. They involve careful thought and planning to be sure that everyone is treated fairly and has the same opportunities.

Your task is to create a fair game using the objects in front of you. You must explain the object of the game and write down all its rules. Make sure to include penalties for the players who violate the rules. Have them title their game and prepare to teach the rest of the class how to play it.

After each group has shared its games with the class, have the students compare the function of their games’ rules with the function of school and community rules. Ask the students to explain how they know when a rule is positive or unfair. Discuss how unfair rules can be changed.

Adapted from “Playing by the Rules” in Character Education in America’s Schools, by Terry Akin, et al. (Torrance, CA: Innerchoice Publishing, 1995). Used with permission.
IDEA #177

Sponsor a Child

OVERVIEW: By sponsoring a child in a developing country, kids learn that caring is something we should extend beyond our own circle of friends — even to those living in another part of the world. The students learn that together they can make an important difference.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- world map or globe (optional)
- *National Geographic* or other magazines with articles on world cultures (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Find an appropriate organization and, as a group, sponsor a needy child (or children) in a developing country. Through this activity, show students how fortunate we are (even low-income families in developed countries are better off than most of the people in the developing world). Emphasize that caring should not apply just to those we know, or just to people who inhabit a certain part of the planet. This exercise can also help them learn about another culture.

Small contributions from each member of the group can go a long way when they are pooled. Don’t insist that each child contribute financially, but include everyone somehow. (Be creative about raising funds — donate the proceeds from a recycling project or some kind of sale. Solicit local businesses for support.) Set goals and have the students make and display a chart tracking your fundraising progress.

Often the sponsorship program permits and translates correspondence (even better, perhaps one of the children in your group speaks the language and can do the translating). If so, have the students write letters to find out about the sponsored child’s interests, needs and living conditions. Use a world map or globe along with magazines like *National Geographic* to make this caring activity more “real” and to heighten the children’s appreciation of the sponsored child’s culture. Usually the sponsorship organizations put the donations in practical terms (e.g., $10 buys twelve bags of rice, etc.). Share these examples with the students.

IDEA #178

Learning Compassion

OVERVIEW: Children discuss the meaning of compassion, why it is important, and how they can show it.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Ask: *Who can tell me what “compassion” means?* Discuss the meaning of the word, noting some essential elements: understanding what others are going through, not wanting others to hurt, and being a friend to those in need.

Say: *Without compassion, the world would be a hard and lonely place. With compassion, we are all connected and hard times are much easier because others understand and care.*

Ask: *How do we practice it?* Field responses and add any of the following which go unmentioned:

- Think about others’ needs — not just your own.
- Notice when someone looks sad or (an animal or person) seems to be in some kind of trouble.
- Go up to a person in need and let them know they are not alone (tell them you are there for them).
- Share your own experience if you have had a similar one.
- Understand and forgive them if they have hurt you accidentally.
- Listen closely to people in need when they talk to you and try to understand what they’re saying.
- Do what you can to help.

---


The way to _______________

be happy is to _______________

make others so.

— Robert Ingersoll
IDEA #179

Role-Playing Compassion

OVERVIEW: Through brief role-playing exercises, children show what compassion “looks like” in various situations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students that you want them to demonstrate compassion in a few make-believe situations. Call on individual students to role-play the scenarios below. When you feel it’s appropriate, you might participate by playing an opposing role or posing questions which get them thinking about the exercise. Ask: What would compassion look like if . . .

• Your dog was caught up in his leash?
• A friend was confused about what the teacher said?
• Someone was sad because her mother was sick and in the hospital?
• Your sister was crying because, after practicing every day for several weeks, she didn’t make the basketball team?
• A new student was feeling lonely and left out?
• Your mother seemed very tired after work?
• You saw a woman with some small children looking for food in a trash dumpster?

— Joseph Campbell

IDEA #180

Caring Artifacts From The 21st Century

OVERVIEW: Students view objects in their daily lives as instruments of a caring society. They discuss compassion and how they can display it.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to define artifact (something created by humans usually for a practical purpose; an object remaining from a particular period). Discuss what people can learn about cultures from artifacts. Next, ask students what kinds of objects are lying around their bedrooms (books, snacks, shoes, etc.). Ask them to define their uses. List answers.

Next, suggest that the listed objects are useful in a different way: as instruments of caring. Ask the students how this is possible (e.g., a comic book can be read to a younger sibling). Encourage them to be more specific than simply saying, “You can share it.”

Then say: Sometimes we are so used to seeing objects in one way that we forget they have other uses. Some of the most helpful ideas in society originated from individuals who took the time to see things in a different way. Cite examples.

Next introduce the task. Say: Pretend a thousand years have passed. You are an alien who has discovered five present-day “artifacts” from your room in a box labeled “Care Kit.” Write an essay explaining what the objects are and how they might have been used to show caring and compassion toward others. Remember, the alien will not know the meaning of caring or compassion until you explain these terms.

When they are done, invite the students to share their essays with the class.

Provision for others is the fundamental responsibility of human life.
— Woodrow Wilson
20th-century U.S. president
IDEA #181

Caring Situations

The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions, and not our circumstances.
— Martha Washington
18th-century U.S. First Lady

OVERVIEW: Students discuss the importance of caring for others and analyze specific situations at school that require caring.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- large sheets of newsprint paper (for each group)
- markers
- copies of handout (one for each small group)

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the importance of caring for others, noting that all people want to know that others care about them. You might say: We not only want to know others care, we want them to show they care.

Explain that caring consists of two aspects: being concerned about something and doing something about it. Explain that everyone sometimes needs support and assistance. Emphasize that people who help just because they want to do so because of their caring nature.

Divide the class into groups. Instruct them to designate a “chairperson,” “recorder” and “spokesperson.” Distribute the handout listing “caring situations” to each group. Inform them that the activity will challenge how they decide to handle specific situations at school that call for caring. Instruct them to avoid mentioning actual people who are involved in similar situations in their own lives. Assign three or four of the situations to each group. Give them 15 minutes to decide as a group how they should respond. Have them write down their caring responses with a marker on the newsprint paper so that they can show the rest of the class.

Have each group present its responses. Then post their newsprint paper in the front of the room. Ask the rest of the class to offer comments on the group’s caring solutions. Once every group has shared its responses, congratulate the students for acting in a caring manner by working well together. Invite the students to turn to one other person in the room and tell them what they will do in the next week to be more caring in school. Finally, ask students to share their commitment to more caring behavior with the whole class.

IDEA #181 Handout: Caring Situations

Describe what a caring person would do in the following situations. (Remember, an ethical person tries to make his or her behavior reflect all of the “Six Pillars of Character” — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.)

1. A new student has started school and doesn’t know anyone.

2. One of your teenage friends uses drugs or drinks alcohol.

3. One of your classmates didn’t make a school team and feels bad.

4. One of your fellow students has been upset for several days.

5. Your friend’s boyfriend or girlfriend is secretly dating someone else.

6. Someone vandalized the school, and you know who did it.

7. One of your classmates is always left out of social activities.

8. A friend’s uncle died recently.

9. It is the holiday season and parents of some fellow students have been out of work for a long time because a local factory closed down.

10. A fellow student has a serious disease.

11. You hear some students gossiping and putting down other people.

12. One of your teachers is upset and sometimes cries during class. You have heard that she and her husband are getting a divorce.

13. A classmate must pass the next math test to pass for the year.
IDEA #182

Harmful Words

OVERVIEW: Students discuss angry feelings underlying the hurtful statement “I hate you!” They discuss how these words can have harmful consequences and offer solutions for making more productive, caring statements.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens (optional)

PROCEDURE:

Present a scenario that models a conflict causing one of the angry participants to utter “I hate you!” Example: A mother refuses to let her daughter go to a party at her friend’s house. The daughter gets angry and yells this hurtful phrase. The words harm the relationship.

Ask the students to offer other classroom-appropriate examples of when people say “I hate you” without really thinking. List these examples on the board. Then ask them to think about what feelings these people might have been experiencing when they said this. Note these feelings next to the corresponding situations on the board.

Ask: How do you think the people on the receiving end of these words felt? Go through the list of examples and note the students’ answers. Next, ask the students to help you explain what the people who said the hurtful words really meant to say when they blurted out the uncaring remarks. Again, list their answers on the board. Suggest that anger is not a wrong feeling, but that impulsive outbursts (like “I hate you!”) have consequences. Ask them to share some possible consequences and suggest that there is no real benefit for the person who says this. Then say: If the people in these examples had chosen more accurate words to communicate the reasons they were angry, they might have helped the situation and been less hurtful. Present several ways that the daughter in your opening example could have done this (e.g., “I am upset that you won’t let me go to the party,” etc.).

Divide students into groups. Assign one of the situations on the board to each group. Instruct them to come up with at least five ways the person who said the hurtful words could have spoken more accurately, and caringly, about his/her feelings. Inform them that they will have to share how the situation could have been avoided if the parties had told each other about their feelings prior to the heated exchange. Reiterate the need to understand why we are angry and the importance of choosing positive, precise words to communicate those feelings.

— Elvis Presley
20th-century American entertainer

Inspired by “I Hate You!” an article by Elizabeth Pantley posted in the “Experts’ Advice” section of the ParentsTalk website (www.parentstalk.com). This article was excerpted from Perfect Parenting: The Dictionary of 1,000 Parenting Tips (NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, 1999).
IDEA #183

Addressing Community Problems

OVERVIEW: Students offer examples of problems faced by their community. They discuss how these problems are caused, how they affect members of the community, and how concerned citizens can work toward solving these problems.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Addressing Community Problems” worksheet for each small group

The number of groups will be determined by the number of community problems suggested by the students.

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to think of some major problems they might find in their own neighborhoods. List them on the board. The list might include such things as:

- Homelessness and hunger
- Drug abuse
- Gang violence, vandalism and graffiti
- Litter and other forms of pollution
- Theft
- Domestic violence and child abuse

Tell students: Each of these is such a big area of study. Let’s divide into small groups so that each group can focus on one of these topics. Divide the students into groups of equal number and assign one topic to each group.

Pass out one photocopy of the “Addressing Community Problems” worksheet to each group and tell them to discuss the questions as they relate to their given topic. Tell them to have one member of the group list their responses on the worksheet. When all the groups are finished, have them share their responses with the class.

Adapted from “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.

The Greek word for idiot, literally translated, means one who does not participate in politics. That sums up my conviction on the subject.

— Gladys Pyle
IDEA #183 Worksheet: Addressing Community Problems

All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.
— Edmund Burke

If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.
— Unknown

Topic: __________________________________________________________

Causes: What circumstances might lead someone to contribute to this problem?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Are there certain groups which contribute to the problem? If so, who are they and why do they do this?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Effects: What effect could this problem have on those who have contributed to it?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Who suffers the most as a result of this problem?

________________________________________________________________

Besides the primary victims, are there others who suffer indirectly? If so, who are they?

________________________________________________________________

Solutions: What will it take to solve the problem? What can concerned citizens do to contribute to the solution?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
IDEA #184

Political Cartoons About Community Problems

OVERVIEW: Students offer examples of problems faced by their community. They discuss how concerned citizens can work toward solving these problems. This is reinforced by drawing and posting political cartoons about these issues.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

• sample political cartoons cut out from a newspaper or magazine

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to think of some major problems they might find in their own neighborhoods. List them on the board. The list might include such things as:

• Homelessness and hunger
• Drug abuse
• Gang violence
• Vandalism and graffiti
• Litter and other forms of pollution
• Domestic violence and child abuse

Tell them that their assignment is to draw a political cartoon related to one of the community problems that has been mentioned. Tell them to focus on how individuals can make a difference in their communities. Remind them that political cartoons usually have a small caption to go along with the artwork. Say: These issues are serious, so you don’t have to make your cartoons funny. But make them clever! Pass around a few sample cartoons that are not too sophisticated.

Have them draw their cartoons as an in-class activity or as a homework assignment. When they’re finished, discuss the drawings. Finally, post them on a wall under the banner, “Don’t Just Complain About Our Problems — Do Something to Fix Them!”

Contributed by Woodbridge High School students (Irvine, CA).

One person with a belief is a social power equal to ninety-nine who have only interests.
— John Stuart Mill
Dystopia

The fine line between T.V. violence and real violence. Desensitizing kids at a young age.

Political cartoon created by a student at Woodbridge High School (Irvine, CA).
IDEA #185

Doing One’s Share in the Community

OVERVIEW: Students offer examples of problems faced by their community. They discuss how concerned citizens can work toward solving these problems. This is reinforced by writing and performing skits focusing on these issues.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- enough pens and paper for each group to write one skit

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to think of some major problems they might find in their own neighborhoods. List them on the board. The list might include such things as:

- Homelessness and hunger
- Drug abuse
- Gang violence
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Litter and other forms of pollution
- Theft
- Domestic violence and child abuse

Divide the students into groups of equal number and assign one topic to each group. Then have them write a simple skit about their topic. Tell them that the theme of their story should be: Good Citizens Do Their Part to Make Their Communities a Better Place. Write this on the board as a reminder.

Tell them that their skits should focus on how the ordinary citizen can contribute to solving problems in the community. Then arrange for them to present their skits to their peers and/or to younger children.

IDEA #186

Environmental Issues

OVERVIEW: Students address environmental issues and propose solutions to the problems they perceive. They develop a sense of responsibility for their community by expressing their ideas in letters written to policy-makers and business leaders.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- current newspapers and/or news magazines
- writing paper
- envelopes and stamps
- scissors

PROCEDURE:

1. Read articles about environmental issues in the community.
2. Discuss the environmental impact raised by the issues in these articles.
3. Develop strategies for correcting the environmental problems presented in the articles.
4. Write and send letters to appropriate business or government officials describing the environmental problems and proposing solutions. Enclose a copy of an article or two with the letters.

This activity may be tailored to suit the content of a specific course or program. For instance, the activity may be done in a chemistry class with an emphasis on environmental science. Or, in an English class, emphasize the writing exercise.

For free pamphlets and fact sheets, send self-addressed, stamped envelopes to:

National Recycling Coalition
1103 30th St., NW, Suite 305
Washington, D.C. 20007

Learning About Renewable Energy
P.O. Box 8900
Silver Spring, MD 20907

Adapted from “Character Education in Ohio: Sample Strategies” handbook (Ohio Department of Education, Columbus, OH), 1990. Used with permission.
IDEA #187

Guest Speaker

OVERVIEW: Students learn how certain community members are responsible for certain duties, but that some responsibilities are expected of everyone.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: Have the guest speaker fill out the “Guest Speaker Biography” activity sheet before visiting the class and devise a fair way of selecting one student to introduce the guest.

PROCEDURE:

As a group, write an invitation to a fire fighter, a police officer, an environmental inspector, or other public official asking her/him to speak to the group about how he/she works for the good of the community. Before visiting the class, have the guest speaker fill out the “Guest Speaker Biography” activity sheet, and allow one of the students to introduce him/her using background information on the form.

Have the guest highlight the obligations all of us (even children!) have to protect and serve others. (For instance, anyone who witnesses a crime or an incipient forest fire is morally obligated to call the proper authorities.)

After the visit, have the students send “thank you” cards to the guest, including an explanation of what they learned from him/her.

Adapted from “The Teaching of Values” (Los Angeles Unified School District), 1978.
Idea #187 Activity Sheet:
Guest Speaker Biography

Please print clearly. This information will be used by a student who is selected to introduce you.

Name: __________________________________________________________

Agency or company: ________________________________________________

Job title: _________________________________________________________

I have been a ____________________________________ for _______________ years.

Brief background:
_____________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Where I grew up and went to school: _________________________________

Additional information which might help introduce you:
_____________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
IDEA #188

Safety by the Dozens

OVERVIEW: Students compare their experience of trying to keep an egg from breaking with the fragility of maintaining a healthy community.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- drop cloth or large piece of plastic
- one egg for each team of four students
- 25 straws for each team of four students
- masking tape

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students to define and list the characteristics of an egg. Compare those qualities to a community. The goal is to suggest that an egg is fragile and requires care and support to keep it from breaking so that it can provide life (or nourish our bodies). Then ask them to explain how a community can be fragile and why we should care about it. Next inform them that they are going to practice the skills of saving a community by saving an egg.

Divide the class into teams of four with a designated work area. Give each group an egg. Explain that the egg represents a member of their community. Say: Each member of a community needs to be protected, but that can be difficult. How do communities protect individual members? Solicit responses and discuss.

Inform each team that they have seven minutes to create a device to keep the egg safe when it is dropped from a designated height (say, the height of your waist). They can only use the resources provided. Distribute the straws and masking tape.

After each team explains their finished product, one person from the team drops their egg from a designated height onto their egg-catching device. (Place a drop cloth under the device in case it doesn’t manage to keep the egg intact.)

Afterward, discuss what challenges they faced keeping the eggs safe. Ask: What challenges would you face keeping your community safe? What responsibility do you have to the community? How and why?

Adapted from an idea submitted by Mary Jo Williams, a 4-H youth development specialist (4-H Youth Program, University Extension, University of Missouri System). This is based on an idea that originally appeared in Adventures in Peacemaking: A Conflict Resolution Activity Guide for School-Age Programs, by William J. Kreidler and Lisa Furlong (Hamilton, MA: Project Adventure, 1996).
IDEA #189

Character Maps

OVERVIEW: Honing research skills and geographical knowledge of our nation, students create maps displaying town names associated with the Six Pillars.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Students should have access to a library or the World Wide Web to conduct research.
- drawing paper; pencils and markers
- a map of the United States
- atlas or almanac

PROCEDURE:

Explain that good citizenship involves awareness of our environment. Have the students help you list ways they can become more aware of their national environments (e.g., reading newspapers, watching the news on TV, learning about the country’s history, its voting process, etc.). Then suggest that gaining geographical knowledge is also a way to learn about a community. Ask the students to explain how and list their answers.

Display a map of the United States. Have the students point out the elements that make up a map. Ask where someone could find information to put on a map (the World Wide Web, maps in a library, etc.). Show them how to find specific places using the index in an atlas or almanac.

Divide them into groups. Instruct each group to create a map of a specific state or of the United States. Explain the exercise: Not only are you going to become more knowledgable citizens, but you are going to encourage good citizenship with these maps. Each will display the geographical location of towns whose names are somehow related to the Six Pillars of Character — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Also, you may identify on your maps towns, streets or other landmarks that share the names of people whose actions can be associated with the Six Pillars. Cite an example such as: Lincoln, Nebraska, can be associated with trustworthiness because Abraham Lincoln is known for having a great deal of integrity. Designate a specific amount of time to complete the “character maps.”

Once the maps are completed display them in a prominent location.

Inspired by All Over the Map, by David Jouris (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1994), a collection of maps based on themes and word groups.

— Albert Einstein
20th-century Nobel Prize-winning Swiss physicist and mathematician
IDEA #190

And the Survey Says . . .

OVERVIEW: Students prepare and conduct a survey about a community issue, then send the results to the person or agency connected with the issue.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens
- copies of activity sheets (one for each small group)

PROCEDURE:

Discuss with the students an issue at school or in the community. Then pose a related question to them, giving them the option to agree, disagree or declare that they are undecided by raising their hands. Count the number of hands raised for each answer. Draw a table on the board to display the totals for each option. Then calculate the percentages for each response (optional).

Explain that they have just participated in a survey. Ask them to explain what a survey is, what purpose it serves and who takes surveys. List answers to these questions on the board.

Explain that they too can take surveys. Say: As a responsible citizen, you take interest in issues that can help or hurt the community. A survey is one way for you to find out information about a particular issue in the community: how people think and feel about it, and what they would like done about it. While you may not agree with the results, you can use the information to help you figure out what kind of action you need to take to make sure the community’s best interests are served.

Divide students into groups of three. Distribute and explain the activity sheet. Tell them to use this as a model for their assignment.

Have each group pick an issue in the community they are concerned about and create a survey of four or five related questions. Help each group fashion respectful, objective questions. Tell them that they will create a table charting the results in percentages after they have polled people.

Explain the importance of safety and accuracy; specifically, be sure to discuss: acquiring proper permission to be in certain areas, being safe (not entering respondents’ houses if going door-to-door; taking a supervisor along), asking questions.

The true test of civilization is not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops – no, but the kind of man the country turns out.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson
19th-century American essayist, public philosopher and poet
respectfully, bringing enough supplies, and remaining calm and polite if people object to or disagree with any part of the survey.

After all groups have analyzed and shared their results, have them locate and send their survey results to an agency or individual who can use the information to constructively act on the issue in question. (Of course, the students’ surveys will not be “scientific” or statistically sound, and you should explain this to them. Make them aware that statisticians do a great deal of work to ensure that their methodologies are legitimate and that their results are representative of a specific community or demographic.)


No great deed is done by falterers who ask for certainty.

— Mary Ann Evans (a.k.a. George Eliot)
19th-century English novelist
IDEA #190 Activity Sheet: And the Survey Says . . .

Survey Goal: To find out how people feel about the town offering recycling bins to accompany trash disposal and pick up for homeowners.

Number of Adults Surveyed: 75

Possible Answers:  
SA – Strongly Agree  
A – Agree  
D – Disagree  
U – Undecided  
SD – Strongly Disagree

Opinion Survey Questions:

_____ 1.  Currently, I recycle most of my glass, paper and plastic products.

_____ 2.  Currently, I don’t recycle most of my glass, paper and plastic.

_____ 3.  If the town provided a recycling basket along with the trash cans for waste pickup, I would recycle more of my glass, paper and plastic.

_____ 4.  If I had to pay more to the city government to receive a recycling basket with my waste pickup, I would not mind.

_____ 5.  If I had to pay more to the city government to receive a recycling basket, I would mind, but I would still recycle more of my glass, paper and plastic.

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What do these results suggest? Why?
IDEA #191

Decision-Making Guide

You should investigate something to see its benefit or harm, examine whether it is appropriate and suitable or not; then after that you may carry it out.

— Caotang

OVERVIEW: Students learn about good and bad decision making, and will discuss the consequences of decisions they make. Using a five-step process, students learn to apply their ethical decision-making skills to realistic situations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one copy of the “Decision Making Guide” handout for each student

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the following with the students:

1. *How do we make good decisions? Name some good decisions you’ve made.*
2. *What are “consequences?”*
3. *Name some consequences of bad decisions.*
4. *Name some consequences of good decisions.*

Tell students: *It is important that we learn to make good decisions for ourselves. By making good decisions, we feel good about ourselves, others feel good about us, and we don’t have to worry about negative consequences.* Distribute and discuss the “Decision-Making Guide” handout.

Discuss the decision-making process (as outlined on the handout) until you feel that the students understand it. Then pose some hypothetical scenarios like the one below and put the guidelines to the test. (Remember to run through the Six Pillars of Character as an “ethical screen” for each decision.)

Run through the following scenario and let the students respond. Provide the necessary information as you go. Example: *Your younger brother asks to borrow five dollars from you.*

1. **STOP and CLARIFY:** You ask why, what for, who else is involved, etc. By asking these questions, you find out that your brother wants to buy your mother a birthday present and he needs another five dollars to buy her some perfume that she really wants.

2. **EXAMINE the information and motivation:** Your mom’s birthday is only a week away and you know your brother doesn’t have much money to spend on a gift.
3. THINK about the consequences and DECIDE: Your brother seems like he wants to do the right thing, and the chances that the loan will harm anyone are slim. But use the Six Pillars to “screen” your decision:

- **Trustworthiness**: You do have the money — to say you don’t would go against this Pillar. But remember, if you say you’ll give it to him, you’ve got a promise to keep.
- **Respect**: To ignore your brother because he gets on your nerves definitely wouldn’t be supported by this Pillar.
- **Responsibility**: Maybe borrowing money isn’t a good habit to encourage in your younger brother. How about suggesting that you buy the gift together? Since you have a little more money than he, you might offer to pay for more than half.
- **Fairness**: Since your allowance is greater than his, it doesn’t seem fair to expect him to pay as much as you for your mom’s gift.
- **Caring**: To spend the money on yourself certainly wouldn’t be a good example of this Pillar.
- **Citizenship**: (Not really an issue here.)

4. ACT: You decide to give your brother the five dollars; you also suggest that you both put your money together to buy your mother’s gift.

5. MONITOR and MODIFY: You both go to the store together and buy the perfume and some earrings. Your mom loves it — no modification necessary!

Next, have the students apply the decision-making model (and the Six Pillars “screen”) to dilemmas they make up or to the following examples:

- **You told your mom you would watch your baby sister when she’s at work. Your friend has an extra ticket to a ball game and wants you to go along. What do you do? Why?**

- **Some kids got some beer from their parents’ refrigerator. They invite you to join them. You don’t want to drink, but you want to be accepted. What will you do? Why?**

- **On the way to school, you and a friend find a dollar on the sidewalk. Both of you want it. What do you do? Why?**

- **You have a friend who is always putting himself/herself down. He/she doesn’t look very attractive: really tall and skinny with lots of pimples, big feet, and hair that never looks quite right. What do you say to your friend? Why?**

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Adapted from “Making Ethical Decisions” by Michael Josephson (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995; and “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.
Idea #191 Handout: Decision-Making Guide

Use the following process to help you make good decisions:

1. **STOP and CLARIFY:** Ask questions to find out as much as possible about the situation.

2. **EXAMINE the information and motivation:** Distinguish between facts and opinions and think about who is pushing you to act a certain way and what interest they have in your decision.

3. **THINK about the consequences and DECIDE:** What will happen if you act one way rather than another? Does your decision accord with the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship)? Will it harm you or others; will it be good for others?

4. **ACT:** Once you’ve made a decision about what to do, plan how you will carry it out. Make certain your plan benefits as many people as possible and hurts as few as possible.

5. **MONITOR and MODIFY:** Watch what happens after you’ve acted, and keep an eye out for new information. If the consequences aren’t as you expected or you discover something new, be prepared to make a new decision using the process outlined above.

Adapted from “Making Ethical Decisions,” by Michael Josephson (Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA), 1995.
IDEA #192

Six Pillars Collages

OVERVIEW: Students demonstrate and discuss the Six Pillars of Character as they are depicted in magazine photographs and illustrations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- various magazines (as many as possible)
- safety scissors
- paper
- glue or paste

PROCEDURE:

Spread out magazines on tables. Provide students with safety scissors, paper and glue and have them search through the magazines looking for pictures demonstrating the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Say: Your assignment is to find one picture for each of the Six Pillars, cut it out and make a Six Pillars collage by pasting it on to your paper in a nice looking way. Above each picture, write the name of the value.

After the children are finished, have each one show his/her creation, explaining how the pictures on their collages depict the six core values. The papers can then be put on a wall or taken home.

Another option is to go through the same process focusing on one specified value (e.g., everyone could cut out pictures related to respect). Then post all the papers on the same wall. The next day (or week), do the same for another value and another section of the wall until good character is all around!

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).

In nothing do men approach so nearly to the gods as in doing good to others.
— Marcus Cicero
IDEA #193

Six Pillars Puzzlers

OVERVIEW: Students think of the most creative ways they can depict the Six Pillars of Character. With creative sculptures and other artwork, they try to fashion something that isn’t immediately clear, but unmistakably represents one of the core values once it is explained.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
(Unspecified materials to be rounded up at home)

PROCEDURE:

Tell the students that wild imaginations will be rewarded in this assignment. The only requirement of this exercise is that their artistic creations relate in some way to one or more of the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship — and they have to be able to describe how.

Tell them: The object is to be clever enough to design something that nobody will understand until it is explained. The trick is to make something that unmistakably relates to one of the Six Pillars once you give your explanation. Posters are fine, but do your best to be creative: You can express yourself with an old bedsheets, T-shirt or a towel. Or make a sculpture out of unwanted materials around the house or in the garage. Just make sure you’re safe and don’t damage any property.

When the creations are complete, go around the room having everyone try to guess which Pillar a given work represents and why. You might award points to those who baffle the group and to those who quickly figure out their peers’ creations. Bring in your own creation and play along!

Adapted from the YMCA’s “Character Development Starter Kit” (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).

Live as you will have wished to have lived when you are dying.

— Christian Furchtgott Gellert
IDEA #194

Popular Songs

**OVERVIEW:** Students share and discuss popular songs that contain positive messages and then create their own lyrics focusing on one of the Six Pillars.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- portable CD/tape player, CD or tape with a popular song containing a positive message
- paper; pencils or pens

**PROCEDURE:**

Ask students to explain why they listen to music. Field answers and discuss how various types of songs affect people’s emotions.

Say: *Now I am going to play a popular song for you.* Share the title and artist. (Try to pick a song that will appeal to the students.) *While it is playing, I want you to listen for and jot down any words you hear that are related to the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Also note how the song makes you feel.* Before playing the song, have them write the six words on a paper, with enough room under each word to list appropriate song lyrics.

Play the song. Then collect students’ papers and, based on student responses, list key words and phrases on the board.

Then ask students to share how they felt after listening to the song. Ask the students to suggest ways music can encourage constructive behavior.

As a homework assignment, instruct the students to select a popular song that offers a positive message related to one or more of the Six Pillars. Have the students bring the song to class, share it, and explain which of the Six Pillars is (are) promoted in the song and what positive messages are conveyed. Then have them offer examples of constructive behavior that could result from listening to the song.

Once everyone has shared his/her song, divide the students into groups of three or four. Instruct them to pick a song and create new lyrics for it, focusing on one of the Six Pillars of Character. Invite them to share their creations with the class.

*Adapted from an idea submitted by Danette Townsend, adolescent and family director at the Mountainside YMCA in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*
IDEA #195

Problem Solving Contest

OVERVIEW: Groups of students work together as a team to solve problems and then “perform” their solutions in front of parents and peers, highlighting good character traits that are required.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Each group of students decides what materials are needed.

PROCEDURE:

Ask students to define cooperation (people working together for common benefit). Next, ask them what skills are necessary for cooperation to take place. List these on the board. Then ask them what skills are necessary to solve problems effectively (e.g., respect, responsibility, fairness, deduction, sharing, listening, planning, etc.). List these also. Have the students explain why these skills help build character.

Divide the students into groups. Explain that they will have to solve a particular problem in an allotted amount of time. (This contest can take as long as you feel is necessary for them to produce a solution.) Present several challenging scenarios. Allow them to choose one to solve. Some examples might be: students must find a way to mail an egg so that it arrives without being broken; students figure out a way to determine whether their class is getting the recommended daily allowance of a specific vitamin; students create and describe a type of creature that can best survive on a newly discovered planet where the wind constantly blows in excess of 180 miles per hour at a temperature below freezing; students determine the quickest walking route with the least amount of steps from one specific destination to another (that you determine).

Once the contest deadline arrives, the groups set up, demonstrate, or present their solutions to peers and parents. Each group is interviewed by you or a committee of teachers to explain what character skills were needed in the process to figure out a solution. The best solution should be judged on the cooperative effort considered and displayed in the process of discovering their solution.

Inspired by “Cooperative Contests” by Marlynn Clayton. This was the “Article of the Month” (January 1999), posted on The Responsive Classroom website (www.responsiveclassroom.org).
IDEA #196

The Six Mistakes of Man

OVERVIEW: Young people think about and discuss mankind’s shortcomings — and what to do about them.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Introduce Cicero to the students. Explain that he was a Roman statesman, philosopher and lawyer who lived during the final civil wars that destroyed the Roman Republic (b: 106 B.C., d: 43 B.C.).

Point out that Cicero famously reduced the folly of man to six mistakes. List on the board these “Six Mistakes of Man”:

1. The delusion that personal gain is made by crushing others.
2. The tendency to worry about things that cannot be changed or corrected.
3. Insisting that a thing is impossible because we cannot accomplish it.
4. Refusing to set aside trivial preferences.
5. Neglecting development and refinement of the mind, and not acquiring the habit of reading and studying.
6. Attempting to compel others to believe and live as we do.

Ask the students if they think these points are still relevant today. If not, ask them to explain why. Ask what “mistakes,” if any, are missing from this list.

Have the students choose two of Cicero’s mistakes that they agree are still a problem today and write a report showing evidence of these mistakes in action. Invite them to include photos and other art or to make a video to accompany their findings. As part of their research, they might investigate what other philosophers have thought of mankind’s biggest errors or character flaws.

The student reports — due in two weeks to one month (depending on the creativity and resources of the class and your schedule) — should have a concluding section on what students would do to “solve” or lessen the effects of their two chosen “mistakes.”

— Cicero
(Roman orator and statesman)

Criticize by creation, not by finding fault.
IDEA #197

Creating a Code for Coaches

**OVERVIEW:** Students create a code of conduct for coaches. As part of this activity, they analyze the values, privileges and ideals of participating in team sports and see that trust is built when clear rules are adhered to.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- paper; pencils or pens

**PROCEDURE:**

**Freedom is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling that desire.** — Epictetus Greek historian

Say: Playing sports professionally and even in college has become quite lucrative for athletes today. What does “lucrative” mean? Solicit and list answers. Then say: Playing a sport can be valuable for other reasons besides the fact that it makes someone wealthy. In what other ways is participation in team sports valuable to both professional athletes and each of you? Again, list answers. List the Six Pillars of Character on the board and associate benefits of team sports with each character trait.

Have the students offer examples of ways that players sometimes jeopardize the joy of the game and the character-building experience (e.g., bad-mouthing opponents, fighting, cheating, etc.).

Have the students offer examples of ways that players sometimes jeopardize the joy of the game and the character-building experience (e.g., bad-mouthing opponents, fighting, cheating, etc.).

Ask what role coaches play to make participation in team sports valuable. List answers. Have the students offer examples (e.g., modeling honesty, watching out for students’ safety, showing good sportsmanship, etc.). Say: As we’ve pointed out, coaches, just like students, need to realize that participation in team sports is a privilege that requires responsibilities. And one of the best ways for people to conduct themselves properly is to teach them how to do that. Today I want you to create a code of conduct for coaches. While you won’t be presenting this to them, it will help you realize what actions you can model for the coaches. How will that help them? After soliciting answers, suggest that good attitudes and admirable behavior are contagious.

Divide the class into groups. Have them create a code of conduct with at least six specific rules for coaches to follow — one for each of the Six Pillars of Character. They must cite the reasons for each rule. Encourage them to be creative.

When they’ve finished, have students share their codes with the rest of the class. Highlight or list the most prevalent ideas.
Discuss strategies the school or community could use to encourage good sportsmanship and character development in sports activities.

Suggest the students try to note their own attitudes and the attitudes of others now that they have completed these codes. At a later date discuss their observations and experiences.

“Standards of Conduct for High School and Middle School Coaches” and “Standards of Conduct for Student Athletes” are available from the CHARACTER COUNTS! national office. Call (800) 711-2670 or visit www.charactercounts.org.

To many people virtue consists of repenting faults not avoiding them.

— Georg Christoph Lichtenberg
THE SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER

TRUSTWORTHINESS
- Be honest.
- Don’t deceive, cheat or steal.
- Be reliable — do what you say you’ll do.
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country.

RESPECT
- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Use good manners, not bad language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

RESPONSIBILITY
- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere: keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Use self-control.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act — consider the consequences.
- Be accountable for your choices.

FAIRNESS
- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don’t take advantage of others.
- Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING
- Be kind.
- Be compassionate; show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

CITIZENSHIP
- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules.
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment

GOOD IDEAS to Help Teenagers Develop Good Character
IDEA #198

Honesty in the Workplace

OVERVIEW: Students discuss trustworthiness in the workplace. Through discussion and by examining a common example of dishonesty on the job, the importance of trustworthiness is reinforced.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Ask students what supplies employees often take from the office for use at home or elsewhere (e.g., pens, paper, paper clips, envelopes, staplers and staples, paper pads, computer supplies and calendars). On the chalkboard, list these supplies.

Have the students form small groups and give each group an office supplies catalog to calculate the value of the items listed. Tell them to estimate the total loss to the company in one year. Discuss the monetary loss to the company over the long term, the waste of supplies, and the loss of employer/employee trust.

Ask: Does taking these items represent a violation of trust in all cases?

If they answer that it doesn’t matter in the case of staples and paper clips, ask: Would it matter if the boss knew?

Adapted from “Character Education in Ohio: Sample Strategies” (Ohio Department of Education), 1990.
IDEA #199

A Test of Integrity

OVERVIEW: Students will more fully understand the concept of integrity and the importance of using sound moral judgments when faced with difficult situations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- literature and/or audiovisual materials on the Holocaust and the Nuremberg Trials.

PROCEDURE:

Before discussing the concept of integrity, have the students read literature and see audiovisual presentations on the Holocaust (e.g., Steven Speilberg’s “Schindler’s List”) and the Nuremberg Trials.

Begin by defining “integrity” and discussing how it relates to the Holocaust. Discuss the motivation and activities of the Nazis during the Holocaust and the defense used by war criminals during the Nuremberg Trials. (Many charged with war crimes attempted to rationalize their behavior by arguing that they were merely following orders.) Ask how integrity plays into this issue and discuss what alternative courses of action could have been followed. Ask what they would have done.

Read about and discuss those who protected Jews and other persecuted groups from the Nazis during the war. Say: It would have been easy to disagree with the government’s abominable behavior and still do nothing about it. How is this an issue of integrity?

Ask them if they can think of any issues in the United States — even in their own community — which require individuals to make sacrifices to do what is right rather than what is convenient.

Have them write an essay on an incident or issue in history (other than the Holocaust) in which individuals demonstrated great integrity in the face of strong pressure to compromise their principles.

See “Character Education in Ohio: Sample Strategies” (Ohio Department of Education, Columbus, OH), 1990.
IDEA #200

Packaging the Candidate

OVERVIEW: Students learn about the many facets of trustworthiness. They read a play about a political campaign and answer questions about trustworthiness as it relates to the play.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the play for each student

PROCEDURE:

Select students to read the lines and act out parts in a play. Assign the following roles, bringing up a new cast with each scene to include as many students as possible.

- Candidate
- Manager
- Public Relations Agent

Before selecting students to read parts of the following play, briefly discuss honesty in politics. Ask: What are some examples of how a politician might be tempted to act dishonestly? Solicit comments. Discuss the “packaging” of a candidate during a campaign. Ask how this can be done ethically and how ethical conduct might be breached. Ask: Where do we draw the line between emphasizing a candidate’s good qualities and presenting him/her as something he/she is not? Tell the students to keep these issues in mind as they listen to the dialogue in the play.

When they have finished, ask the students for an example demonstrating how each of the following is relevant to the play:

- honesty (non-verbal)
- truth-telling (verbal)
- sincerity
- integrity
- reliability
- promise-keeping
- loyalty

— Adlai Stevenson
Reconsider the issues you discussed before reading the play. Ask the following discussion questions:

1. In general, how might “packaging” a candidate be unethical? Explain.

2. How will the manager “fix” the candidate’s problems? Is it possible to do this in a trustworthy fashion?

3. Should politicians make policy according to opinion polls? How might this be an issue of integrity?

4. What would be the most appropriate course of action for the candidate to pursue regarding his family?

5. How does promise-keeping play into campaign financing?

6. If a candidate genuinely seeks to run a clean campaign, what measures might he/she take to avoid the appearance of impropriety?

7. If you were running against this candidate, what (if any) character flaws would you point out in your opponent?

Idea #200 Handout: “Packaging the Candidate”
(A Play by William Roufberg)

**Scene One: Campaign Headquarters**

**Manager:** Folks, we’ve got a winner here — a near-perfect candidate. Attractive, looks good on TV, has a decent record in business and community service. Too bad you don’t have a military record, but when we finish packaging you, you’ll be a shoe-in.

**Agent:** However, as we start this campaign, are you sure there are no personal problems in your past or present.

**Candidate:** I have nothing to hide, if that’s what’s worrying you.

**Manager:** Good. Your opponent has been in office for a long time and wants to stay there. They believe an elected official should serve as long as the public is satisfied with his or her service. We believe in term limits. Our platform will say that government service should not be seen as a career.

**Candidate:** I’m running for office primarily to put a number of good programs that would benefit our citizens. Basic, honest proposals to improve our schools, lessen crime, provide jobs and health care.

**Agent:** Starting today, we are going to arrange for some voice training and a tailor to improve your image. A video will show you some poor mannerisms that have to be changed.

**Candidate:** You make me feel like a trained seal.

**Manager:** Each day we will brief you on major state and national issues. We will tell you how you are doing in the polls and, if necessary, adapt our positions to accord with public opinion.

**Agent:** My job is to handle the press and take care of all media coverage. We know it helps to look like you’re very family-oriented. Even though you’re divorced and don’t have a very close relationship with your daughter or parents, it’ll be important to get your family involved in this campaign. We’ll need to get some photos of you and all your kids looking very happy together.

**Candidate:** Oh, I’m not sure they’ll want to get very involved. I told them I would try to help them maintain their privacy.

**Manager:** I’m going to design a calendar of events which all of us must follow. Opportunities for staged appearances.
Idea #200 Handout (cont.)

**Candidate:** What do you have in mind?

**Manager:** We’re going to recruit athletes, rock stars and other celebrities to endorse your candidacy . . .

**Candidate:** This is beginning to sound like some kind of game.

**Manager:** . . . and of course we have to raise millions of dollars. To do so, nothing can be left to chance. Everything is planned to build you up and put the other side down.

**Candidate:** I don’t think it’s right to run a negative campaign. How far do we go to put the other side down?

**Agent:** How badly do you want to win?

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**Scene Two: Campaign Headquarters, one month later**

**Agent:** How is our war chest?

**Manager:** The money is coming in. Naturally, I had to make a lot of promises to the big contributors. We won’t trouble our candidate with these details.

**Agent:** I’m afraid we’ve got some bad news.

**Manager:** I’m listening.

**Agent:** Our candidate’s kids all attend fancy private schools. Also, the family belongs to a golf club that has been known to discriminate against those seeking membership.

**Manager:** That makes us look hypocritical since our platform supports public schools and the middle class.

**Agent:** Imagine what the opposition will do when they find out.

**Manager:** Call the team together. It’s not that serious. We can fix it.
IDEA #201

Living with Integrity

OVERVIEW: Students write about what it means to live with integrity and how they can demonstrate this in their personal affairs.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Living with Integrity” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Distribute the “Living with Integrity” handout. Discuss the “do’s” and “don’t’s” with the class. Then tell them that their assignment is to write an essay as described here. Encourage them to be candid and announce that, although you will be collecting this assignment, they will not have to share what they have written with their classmates.

Contributed by Patricia Braun, Changes for Youth Program, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).

It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not.
— Andre Gide
Idea #201 Handout: Living with Integrity

A person of character is trustworthy. Part of being trustworthy is living with integrity — being honest about what you believe is right and standing up for it when you’re challenged.

INTEGRITY

DO: . . . stand up for your beliefs.
 . . . follow your conscience.
 . . . live by your principles no matter what others say.
 . . . build and guard your reputation and your name.

DON’T: . . . do anything you know is wrong — even if everyone is doing it.
 . . . ask a friend to do anything you know is wrong.
 . . . stand by and watch if you see someone doing something wrong.

Essay question: Do you live with integrity? Provide at least one example of how you have demonstrated integrity in a difficult situation. Then describe an instance in which you failed to do what you knew was right.
IDEA #202

Keeping News Trustworthy

OVERVIEW: Students keep a news media log to analyze and prompt discussion on how newspapers, magazines, radio and TV portray daily life and events.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- Special “media literacy” resources for teachers and students include:
  - Center for Media Literacy: www.medialit.org, (323) 931-4177
  - Media Awareness Network (Canada): www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/
  - Media Literacy Online Project (at the University of Oregon College of Education): http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/HomePage
  - New Mexico Media Literacy Project: www.nmmlp.org
  - Links to media literacy sites: www.ci.appstate.edu/programs/edmedia/medialit/links.html

PROCEDURE:

Explain that news and entertainment are powerful forces and that they influence how we perceive ourselves and the world.

Suggest that what we watch on television and the way a show presents a story or event can affect our opinions about it. Point out that this is why TV shows have to offer equal time to political opponents running for the same office. Ask the students why this is important. Present an example of how a newscast can influence viewers’ perspectives of an event or issue:

A news program begins with a report of a “violent” crime. The reporters explain that a woman’s purse was stolen, and she was knocked down in front of a store. The program presents pictures of people crying hysterically at the crime scene. Another newscast on at the same time starts its show with several reports on the stock market and then talks about the purse-snatching event. They don’t show any videotape of the scene, nor do they label it as “violent.”

Ask students to explain how the two shows covered the same story differently (one lead with a story, the other didn’t; one labeled it “violent,” the other didn’t; one showed specific video footage, the other didn’t; etc.).

Next, explain that media (television, newspapers, etc.) are businesses too. Note that in order for them to earn money, they have to get companies to advertise. First,
ask why companies would want to advertise in a certain magazine or on a certain
television show. Then, ask students to explain how that might affect what content
we read or see and why. Together, list ways a story or event may be presented and
why. Then inform the students that they are going to learn to analyze (or *deconstruct*)
what the media presents.

Invite the students to list various questions that can help them better understand
the content of a story in the media. Include: *How realistically do sitcoms portray
relationships, the workplace and family life? How do social, political and economic
factors influence what is reported, and how?* Ask students how critical analysis can
help maintain the public’s trust in the media. Again, list key answers.

Explain to them that everything they see and read is the result of an editing pro-
cess, which is necessary in order to tell a story. Refer back to your original example
and have the class help you answer the following questions:

*What was said or shown? What wasn’t? Why? What effect does the way the
story was presented have on your feelings and on the way you think about what
occurred?*

After this class discussion, pass out the “Media Log” handouts and instruct
students to analyze one daily newspaper or magazine or a television news program
for the next week (one sheet per day). You might have students report their find-
ings to the whole class or collect the completed assignments and assess them as a
class. Discussion topics can include: impartiality, timeliness, relevance, magnitude,
surprise, impact, fame, strangeness, conflict, continuity of coverage (follow-up
stories), negativity, solutions, emotions, diversity and politics.

Finally, introduce the term “media literacy” to students. Explain to them that
being literate in the language and methods used by the media does not mean being
cynical. It means being responsible for our own perceptions — and, through criti-
cism, for helping to keep the media (especially the news) worthy of our trust.

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**It is a hard man who is only just, a sad one who is only wise.**

— *François Marie Arouet de Voltaire*, 18th-century French philosophe
IDEA #202 Media Log Handout: Keeping News Trustworthy

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<tr>
<th>Periodical or program name:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date of publication or airing:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead story (+ description):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length/duration:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other major stories:
(note length of each and which feature graphics, photos and on-site or field reporters)

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  

ANALYSIS

What percentage of space/time did the periodical/program spend on:

Local news? ____________________________
National news? ____________________________
International news? ____________________________
Sports? ____________________________
Commercials? ____________________________
Crime? ____________________________
Celebrities? ____________________________

IDEA #203

Courage in the Movies

OVERVIEW: Teens examine the decisions and behavior of movie characters through the prism of integrity and courage to encourage better awareness of their own ethical decision making in difficult situations.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- television, VCR
- videotapes of movies (see suggestions below)

PROCEDURE:

Engage the students in a discussion about integrity (being true to your best self) and how that requires courage and unselfishness. You might say: One of the key elements of trustworthiness is living a life of integrity — being true to yourself so people know they can trust you. What could be simpler, right? But, of course, we know it isn’t that easy. Integrity requires courage — to do the right thing and be true to your best self. It is one of the toughest requirements of the ethical life because courage requires us to face down those things that we fear. And fear is powerful. When faced with conflict and paying a price we might not want to pay, it’s easier to compromise your values, go with the flow or not stand up for someone or something that’s right.

Explain that the class will watch a movie (or movies, depending on your schedule) and discuss the value of courage and integrity as it is exhibited — or not exhibited — by the characters. Tell the students to focus on key decisions made by the characters. Pick a movie you think is age- and content-appropriate, such as Death of a Salesman, Schindler’s List, Dead Poet’s Society, Mr. Holland’s Opus, My Bodyguard, etc.

(Note: Some of these movies may have violent or graphic content. These elements may be judged historically accurate or important to the story, but as with any movie you choose to show students, you should screen the films first, as some families may object to young people being shown certain movies.)

After the movie, refocus the students’ attention on to the issues of trustworthiness. Give the students one week to write a one- to two-page argument showing that one character’s specific actions were ethically courageous or not. Make sure they can back up their claims with examples and explanations.
IDEA #204

Go Figure: Your Credit Is Built on Trust

OVERVIEW: Teens understand that credit and money markets are based on trust and that an honorable person honors his debts and protects his reputation.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- Worksheet for each student (master provided — you may want to block out answer section before photocopying and distributing)

PROCEDURE:

Ask students how credit cards work. After getting responses, you might say: Credit cards offer convenience. But they are not free or easy money; there are costs to using them. They are a form of borrowing and all borrowing is based on trust. If you give people reason to believe that you will not honor your debts, they will not trust or extend credit to you in the future. Having a clean credit history is important in our society — and is another reason to build and maintain a good reputation. When people trust you, you can more easily leverage your time and resources.

Explain that by using a credit card, users enter into a contract with the credit card company. Different credit card companies have different terms, and it is the user’s responsibility to understand them. For instance, if you don’t pay off what you owe each month, you will be charged a fee based on a percentage of what you owe; this is called a finance charge. Point out that the method used to calculate this fee makes a difference in how much the user pays. Pass out copies of the handout on the following page and give students 10 minutes to see how this works and answer the questions. While they are working you might want to write on the board some or all of the following terms to discuss:

- Annual Percentage Rate (APR). The cost of credit expressed as a yearly rate.
- Periodic Rate. The rate the card issuer applies to the balance to figure the finance charge for each billing period (the annual rate divided by 12).
- Variable Rate. Some card issuers change the APR on the account when specific interest rates (like the prime rate) change. Rate changes raise or lower the amount of the finance charge you pay on your account (if you carry a balance from month to month).
- Grace Period. The period of time the credit card company does not charge interest on a new purchase — as long as the entire balance is paid before the due date.
- Annual Fees. A fixed amount charged each year for the privilege of using a card.
- Transaction Fees and Other Charges. Fees for cash advances, late payments or over-limit.
- Balance Computation Method for the Finance Charge. How your card issuer figures how much interest to charge you if you don’t pay your balance off in full.

Information derived from the Federal Trade Commission’s “Facts for Consumers” (www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/money/credit-card/credcard.htm)
IDEA #204 Worksheet: Go Figure: Your Credit Is Built on Trust

To figure Average Daily Balance (including new purchases):
Multiply the previous balance by the number of days until payment is received, add to new balance multiplied by number of days until new purchase is made, add to balance for remainder of period multiplied by the number of days remaining in period; divide this resulting sum by 30 days (the billing period)

To figure Average Daily Balance (excluding new purchases):
multiply the previous balance by the number of days until payment is received, add to new balance multiplied by number of days remaining in the billing period; divide this resulting sum by 30 days (the billing period)

| Monthly rate | 1 ½ % | 1 ½ % |
| APR          | 18 %  | 18 %  |
| Previous Balance | $400 | $400 |
| New Purchases (on 18th day) | $50  | $50  |
| Payments (on 15th day) | $300 | $300 |

new balance = $100

Average Daily Balance #1 #2
Finance Charge #3 #4

Answer 1: $270 \[\frac{($400 \times 15 \text{ days}) + ($100 \times 3 \text{ days}) + ($150 \times 12 \text{ days})}{30 \text{ days}}\]

Answer 2: $250 \[\frac{($400 \times 15 \text{ days}) + ($100 \times 15 \text{ days})}{30 \text{ days}}\]

Answer 3: $4.05 \[1 \frac{1}{2} \% \times $270\]

Answer 4: $3.75 \[1 \frac{1}{2} \% \times $250\]

Tips for Maintaining Good Credit — and a Good Financial Reputation

- Don’t spend more than you earn.
- Pay off the balance due each month; don’t just make the minimum payment.
- Pay bills promptly to keep finance charges as low as possible; avoid late payments and over-the-limit fees.
- Don’t have more than one card.
- Make sure you understand the terms of a credit card plan before you accept the card.
- Keep copies of sales slips and compare charges when your bills arrive.
- Draw a line through blank spaces about the total when you sign receipts.
- Sign your card so no one else can use it.
- Don’t lend your card to anyone, even to a friend.
- Keep your account information private. Never give out your credit card number or expiration date over the phone unless you know whom you’re dealing with.

Information derived from the Federal Trade Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection and other sources.
IDEA #205

Whatever Happened to Good Manners?

OVERVIEW: Students learn about your expectations in terms of respectful behavior. They write a brief response to a handout on manners and discuss the importance of showing respect to you and to each other.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Hold a discussion (preferably at the beginning of the year or at the start of your youth program) about manners and common courtesy. Start by acknowledging that most young people are polite in most cases. Tell the students that you want them to know what is expected of them. Mention that this is their opportunity to learn and that they’re responsible for creating a positive environment so that everyone can get something out of the time you have together. Distribute the “Whatever Happened to Good Manners?” handout.

Then have them write a one-paragraph response to the observations and questions on the handout. Tell them they don’t have to address each question separately. Rather, say that they should write a general response or respond to one or two points which they consider most significant. Discuss their responses and the notion of manners in general (why they are important, which ones are the most important in terms of showing respect to others, how showing courtesy toward others encourages them to treat you with respect, etc.).

Adapted from “Whatever Happened to Good Manners?” by Hal Urban, Woodside High School teacher, Redwood City, CA. This selection originally appeared in “The Fourth and Fifth Rs” newsletter (Fall 1995). Used with permission from the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, State University of New York, Cortland.

Manners are of more importance than laws.
— Edmund Burke
IDEA #205 Handout: Whatever Happened to Good Manners?

*Without good manners human society becomes intolerable and impossible.*
— George Bernard Shaw, 19th century Irish playwright

How Things Were Different Not Too Many Years Ago:

- Students rarely came late to class. When they did, they apologized. Today many often come late. Only rarely does one apologize.
- Students didn’t get up and walk across the room while the teacher was talking. Today it is done often, and nothing is thought about it.
- Students didn’t litter in the classroom or write on desks. Today many students do both.
- Students didn’t talk back to teachers in a defiant manner. Today it is done often.
- Students didn’t swear in classrooms or in the hallways. Today some students can’t talk without swearing.
- Students used to listen when the teacher was talking. Today, many students feel they have the right to ignore the teacher and have a private conversation with their friends.
- Students used to listen attentively when another student asked a question, answered a question, or expressed an opinion. Today, many students don’t want to listen to their classmates.
- Students, in general, were more considerate of other people’s feelings. Today, many students could care less about other people’s feelings.
- When students needed something from the teacher, they would politely ask for it. Today, students say, “I need . . . ,” often in a demanding tone.

Some Questions to Consider

- Why is this happening?
- Is a society better when people treat each other with respect?
- Is a classroom better when both students and teacher show mutual respect?
- Why does Henry Rogers say, “Good manners are one of the most important keys to success in life?”
- What is the “Golden Rule?” If it’s so simple, why do so many people today have difficulty practicing it?
- At school, do students practice the manners that their parents taught them at home?
- Which impresses people the most — being “cool” or being courteous?
IDEA #206

Steps Toward Common Ground

OVERVIEW: Students discuss and practice respectful communication in a structured small-group discussion activity.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Steps Toward Common Ground” handout for each small group
- a pen and paper for each student to take notes on the proceedings

PROCEDURE:

Begin by talking about differences of opinion and how they can be most effectively resolved through social discourse. Ask: What makes for a good discussion of issues? Do participants express an interest in others’ opinions? Listen respectfully? Reflect on new ideas? Give others a chance to speak? What is your approach in a discussion — to make your position triumph or to seek the truth and gain new insights? Solicit comments from the students. After your discussion, break the students into groups of four, distribute a photocopy of the “Steps Toward Common Ground” handout to each group and follow the instructions for Rounds One through Four.

Round One (Don’t allow much more than five minutes for this round.)
1. Assign a topic from the “Four Steps Toward Common Ground” handout.
2. Have each group pick a timekeeper.
3. One after the other, have each student express his or her opinion as succinctly as possible (time limit: 20 seconds per student).
4. After each student has spoken, all students have two minutes to each record all the stated opinions on a piece of paper (they should leave considerable space under each one for future comments).

Round Two (Don’t allow much more than five minutes for this round.)
1. Continue the same discussion. Have the group choose a new timekeeper.
2. The first to speak must explain and support his or her opinion (time limit for each speaker: 30 seconds).
3. The speakers who follow must restate the previous speaker’s reasoning, add a supporting statement, and then proceed to explain and support his or her own opinion.
4. After all the students have spoken, give them two minutes to each write down
the reasoning provided for each opinion.

**Round Three**
1. Continue the same discussion. Have the group choose a new timekeeper.
2. Start with the first opinion; each speaker has 30 seconds to provide a respectful (but not necessarily positive) comment on its accuracy and/or relevance.
3. No one may speak a second time until everyone has spoken once.
4. Group members record differences and/or opposing arguments next to each opinion.

**Round Four**
1. Continue the same discussion. Have the group choose a new timekeeper.
2. Each speaker has 30 seconds to support the opinion of his or her choice.
3. The group must then decide which opinion(s) it favors.
4. The group has two minutes to each write down the reasons for their choice(s).

Conclude the activity by having the whole group reflect on the exercise together. Ask them if any of the points on the “Steps Toward Common Ground” handout have become more clear as a result of the exercise.

Adapted from “The American Promise Teaching Guide” (made possible by Farmers Insurance Group), 1996.

**Courage**

finds its own

*eloquence.*

— Plautus
Roman statesman
IDEA #206 Handout: Steps Toward Common Ground

Sample Discussion Topics:

- Racial prejudice in America is as big a problem as it has ever been.
- The best way to address the issue of illegal immigration is to severely restrict all immigration.
- Our economy suffers because there are too many environmental regulations.
- The best way to combat crime is to swiftly put criminals in jail and increase their sentences.
- Our democracy is suffering due to a lack of informed, educated and active citizens.

Are You a Discussion Blocker?

When you block a discussion, you exhibit a lack of respect. This ultimately makes your position less credible and prevents you from gaining new perspectives. Don’t be so proud and pompous that you impede constructive debate. Here are a few trademarks of “discussion blockers.” Do you practice any of these nasty habits?

1. When discussing an issue with someone, do you consistently try to make your position triumph or do you aim to uncover the truth and gain new insights?
2. Do you look for your opponent’s weakest argument and concentrate on attacking it?
3. Do you draw attention to irrelevant mannerisms of the person you’re debating?
4. Do your tone of voice and body language make others feel their opinions are not important?
5. Are you extremely reluctant to concede to others that they have made you aware of something that may change your point of view?
6. Do you always answer a question with another question?
7. Do you appear distracted or anxious to leave when others are speaking to you?
8. Do you express exaggerated surprise at the naïveté of others?
9. Are you unable to “agree to disagree” with others?
IDEA #207

Showing Respect

**OVERVIEW:** Students write about what it means to show respect and how they can demonstrate this in their personal affairs.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- one photocopy of the “Showing Respect” handout for each youngster

**PROCEDURE:**

Distribute the “Showing Respect” handout. Discuss the “do’s” and “don’t’s” with the class. Then tell them that their assignment is to write an essay as described here. Encourage them to be candid and announce that, although you will be collecting this assignment, they will not have to share what they have written with their classmates.

*Contributed by Patricia Braun, Changes for Youth Program, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).*
IDEA #207 Handout: Showing Respect

A person of character shows respect. He/she lives by the Golden Rule, respecting the dignity, privacy and freedom of others. She/he is courteous and polite and is tolerant and accepting of differences.

RESPECT

DO: . . . treat others the way you want to be treated.
     . . . show tolerance and be accepting of differences.
     . . . be courteous and use good manners.
     . . . deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

DON'T: . . . insult or make fun of others.
        . . . offend others with bad language.
        . . . threaten, hit or hurt anyone.

 Write an essay about respect. Consider the “do’s and don’t’s” above and address one or more of the following questions in your essay:

1. What do you do to show respect?

2. Can you think of a time when you failed to do this?

3. How might someone show a lack of respect for himself/herself?

4. Can you think of someone who stands out by consistently demonstrating respectful behavior? What effect does this have on his/her life?
IDEA #208

Respectful Interview

OVERVIEW: Students focus on respect as they hone their listening and interviewing skills with residents of a senior citizen community center.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copy of magazine interview
- paper; pencils or pens
- video camera, VHS tapes and a VCR (optional)
- microcassette recorder (optional)

SETTING: classroom and senior citizen community center

PROCEDURE:

Offer an example of an informative interview from a television news program or a magazine article. Afterward, ask the students to list what makes a good interview. In addition to discussing the substance of the interview, be sure to mention the process of conducting the interview: a good interviewer shows respect by being prepared and by being a good listener and not interrupting.

Next, introduce the project by telling the students that they are going to be reporters and are going to interview residents at a local senior citizen community center or retirement home. Say: *The subject of these interviews will be respect. Focus on how we can be more respectful as a society.* Instruct them to ask the elderly people they interview how society has changed in this regard, how they were taught to be respectful, and what parents and teachers should do differently (if anything) to encourage more respect.

Divide the students into pairs and match the pairs up with a resident of the senior citizen center or retirement home. (Of course, you will have to schedule these meetings in advance with the senior center or residence.) Try to arrange for these interviews to be videotaped so that the students can present them to the class. If this is not possible, try to secure a microcassette recorder so that they can record and transcribe their interviews. Tell the students that each person should have the opportunity to ask questions while his/her partner videotapes or records the conversation.

After watching the interviews, discuss what they learned from the process and from what the senior citizens had to say.

Adapted from an idea submitted by Teresa Edwards, a teacher at Sapulpa Middle School in Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character © Josephson Institute
IDEA #209

Exhibiting a Respect for Work

**OVERVIEW:** Acknowledging the effects of others’ hard work on their community, students create a photo and text exhibit that examines the careers of individuals in the community whose work they respect.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- paper; pencils or pens
- camera, ability to get photos developed

**PROCEDURE:**

Write the following questions on the board: *What does work mean to us as individuals? As a society? How does work shape our values? Our lives?* Have the students copy the questions down, then discuss them. List answers to the questions. Suggest that the work we do for ourselves and our families also affects others. Have the students cite examples such as: If someone works hard and is proud of his or her work, it fosters respect from those who directly benefit from it, as well as from those who simply witness it. This respect, in turn, can inspire others to be more responsible and committed in their work.

Discuss what makes a job worthy of respect. Discuss concepts like prestige, esteem, authority and power, and how these influence the way we perceive workers. Be sure to emphasize the importance of respecting all persons who contribute to society, regardless of how much money they earn or how much authority or status they wield.

Introduce the project. Say: *To foster respect for working people in the community and to display our appreciation for these people, we are going to showcase them.* Tell the students that their assignment is to seek out, interview and photograph a worker whom they respect. Also inform them that once everyone has completed these tasks, the group will create an exhibit of the photographs, including descriptions of each photo.

Assign each student the following tasks (by a certain date):

1. Interview a particular individual about his or her job. Ask the same questions that were discussed at the beginning of class.
2. Take a photo of the worker (at his/her job).
3. Write a brief essay highlighting the worker’s answers to questions, explaining why this person was chosen. (This will accompany the photo.)
Have the students plan, prepare and construct the exhibit after they have completed the tasks above. You might get the exhibit started by including a sample photo and caption of a worker whom you admire.

Also, you might have the students add quotes on work and respect to their exhibit. Here are some samples:

“Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself; and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being, to use him as a mere means for some external purpose.” — Immanuel Kant

“Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don’t turn up at all.” — Sam Ewig

“Never look down on anybody unless you are helping him up.” — Jesse Jackson

“The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.” — Theodore Roosevelt

“Don’t say you don’t have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.” — H. Jackson Brown

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

20th century Nobel Prize winning American civil rights leader

Adapted with permission from the Bread and Roses Cultural Project (330 West 42nd St., 7th floor, New York, NY 10036; 212-631-4565; www.breadandroses.com). A version of this activity is posted on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance website (www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance). Quotes were culled from a variety of sources, including the Josephson Institute’s “QuoteUnquote” library of quotations, available at www.josephsoninstitute.org.
IDEA #210

The Great Privacy Debate

OVERVIEW: Students research privacy issues and stage a formal debate. (The official national high school debate topic for the 2000-2001 school year is “the right of privacy.”)

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the subject of privacy by saying something like: This is a complex society with a lot of wants and expectations. We want to feel safe from crime and harassment. We want ever-greater convenience and comfort. We want easily available information. Ask students for their ideas of the trade-offs and costs. Say: A lot of consumer-driven prosperity, as well as our desire for security, is accomplished through surveillance, investigation and monitoring — by government, media, employers and merchants. Arguably, we have relinquished some privacy in search of greater openness and convenience and efficiency. Not a bad thing. Yet forces we have entrusted with personal information might mismanage this information, putting us at risk. Not a good thing.

Ask students: What is privacy? Write on the board the classic definition given in 1928 by Justice Louis D. Brandeis: “the right to be let alone — the most comprehensive of rights, and the right most valued by civilized men.” Ask students what they think about that definition, weighing the meaning of its components (“comprehensive,” “civilized,” etc.).

Create debate teams of four members each. You might borrow or adapt the national high school debate topic for the 2000-2001 school year — “Resolved: That the United States federal government should significantly increase protection of privacy in one or more of the following areas: employment, medical records, consumer information, search and seizure.”

If debate is not your class’s strong suit, you might have students write essays (of 2,000 words or so) on the debate topic above, choosing the pro or con position. Whether in debate or in writing, students should address some fundamental issues, with plenty of examples, data and reasoning to back up their positions:

- Are contemporary privacy concerns overstated? Understated?
- What does privacy have to do with the value of respect? Are other values involved?

There is no witness so terrible, no accuser so powerful as the conscience which dwells within us.
— Sophocles
Greek dramatist
• Is privacy the same thing as secrecy? What is the difference?
• What are the dangers, if any, of so much information so readily available to so many people with so many motivations?
• Who owns information about you?
• Is information knowledge? What’s the difference? If you have enough data about a person, can you judge or predict that person’s behavior?

When

somebody lies,

somebody loses.

— Stephanie Ericsson
20th-century American author
IDEA #211

Peace Partners

OVERVIEW: Students research the similarities of historically conflicting cultures and then negotiate and write a peace agreement to promote them.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
● copies of handouts (for each student)
● news reports of ethnic conflicts

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the nature of many of the world’s ethnic conflicts. Explain that many stem from ancient hatreds, passed from generation to generation. Ask students to come up with examples, which might include: Hutus vs. Tutsis in and around Rwanda, Kosovars vs. Serbians, Catholics vs. Protestants in Northern Ireland, Sinhalese vs. Tamil in Sri Lanka, Kurds vs. Turks (or Iraqis or Iranians), Turks vs. Greeks, Armenians vs. Azerbaijanis, Israelis vs. Palestinians, etc. Write these on the board.

Ask students what form these conflicts might take. Answers might range from petty insults and caricatures to genocidal wars (“ethnic cleansing”). At your discretion, distribute media reports of such conflicts. Discuss underlying issues such as: competition for political spoils and land, racism, religious intolerance and tribal identity.

Point out that while cease-fires have sometimes maintained an uneasy peace over these conflicts, lasting peace has not been secured by outside force (or a gun). Suggest that lasting peace comes from within the communities in conflict, through mutual respect and understanding. Ask the students to help explain what this means.

Emphasize the importance for different cultures to learn about others’ points of view. You might say: It takes courageous, long-term commitment to resolve ethnic prejudices. And it takes a fresh perspective, either from individuals who can put aside the past or from those without too much invested in the past — the kind of perspective that youth provides.

Explain that in this exercise, students in pairs will be assigned “rivaling” ethnic identities (not their own), which they will research with particular attention to belief systems, cultural values and historical “enemies.” Explain that each student will then be paired with the “enemy” of his or her ethnicity (use examples in first paragraph). The “enemies” will be partners in finding ways to promote peace through the discussion of each other’s grievances and exploration of common values (ethical and otherwise). Each pair will then write a statement of values, later presented to the class.

Divide students into pairs and designate ethnicities (or allow them to choose from your list on the board). Distribute copies of handout #1. As you conclude the exercise, distribute and discuss handout #2, “The Bostonian Agreement.”

— Adlai Stevenson II
20th-century American politician

Politeness
is the art
of choosing
among one’s
real thoughts.
IDEA #211 Handout #1: Peace Partners

My assigned ethnic identity is ________________________________.

My peace partner’s ethnicity is ________________________________

Here are some of the things our two cultures have in common, which we have discovered through research and discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Cultural Values</th>
<th>Ethical Values</th>
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Here are some of our ideas for increasing awareness of what our two cultures share in common:
IDEA #211 Handout #2: Peace Partners
“The Bostonian Agreement”

Forsan Hussein and Michael Bavly are best friends, which is not remarkable except that Hussein is a Palestinian and Bavly is an Israeli. Their people have a history of violent confrontation with each other; cross-cultural friendships are unusual. Having met as students at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, these friends work to bring their peoples together by promoting knowledge of their similarities rather than dwelling on their differences. They do this by organizing interfaith campus dialogues and hosting a radio program that focuses on shared values. Operating on the belief that lasting peace between nations may involve governments but ultimately must rest on understanding between peoples, the two drafted “The Bostonian Agreement.” “It stresses education,” Hussein told Hope magazine. “Coexistence is a long process. If you tell a child that one plus one is two, he will believe it. It’s the same thing with peace. If you tell the same child that Palestinians or Israelis are your friends and neighbors, he will also believe it.” Here is a section from Article III of The Bostonian Agreement:

The parties realize that the hearts and minds of people from both sides are infected with hate, fear and ignorance; therefore, the required change is educating all people about statutes of peace: tolerance, respect, acceptance and trust. Mutual re-education uproots hatred, fear and contrary ideologies. The parties realize the importance of education as a means to achieve peace. Education materials that promote hostility must be modified to promote coexistence and peace. In addition, it is necessary to create and implement in both communities education programs that teach the history, literature and religion of the other.

From “The Bostonian Agreement,” Article III (Confidence-Building Measures), by Forsan Hussein, a Palestinian, and Michael Bavly, an Israeli. Reprinted from Hope magazine (Fall 1999). Reprinted here with permission from Bavly and Hussein, who may be reached at mbavly@brandeis.edu and forsan@brandeis.edu.
IDEA #212

Workplace Skills

OVERVIEW: Students learn about the working world’s expectations for on-the-job performance, how to recognize societal barriers and their potential impact on career planning, and how lessons learned in school are applicable to the workplace.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

This discussion might be combined with a “shadow a professional for a day” activity. This activity consists of matching each student with a parent, relative or other adult friend who has agreed to let the teen observe him/her on the job for a day. Gaithersburg (Maryland) Middle School, for instance, follows up this activity with a letter-writing exercise thanking the participating adult, mentioning how the Six Pillars of Character were observed in his/her workplace and explaining why these values are important on the job.

Tell students: Today we are going to talk about having a job and getting promoted rather than fired. Let’s make a list of some of the factors that are important to keeping a job. Solicit examples and record them on the chalkboard.

Here are nine important attitudes and values we need to develop in order to be reliable workers. Write the following on the chalkboard:

1. Following directions
2. Cooperating with co-workers
3. Being dependable
4. Taking initiative
5. Being eager to learn
6. Being loyal
7. Being honest
8. Being receptive to constructive criticism
9. Being patient; not expecting instant gratification

Say: As you can see, to be a good worker you need to do a lot of the things we ask you to do in school. Why are these things important? Besides work and school, where else is it important to practice all this stuff? (At home, with friends . . . everywhere!)
Tell students: There’s one more area we can’t leave out: being a “team player.”
Being a team player means you think about your responsibilities to others. Just as you rely on them, they rely on you. Neither of you wants to be “let down.” Being a team player means being willing to put aside your personal needs for the team’s needs.

Team players are willing to put aside selfish desires because they understand that all players have to do their parts in order for the team to be a winning one. A spirit of cooperation exists among team players. Your co-workers count on you — and you count on them — to show up on time, call in when sick, practice safe work habits, do your share and treat others with respect.

Ask: What are some reasons for losing a job? (Possible answers might include always coming in late, calling in sick too often, talking instead of working, making personal calls on the company phone, not following directions, arguing with the boss and co-workers, refusing to wear safety equipment, using alcohol or drugs, goofing around, etc.)

— Bhagavad-Gita

Remarks from letters written by students at Gaithersburg (Maryland) Middle School to employees they “shadowed” for a day.
Ov E rv IE w:

Students fill out worksheets listing examples of behavior which is essential to good performance on the job.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of “Keeping a Job” worksheet for each two students

PROCEDURE:

Divide the class into teams of two. Give each team a copy of the “Keeping a Job” worksheet. Explain that as a team they are to make decisions about the information on the worksheet and write down their answers. When the students are finished, have the teams share their decisions with the rest of the class.

Tell students: *We work hard to learn skills for which we can be paid, but that is not enough. We must develop habits and attitudes ensuring that once we are employed, we keep the job and prosper in it. A good work ethic and personal responsibility helps us not only to make a living, but to make a good life overall.*

Adapted from “Learning for Life: A Partner in Education” (a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America). Used with permission. Copyrighted material of the Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.

There is no substitute for hard work.

— Thomas Edison
IDEA #213 Worksheet: Keeping a Job

Name: ___________________________ Date: ______________

Provide a brief example of how each quality could be demonstrated on the job.

Attendance:
________________________________________________________________

Punctuality:
________________________________________________________________

Honesty:
________________________________________________________________

Cooperation:
________________________________________________________________

Dependability:
________________________________________________________________

Initiative:
________________________________________________________________

Loyalty:
________________________________________________________________

Eagerness to learn:
________________________________________________________________

Ability to accept criticism:
________________________________________________________________

Patience:
________________________________________________________________

In your opinion, which two or three of these traits are most important to keeping a job? Why?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

How do some of these traits apply to home, school, and personal relationships?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

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Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character

YOUR 24/7 ONLINE TEACHING RESOURCE: CHARACTERCOUN TS.ORG
IDEA #214

Responsibility All Around

OVERVIEW: Students discuss and write about what it means to be responsible and how they can demonstrate this in their personal affairs.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Responsibility All Around” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Distribute the “Responsibility All Around” handout. Discuss the “do’s” and “don’ts” with the class. Then tell them that their assignment is to write an essay as described here. Encourage them to be candid and announce that, although you will be collecting the assignment, they will not have to share what they have written with their classmates.

Contributed by Patricia Braun, Changes for Youth Program, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).

Do not lose courage in your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them — every day begin the task anew.

— St. Francis de Sales
IDEA #214 Handout: Responsibility All Around

A person of character is responsible. He/she is diligent, accountable and considers the consequences of his/her actions before acting.

RESPONSIBILITY

**DO:**

... what you’re supposed to do.
... persevere.
... pursue excellence. Do your best in everything you do.
... show self-control and self-discipline.
... think before you act.

**DON'T:**

... blame others for your mistakes.
... give up easily.
... let others down when they’re counting on you.

Whose Responsibility?

This is a story about four people: “Everybody,” “Somebody,” “Anybody” and “Nobody.” There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when actually Nobody asked Anybody.

— Author unknown (contributed by Eric Lewis, Bunker Hill Elementary School, Washington, D.C.)

Essay question: In what ways are you responsible at home, in school and at work? What are your duties in these areas? Provide examples showing how you take responsibility and how you could become more responsible.
IDEA #215

Student-Led Parent Conferences

OVERVIEW: Instead of visiting school periodically to listen to teachers explain how their children are doing, parents are directly guided through this process by students themselves. Everyone benefits: students learn responsibility and presentation skills; parents get a new perspective on how their children are performing; and teachers escape the tedium of assembly line-like recitation. The key is preparation.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- three-ring notebooks for students

PROCEDURE:

At the beginning of the school year or grading period, explain to students the importance of parent conferences. Tell students they will be responsible for preparing a portfolio of their work and direct them to set aside a binder in which to file their assignments and special projects.

A week before the conference, send an invitation letter to parents. Three days before the conference, direct the students to prepare their presentations, which should include at least one quiz, one homework assignment and one lesson from which they feel they learned the most. Instruct students to complete the handout on the following page to serve as a cover sheet for their presentation materials. (You might also encourage students to talk about what they learned in terms of the Six Pillars of Character, as appropriate.) The day before the conference, practice presentations with the students by assuming the role of the parent, then by assuming the role of the student while the students pretend to be parents. In their presentations, students should cover: the purpose of assignments; what was learned; the grade received, and why. Finally, students should help prepare the conference room(s) by cleaning, setting up refreshments, etc.

During the conference, visit with each family, pointing out students’ strengths. If coordinating this activity with other teachers in a “team teaching” environment, make sure that parents know each teacher on the team is available for discussion. Direct those students whose parents can’t attend to hold their conferences at home; these students should return to you a form (designed by you) signed by their parents, signifying the home conference has taken place.

Adapted from “Letting Students Lead Parent Conferences” by Laura Hayden, a teacher at Derby Middle School in Derby, Kansas. Her article is posted on the National Association of Elementary School Principals website (www.naesp.org/comm/mnf98b.htm).

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IDEA #215 Handout: Student-Led Parent Conferences

These are the areas I will cover in my conference:

- the purpose of assignments
- what was learned
- the grades earned, and why

These are my thoughts on my grades:

These are my thoughts on my study habits:

These are my thoughts on my behavior in class and toward my classmates and teachers:

These are my academic goals for the rest of the year:

These are my personal goals for the rest of the year:
IDEA #216

Writing a Grant Proposal

OVERVIEW: Limited school and government budgets can’t always stretch to accommodate a mural project, an experimental garden or new band uniforms. Yet this funding challenge is itself an opportunity. Students generate and write a grant proposal to raise money from charitable, corporate or governmental sources, and learn the value of persistence and planning as they hone writing and researching skills.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- typewriter/computer terminal and printer

Excellent Internet resources include:
- Foundation Center (www.fdncenter.org)
- WestEd: Tips on Preparing a Successful Proposal (www.wested.org/tie/granttips.html)
- Grantseeking in Minnesota: Writing a Successful Grant Proposal (www.mcf.org/mcf/grant/writing.htm)
- National Youth Development Information Center (www.nydic.org/funding.html)
- The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits (www.mapnp.org/library/fndrsng/np_raise/np.raise.htm)
- Michigan State University Library (www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/znonprof.htm)
- Chardon Press (www.chardonpress.com)
- Raising More Money (www.raisingmoremoney.com)

PROCEDURE:

It’s important to know before starting this project that fundraising can be a slow and painstaking process. The young people involved in this grant-seeking activity may not be around when, and if, the funds come through. But the goal of the activity is not so much to focus on the money but on the process involved in thoroughly conceptualizing a problem-solving idea and then working as a team to make it a reality. Securing funding can mean writing many grant proposals, to many potential funders. Because of this long-term outlook — and because money and ongoing fiduciary responsibilities are involved — you should coordinate this activity with
Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.

— Epicurus
Greek sage

the administration of your school or organization. Ideally, you and your students, along with your administration, will set up a process to involve future students in managing the newly funded project.

Ask the students to list the greatest needs of their school (or organization) and, separately, of the community at large. Depending on the size of the class, you might divide the students into groups of six or so and let them discuss these needs; assign them this task as a homework-research assignment. Have them reassemble the next week as a whole class and consolidate lists. Then, hold a vote to select the best fundable project.

A grant proposal tells a story. Elements of a successful “Six Pillars” proposal include: goals; objectives; and an explanation of how the grant will help students make one or more of the Six Pillars stronger at school, in the community and in their own lives.

At large corporations there is usually one person in charge of corporate giving. Find out who this person is and what the company’s guidelines are. Address that person and follow the guidelines with a compelling and clearly written proposal, stressing why your activity merits sponsorship. Follow up with polite inquiries about the application’s status. Remember:

- Be realistic about what can be accomplished.
- Be factual (not emotional). Be specific; don’t make statements in your proposal you can’t substantiate.
- Use clear English (no abbreviations, jargon or slang).
- Get approval from your school or district; collaborate, if necessary, with other pending proposals. You should know if matching funds are available.
- Follow grant guidelines closely and completely.
- Be clear about the amount of work required and who will do it.
- Do your homework; know the cost of all project materials and expenses (including labor) called for in your proposal.

Whether or not the grant is received, direct the young people to write thank-you notes for the opportunity to apply. The group leader/teacher also should write a thank-you note. If a grant is received, give credit to the donor by sending a press release to local newspapers.

Looking for a good idea that might get funding? Here are some leads:

Students at Boone Grove High School in Valparaiso, Indiana, wrote a successful grant proposal to fund a center for senior citizens at their school called Project CARE. Contact: Maureen Maher, Project CARE Coordinator, at (219) 462-1966.

Also, Kraft Foods in partnership with the National 4-H Council offers grants of $500 to $2,500 to local teams promoting youth and adult involvement in such solutions as food banks, outreach and public awareness. Contact: 4-H Council (www.fourhcouncil.edu) or Kraft Foods.
IDEA #217

Achieving Self-Control Through Anger Management

OVERVIEW: Young people realize that they are responsible for their own well-being and that only they can control their feelings. This exercise is not an examination of the causes of anger, but rather its effects.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of handouts (one for each student)

PROCEDURE:

Start a discussion about anger and its consequences. Say something like: *We all get upset sometimes. What are some of the things you get angry about?* List responses, which might include people being hurtful, people breaking rules like cutting in line or cheating, people being slow to understand, etc. Discuss why these things make the students angry.

Next, say: *What are some of the ways we express anger?* Write down responses, which might include: keeping anger in and “venting” it later; keeping it in and never expressing it; seeking revenge, such as spreading gossip about someone or not sharing information the adversary needs; calling names, mocking; sarcasm; getting physical, etc.

Ask students to help you explain what it means when we say someone or something “makes” us angry. Discuss how this can happen. After student responses, ask: *Is it really true that other people have control over our emotions? Is anger like a witch’s spell or a curse that gives other people power over us and makes us unable to do anything about it?*

Suggest: *We can’t control what other people do and say. But we can control ourselves. Our anger is our own problem, a problem we alone can solve. There is no way to live a happy, constructive life — a life of good character — without self-control, and that means controlling our anger.*

Say: *Anger does not give you energy. It does not keep people from taking advantage of you. Anger is a response to fear, psychologists say. You have to learn to deal with that fear to be free of it.*

We make problems worse when we react in anger. You need to deal with problems calmly, without making them worse by destroying your well-being and relationships. It does not help you get your own way. It makes you suffer. You almost always lose more than you gain when you get angry, regardless of the way it seems to you at the moment.
Direct the students to come up with a plan to recognize and deal with anger (including responding to other people’s anger). Instruct students to write down a list of challenges and ideal ways to respond; a list of excuses for getting angry; and ways to take responsibility for our feelings. Encourage them to creatively write about dealing with anger in such forms as: poetry, acronyms, advertising slogans, etc.

In his book *4 Downs to Anger Control*, author Tom Letson uses football terminology to reach his audience. He makes the distinction between “offensive” thinkers and “defensive” thinkers. In football, defense players are trained to view yardage gained as a personal attack, but, he says, this doesn’t work off the gridiron. He suggests people view themselves (in life) as offensive players moving the ball against a tough defense, not reacting to problems, but anticipating them. He terms his “four downs” to anger control A.S.A.P.: 1. Assess the problem; 2. Strategy development; 3. Assess strategy successes; and 4. Punt the failing strategy. He also came up with T.I.M.E.: Think! (about your anger); Intercept! (angry thoughts); Move! (out of the area); and Exit! (the premises completely).

In his book *Winning Every Day*, Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz came up with F.A.I.L.U.R.E. to explain how not to deal with anger: Frustration (you don’t have any answers); Aggression (misdirected); Insecurity (you fear you can’t cut it anymore); Leadership (you abandon it); Undisciplined (you stop practicing fundamentals); Resentment (you assume the victim’s role); Excuses (it’s everyone’s fault but your own).

It is important for the students to come up with something that works for them. (It can be simple, but it should show evidence that thought has been invested in the topic.) After the assignments are turned in, share student ideas. In closing, distribute and discuss copies of the handout.

**Special Resources:**

- *4 Downs to Anger Control*, by Tom Letson (Finish Line Press, 1998)
- *How to Keep People From Pushing Your Buttons*, by Albert Ellis, Ph.D. and Arthur Lange, Ed.D. (Carol Publishing Group, 1994)
- *What to Do When You’re Angry*, by E. Dean Bevan, Ph.D. (Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, 1994)
- American Psychological Association (www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html)
- Anger Management Resource List (www.christophers.org/anger_resources.html)

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*Handout adapted from What to Do When You’re Angry, by E. Dean Bevan, Ph.D. (Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, 1994).*

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.grade-level: 9-12

*Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character*

YOUR 24/7 ONLINE TEACHING RESOURCE: CHARACTERCOUNTS.ORG
IDEA #217 Handout: Manage Anger and Gain Self-Control

We all have problems with people sometimes. But getting angry only makes problems worse, and you will suffer further distress in the bargain. So get smart and get in control. Deal with conflict calmly and rationally. Here’s how, according to E. Dean Bevan of Baker University in Kansas.

1. **Name and “own” the feeling.** Admit it to yourself if you are angry — not “stressed” or “hassled” or “depressed” or “upset” or “abused.” And don’t say someone “made” you angry.

2. **Be civil.** Ironically we often treat strangers better than the people we know; so treat those closest to you at least as well as you treat strangers.

3. **Don’t raise your voice.** Yelling at others does not release pressure, it adds to it — and it turns off the person you’re trying to communicate with. It doesn’t “clear the air,” it poisons it. How do you feel when someone yells at you? Resentful, at best. In a disagreement, remain calm and say, with a smile if possible, “I don’t agree.” If this feels odd or unnatural, it doesn’t make you a phony. You’re trying something new that takes getting used to ... so get used to it.

4. **Don’t get physical.** Acting out your anger (from slamming doors to hitting) is like throwing gasoline on fire: it doesn’t quench the anger, but makes it leap to another level, with potentially serious repercussions.

5. **Listen.** Angry people tend to argue, usually pointlessly, with people they are around the most (friends and family). Because we feel we know the other person, we have their argument all worked out in our head beforehand — meaning we don’t have to listen to what they are actually saying. If you are listening to people, you should be able to repeat what they are saying.

6. **Don’t exaggerate.** Be specific about a problem you are trying to solve and the true frequency of its occurrence. Avoid saying “always” and “never” or phrases like “I’ve told you a million times,” etc.

7. **Avoid absolutes.** See #6. If your adversary hears you saying he is “always” this or “never” that, what chance do you think he’ll agree with you?

8. **Stick to the facts.** If you are upset about someone not being considerate and inviting you along for lunch, say so (if only to yourself). Don’t think, or say, something like, “you never think of me.” Naming the exact problem, like naming anger itself, is a step toward a calmer perspective. Also, don’t characterize a problem (“your work is a mess”); use specifics (“you made these three errors on these two pages”). Feelings are not facts, but your feelings are legitimate. So name your feelings about the facts. Say: “You told a story about me to other people that embarrassed me.”

9. **Don’t call names.** This only produces more anger and makes it hard for the other person to back down. Once harsh words leave your mouth, they can’t be taken back. Relationships can heal after an argument, but personal attacks can leave scar tissue. Even after the argument or conflict is over, your relationship with the person you called derogatory names will probably never be the same.

10. **Don’t mock.** What good can come of belittling someone by caricaturing his behavior or by using an exaggerated tone to distort her words? Of course it’s rude and disrespectful, but it also does you no good.

11. **Memorize your escape.** If an argument escalates and you feel you can’t continue calmly, smile and say, “Let’s stop and talk about this another time.” Then stop talking; resist the temptation to have the final word (this doesn’t mean punishing the other person with the “silent treatment”).

12. **Don’t take hostages.** If someone wants to leave an argument, let him. Don’t block his exit.

13. **Say “you may be right.”** You may not believe it, but saying this sends the message that you have an open mind. (Of course, the idea here isn’t to be phony; do your best to be genuinely open-minded.)

14. **Don’t make major decisions when you’re angry.** Making a decision to spite someone else will only hurt you. If you’re upset, give yourself a few days before making any major decisions. Wait until you can rationally ask yourself how you will benefit from your decision.
IDEA #218

“. . . And Justice for All”

OVERVIEW: Through discussion and artwork, each youngster gains a better understanding of justice and fairness.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- white construction paper (one sheet for each student)
- colored markers and pencils or paints for each student

Prior to this lesson, clip newspaper or magazine articles which demonstrate justice and fairness.

PROCEDURE:

Remind students of the last phrase of the Pledge of Allegiance: “. . . with liberty and justice for all.” Ask the students if they know what “justice” really means and record their ideas on the chalkboard.

To reinforce the fundamentals, follow your discussion with the following statement: Justice means everyone gets equal treatment under the country’s laws. It means giving deserved rewards and punishments impartially. That is, not favoring one person over another because of their skin color, ethnic background, religion, gender or sexual orientation. This also applies on a personal level — not just as it relates to the law. It means respecting each other’s differences and doing your best to give everyone an equal chance.

Give examples of justice at home, in the classroom, in the community, and in the nation. Talk about specific articles from newspapers or magazines and offer other examples such as:

- All the children at home must do their chores before watching TV or going outside to play. No one is favored.
- Everyone gets a turn to talk when there is a class discussion.
- If someone is drunk and driving a car, that person is breaking the law and, if caught, should be punished no matter who he or she is.
- Everyone in our country who is accused of committing a crime is entitled to a fair trial.

The innocent love justice.

Everyone else prefers mercy.

— Unknown
Distribute art supplies and ask the students to think of an example of justice at home, at school, in the community, or in the nation. Invite the students to draw a picture of that example of justice. Under the picture, have them write the words, “This is an example of justice because . . .” complete the sentence with a brief explanation of how the picture exemplifies justice. For example, a student might draw a picture of a child holding up an exam with an “A” on it, writing below: “This is an example of justice because . . . an ‘A’ is earned by all people who get a certain score.”

When the pictures are finished, ask the students to show them to the class, reading aloud the reason why each is an example of justice. Post the pictures on a bulletin board in the class or at another highly visible location. Summarize the activity by asking some thought-provoking questions like the following and facilitating the discussion.

1. What would it be like if teachers gave good grades only to their favorite students and not to everyone who earned them?

2. Why is it so difficult for us to treat each other fairly?

3. What does it mean to be partial?

4. When is it okay to be partial to someone or something? When is it not okay?

5. What is the difference between being partial and being prejudiced?

6. A popular saying states that “justice is blind.” What does that mean? Do you think justice in our country is really blind?

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #219

**Stereotyping**

**OVERVIEW:** Students learn about making fair judgments by discovering how inaccurate stereotypical labels can be. They note instances of stereotyping they encounter throughout the week and are encouraged to always be wary of making hasty judgments.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Write “stereotype” on the chalkboard and ask the students to define the word. Discuss it until you feel that everyone is clear about what it means.

Next, ask: What are some common labels assigned to people which cause them to be stereotyped? Generate a list on the chalkboard, including labels like: dumb jock, dumb blonde, crooked politician, valley girl, etc. This list might also include stereotypical names for organizations, ethnic and religious groups and political parties. Ask children to share relevant personal experiences or other examples from literature, history, films or current affairs. Ask them, Were the labels always accurate? When someone is labeled like this, how do you think it makes them feel? Discuss how stereotypes can be harmful and unjust.

Tell them: Pay attention this week for cases of stereotyping at school, at home and in the news. At the end of the week everyone must bring in a list of at least ten instances —without naming those involved. We will be discussing these so be prepared to explain each one. When you discuss the examples, emphasize how these generalizations confuse our ability to judge people fairly on their own merits. Write the word “prejudice” on the board and note that it comes from “pre-judging” — that is, judging others before they have the chance to prove themselves.

Ask: What are the possible consequences of using stereotypes to judge others? (Examples include: missing out on having a good friend because her “label” caused you not to give her a chance; having a losing basketball season because the coach cut some good players simply because they didn’t look right; electing an unqualified political candidate because he/she looked better on TV.)

Adapted from “The Teaching of Values” (Los Angeles Unified School District), 1978.
IDEA #220

Media Coverage

OVERVIEW: Teens research news coverage using magazines, newspapers, television and the Internet to make the case that a particular local topic is not getting the fair attention it deserves.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- access to library, news reference database

PROCEDURE:

Ask students where they get their information about current events (newspapers, magazines, television news programs, the Internet). You might say: There’s a lot of information out there, isn’t there? And yet a lot of important issues probably aren’t getting the attention they deserve — and because of that these issues may remain problems longer than they have to. Ask students why this might be true. Possible answers: these issues are being ignored by the media; people are apathetic and don’t care to stay informed; there’s so much information out there that we have trouble prioritizing the importance of what we read, watch and hear.

Tell students they will each research a local issue that they think has been inadequately covered in the news. Explain that a “local” issue is either one that only concerns the local community or is a local expression of a larger issue or problem (like homelessness for example). Ask the students to help you define “inadequate” coverage: reporting on an issue without balance (fairness to all sides of the issue) or just not covering an issue as much as other stories. Inform students that they must back up their assertions with research from the library (or the Internet) to find out how much coverage there has been.

Reports are due in two weeks. Check in with students at least once a week to make sure they’re making progress. You may want selected students to make a class presentation on their findings as well as explain what they are willing to do to raise awareness of the neglected issue.

As a follow-up exercise, you might instruct students to write reports on the neglected topics and then submit them — with a letter explaining the project — to local media organizations. This can be an individual or group exercise.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead
20th-century American anthropologist
IDEA #221

Diversity Discussion Questions

OVERVIEW: The students think about and discuss the concepts of “unity in diversity” and “strength in diversity.”

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: none

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the meaning of “unity in diversity” and “strength in diversity.” Ask the following discussion questions:

a. How does the interdependence of people make their contributions more valuable?

b. As we become better acquainted with persons of different backgrounds, does our fear and suspicion of them diminish? Do we learn to better appreciate their abilities?

c. What is the benefit of allowing — even encouraging — different groups to preserve their uniqueness while, at the same time, getting people of various backgrounds to work together for a common purpose?

d. How does the prejudicial treatment of one person endanger the rights of all persons?

e. What can each of us do to combat prejudice against groups to which we don’t belong?

If we cannot end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.

— John F. Kennedy, Jr.

Adapted from “The Teaching of Values” (Los Angeles Unified School District), 1978.
IDEA #222

Cases of Justice

OVERVIEW: In small groups, the students come up with real-life examples of justice or injustice as it relates to their group’s topic. They learn about historical and contemporary cases demonstrating fairness as a societal issue, then present a report to the whole class.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- slips of paper photocopied and cut out from the “Cases of Justice” activity sheet (one for each small group)

PROCEDURE:

Divide the students into small groups. Distribute one slip of paper (photocopied and cut out from the “Cases of Justice” activity sheet) to each group and tell them to briefly discuss the topic. Say: *Your discussions should address the following questions* (you might write these on the board as a reminder):

- *Is this topic important to preserving and/or building democracy? Why or why not?*
- *If one person is denied this right, how is this the problem of society at large?*
- *What would happen if people were consistently denied this right?*

Before they begin their discussion, say: *Next time we meet, each of you must bring in an example (from history or current affairs) demonstrating how justice was or was not served with respect to your group’s topic. We will then break into groups again and the groups will choose one example to present to the rest of the class.* Give them adequate time to prepare an oral presentation which the whole class will discuss.

*Adapted from “The Teaching of Values” (Los Angeles Unified School District), 1978.*
IDEA #222 Activity Sheet: Cases of Justice

Directions: Photocopy and cut out the following topics for small group discussion:

Freedom to observe religious traditions or elect to observe none

Equality of opportunity in terms of employment

Judgment on the basis of facts, not rumors

Social acceptance without regard to ethnicity

Equality in the eyes of the law

Equality of opportunity in terms of education

Freedom to hold unpopular opinions

Respect for private property
IDEA #223

Being Fair and Just

OVERVIEW: Students discuss and write about the importance of fairness and justice and how this issue is relevant to their personal lives.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Being Fair and Just” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Distribute the “Being Fair and Just” handout. Discuss the “do’s” and “don’ts” with the class. Then tell them that their assignment is to write an essay as described here. Encourage them to be candid and announce that, although you will be collecting this assignment, they will not have to share what they have written with their classmates.

Contributed by Patricia Braun, Changes for Youth Program, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).

Truth never damages a cause that is just.

— Mahatma Gandhi
IDEA #223 Handout: Being Fair and Just

A person of character is fair and just. He/she tries to be impartial and is open to differing viewpoints.

FAIRNESS

**DO:**
- . . . treat people equally. Give everyone a chance.
- . . . play by the rules.
- . . . be open minded to what others have to say.

**DON'T:**
- . . . take advantage of others.
- . . . blame others carelessly or unfairly.
- . . . use favoritism in rewarding or punishing others.
- . . . take more than your fair share of anything.

Essay question: Write an essay about fairness and justice. Consider the “do’s and don't's” above and address one or more of the following questions in your essay:

1. Many people today say, “Life isn’t fair.” Do you believe this? Why or why not?
2. If this is true, why should people of character try to be fair and just?
3. Why is this an important value to you in your personal life?
IDEA #224

Textbooks Unbound

OVERVIEW: Young people discuss and write about fairness using their history textbooks as subjects for analysis.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Textbooks Unbound” handout for each student

PROCEDURE:

Distribute the “Textbooks Unbound” handout (This should be handed out in advance of your discussion so that students can reflect on the questions and come prepared. As a homework assignment, you might have them write essays based on one of the discussion questions on the handout.) Discuss the questions with the class. Encourage them to be candid and critical, but don’t let the exercise degenerate into a thoughtless “book bashing” session. Discuss how fairness was and was not shown and how the depiction of historical events can create and reinforce unfair stereotypes.

In addition to (or instead of) having the students compose essays in response to the handout’s questions, you might assign the following writing exercise:

“The year 1876 is ending. Conflict over racial, ethnic and economic differences has rocked our nation’s Centennial. How does your history textbook address these themes? Produce a special edition of USA Today reviewing the year’s important stories. In small groups, investigate the following ‘headlines’:

• “Presidential Contenders Argue Over Reconstruction”
• “Major Setback in Indian Wars”
• “Anti-Chinese Sentiment Increases”
• “Labor Movement Gains Momentum”

Discussion questions adapted from Teaching Tolerance, Spring 1997 (Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, AL). Used with permission. Fax the Center at (334) 264-3121 for information about its Teaching Tolerance Project.
Idea #224 Handout: Textbooks Unbound

1. Take a fresh look at your history book:
   - Use three elements — illustrations, chapter subheads and index — to compare and contrast the book’s coverage of African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Latinos and Native Americans.
   - Compare the coverage of wars, battles and conflicts with that of peace-makers and peacekeeping initiatives.
   - How does your book “tell the story” of our country? How many different “voices” can you identify?

2. How much space does your textbook devote to the lives and writings of African American leaders Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois? Use the following points to guide library research, discussion and other activities:
   - Describe the early experiences and education of the two men.
   - What were their significant achievements?
   - Compare and contrast their ideas for improving the lives of black Americans. How much of their personal experiences have contributed to these views?
   - Take a similar look at the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X during the Civil Rights era.

3. How does your textbook treat Jeanette Rankin? Use her career to address the recurring theme of progressivism in American politics:
   - Research and report on her activities following her first anti-war vote; involvement in the international peace movement in the 1920s and ‘30s; re-election to Congress in 1940; leadership of the Women’s Strike for Peace in 1968; and advocacy for women’s rights into the 1970s.
   - What lessons can young people learn from Rankin’s example?
   - Propose a suitable tribute to her life and work — for example, design a postage stamp or a monument or describe a commemorative event.

4. Rock ’n’ roll exerted a powerful influence on young people of the 1950s. Its popularity brought conventional attitudes about race into question.
   - What does your history book say about rock ’n’ roll?
   - Why did some people call rock ’n’ roll “jungle music”?
   - Discuss social tensions depicted in the documentary “Rock ’n’ Roll — The Early Years” and the feature films “Blackboard Jungle,” “The Buddy Holly Story” and “La Bamba.”
IDEA #225

Teen Court

OVERVIEW: While reflecting on the virtues of the democratic jury system, students participate in a mock trial and hone critical thinking and communication skills to reach a fair, unanimous judgment. Alternately, this exercise can be used to judge the specific action or behavior of a historical or literary figure.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- chairs for “jurors”

PROCEDURE:

To set the stage, you might say: *Any society needs a system of justice to decide if the rules that define and protect the society have been broken — and, if they have, what to do about it. The perceived fairness of this system lends legitimacy to authority and order in that society. In the United States, we employ the ancient right of being judged by a “jury of one’s peers.”*

Inform the class that you are going to hold a mock trial. Choose one student to play the defendant, one the prosecutor, one the defender and 12 students to be jurors. You will be the judge.

Tell the students the facts of the case: The defendant, Phil, is a 17-year-old junior who was caught stealing school supplies and a pair of sneakers for his little brother at Wal-Mart. Phil has never shoplifted before, but was teased for not having basic stuff that other kids have. His mother, a single parent, works all day in a minimum-wage job and doesn’t have much time or money for her children, whom Phil usually cares for after school (he doesn’t have time for a job). Several months before this incident, he was caught shoplifting in the same store, but the store clerk simply asked Phil to return the goods and then let him go. Lastly, when he was younger, the store clerk who caught Phil used to shoplift with Phil’s older brother (Phil knows this).

Tell the jurors that they are to decide a *just* punishment or remedy to the criminal actions presented. After a designated amount of preparation time, the prosecutor will make a five-minute opening statement about what he/she feels the defendant’s actions should warrant (with reasons given for his/her arguments). Next, the defender has five minutes to rebuff prosecutorial comments and pose his/her own remedy to the crime. Then, each juror asks the defendant one or two questions. After all the jurors’ questions have been asked (the defendant answers directly), the jurors...
must unanimously reach a fair remedy or punishment to the crime, write it out, and present it to the rest of the class.

Once the remedy is shared, discuss why it was chosen and what might result. Highlight its rehabilitative nature (or lack thereof). Lastly, ask the jurors to discuss what skills they needed to reach a fair judgment and how these skills can be applied to everyday life.

End with this statement: Do you think that young people could never sit in judgment on a real case? Think again. Students at Wilson High School in Los Angeles act as jurors to listen to first-time offenders under the supervision of a Superior Court judge. The jury asks questions and the defendant must explain his or her actions. The sentences typically run to community service (say, 50 hours for vandalism, curfew violation, assault). The student jurors decide what’s fair. Those who are judged guilty also must return to serve on a jury themselves. Contact: Wilson High School, 4500 Multnomah St., Los Angeles, CA 90032

No man chooses evil because it is evil; he only mistakes it for happiness, the good he seeks.

— Mary Wollstonecraft

19th-century English novelist (“Frankenstein”)
IDEA #226

Fair Opportunities: Teaching Disadvantaged Students

OVERVIEW: Teens establish a tutoring program for disadvantaged students and meet regularly to compare notes and share teaching ideas and successes. You may want to make this an elective exercise, however, for it involves a serious commitment from your students.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- student notebooks for journal-keeping
- Resources include (check www.charactercounts.org for more):
  - Boys & Girls Clubs of America
  - Big Brothers Big Sisters
  - YMCA
  - “School on Wheels,” a nonprofit, trademarked, Los Angeles-based tutoring program for homeless youth (310) 589-2642

SETTING: Tutoring can be done in any public place, such as a library or at a shelter (but not in a private living space).

PROCEDURE:

Inform students that not all young people have a home life that is conducive to studying. Some parents are working or absent or unable to help with schoolwork. Suggest that inconsistent parenting and schooling can be a particular problem for youth who live in foster care or who move from shelter to shelter. Ask students to help explain how and why this can harm the futures of these individuals. Point out that homeless children in particular are forced to move frequently and need someone to help them with their studies.

Tell the students that they can help address this fundamental injustice by becoming tutors and mentors. Give students a list of local tutoring/mentoring resources and tell them they have three weeks to get involved in an approved group. They can choose to help someone younger, as a mentor, or another teen, as a peer. Emphasize that good tutors/mentors, stick with it (after their own assignment ends). You might relay that helping a homeless child simply to fulfill a class assignment does not model genuine good character.

Instruct students to keep a journal of their tutoring sessions and report back to the class every month about problems they are encountering and solutions they’ve found. At the end of the term, have students write a 2,000-word report, exploring how the experience challenged and changed them.
IDEA #227

Big Brothers and Sisters

OVERVIEW: Teens learn the importance of caring for younger children through a mentoring program with young children.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: pens and notebooks for journal-writing activity

SETTING: Mentoring activities should be supervised and conducted in an open public space.

PROCEDURE:

Initiate a mentoring program in your classroom or other youth setting. Have the teens discuss ways they could help younger children (e.g., with reading, math, artwork, horticultural or other science projects, or learning about the Six Pillars!). The assistance they provide might tie in with a subject they are currently studying or you might consider initiating a whole new project, such as jointly planting a garden. (Use ideas from this book or other CHARACTER COUNTS! resources.)

Begin by making arrangements with an elementary school teacher or other adult who works with children. Tell him or her that you would like to have your teenagers serve as mentors for the children. (Alternately, you might talk to several teachers, asking each to select a few students who could use a little extra help — or see the list of contacts at the end of this idea for help.)

Ask the teens if any of them have younger brothers or sisters whom they have to baby-sit. Ask: What are some of the most basic things to remember when dealing with these kids? Make a list of their responses and tell them to do the same. Make sure to emphasize being patient and giving compliments.

Emphasize the importance of teaching by example. Say: Young children often learn just as much from observing our behavior as they do from hearing our instructions. Discuss the development of values in children, citing the Six Pillars of Character and tell them they are taking on a serious responsibility and that you are relying on each of them to be a dependable and caring role model. You might also consider having the children’s teacher coach the teens on how to be a positive and effective mentor.

Have the teens work one-on-one with an assigned “little brother” or “little sis-

— Marc Freedman (author of The Kindness of Strangers, Jossey-Bass, 1993) on what it takes to be an effective mentor
Monitor the interaction of the young people, going from pair to pair assisting them as needed; try to foster as much independent interaction between the teenagers and the students as possible.

Discuss the activity with the teens the next time you meet. In addition to discussing any opportunities for improvement, ask them how they think they can positively impact the children.

Have them track their progress and observations in journals. Tell them that these journals will be due on the day you discuss the previous mentoring activity.

Schedule regular meetings (once or twice a week), reflecting with the group after each session.

Contributed by Big Brothers and Sisters of Tarrant County (Fort Worth, TX).
Mentoring Resources

Here are some resources if you would like more information and/or help matching teen mentors with youths in need:

**America’s Promise: Alliance for Youth**
(888) 55-YOUTH
(http://www.americaspromise.org)

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of America**
(215) 567-7000
(http://www.bbbsa.org)

**Children First**
(800) 914-2212

**Coalition for America’s Children**
(888) 544-KIDS
(http://www.kidscampaign.org)

**Impact Online**
(415) 327-1389 or (703) 757-6520
(http://www.impactonline.org)

**One to One/The National Mentoring Partnership**
(202) 338-3844
(http://www.mentoring.org)

**Project America**
(800) 880-3352
(http://www.project.org)
IDEA #228

Seniors Prom

OVERVIEW: Students develop and promote cooperation, commitment and community caring through the planning of a senior citizen prom.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- art supplies, decorations, refreshments, music

SETTING: cafeteria or community center activity room

PROCEDURE:

Discuss why students have a prom. Discuss and list all the preparation required to execute a prom. Ask students to explain how these various responsibilities incorporate the Six Pillars — in particular, the trait of caring. Discuss the positive feelings students gain from producing and attending a prom. Have them explain how the experience can promote character growth.

Next, have them discuss why this activity should or shouldn’t be limited to high school students. Then, ask the students to consider the possibility of having a prom for true “seniors” — senior citizens — at a retirement home or center. Discuss the responsibilities involved as well as how such an activity would benefit the attendees.

Assign or designate responsibilities to pairs or groups of students such as:
- contacting the center’s administrative staff to arrange date and time
- acquiring art supplies to make decorations
- obtaining refreshments and refreshment supplies
- finding music and music equipment
- coordinating the actual prom set up and execution
- formulating a budget (based on funds and resources)
- planning possible fundraiser events

At the event, students serve as hosts and hostesses, dance partners, etc. After the prom, students can again discuss how the prom provided opportunities to express and develop the trait of caring. As a summary project, you might have students write about the misconceptions young people have about the elderly (and vice versa), suggesting how a project like this can foster understanding.

Inspired by “Senior (Citizen) Prom” activity posted on the Cooperating School Districts website (www.info.csd.org/staffdev/chared/newcece/newhigh.html).
IDEA #229

Helen Keller’s Example

OVERVIEW: Teens learn the importance of caring for others and how even those facing great obstacles can make a tremendous difference helping those in need.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS: biographies and other materials related to Helen Keller (see below)

PROCEDURE:

Prior to having a discussion about the example set by Helen Keller, have students read selections from one of the biographies of Helen Keller. Also recommended is an eight-page pamphlet about Helen Keller’s altruism and selflessness which is available from the American Foundation for the Blind. Obtain this item by sending a self-addressed envelope with two stamps to the following address:

The American Foundation for the Blind
15 W. 16th St.
New York, NY 10011

Discuss Helen Keller’s approach to life (e.g., how she spent her adult life caring for and assisting others). Ask the students what effect they think this had on her personally. Say: Although she had to overcome enormous obstacles in her own life, she was enriched and learned to appreciate life more fully as a result of her service to others. Mention to the students how easy it would have been for her to play the role of a powerless victim, but how she resisted this temptation and turned an adverse condition into an asset.

After discussing Helen Keller and the importance of caring for others, have them write an essay in response to the following: “Compare Helen Keller’s example of kindness and compassion to the example set by a popular contemporary hero.” Tell them to pick a specific figure who is admired by today’s young people (e.g., a sports star, actor or musician) or to write in general terms about a typical contemporary role model.

IDEA #230

Show You Care

OVERVIEW: Students discuss and write about caring for others and how this issue is relevant to their personal lives.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Show You Care” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Distribute the “Show You Care” handout. Discuss the “do’s” and “don’t’s” with the class. Then tell them that their assignment is to write an essay as described here. Encourage them to be candid and announce that, although you will be collecting this assignment, they will not have to share what they have written with their classmates.

You are what you do.
— Unknown

Contributed by Patricia Braun, Changes for Youth Program, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).
IDEA #230 Handout: Show You Care

A person of character is fair and just. He/she tries to be impartial and is open to differing viewpoints.

CARING

**DO:**

. . . show compassion and kindness.
. . . show empathy and consideration.
. . . be thankful and express gratitude for what others do for you.
. . . forgive others.

**DON’T:**

. . . be mean, cruel or insensitive.
. . . neglect those who need your help.
. . . think only about yourself.

•     •     •

Essay question: Write an essay about showing kindness, compassion and consideration to others. Consider the “do’s and don’t’s” above and address one or more of the following questions in your essay:

1. Are you a caring person? How much do you show kindness, compassion and consideration to those who can’t help or hurt you?

2. Do you know someone who is especially caring? How do they show this?

3. Why do some people appear to show more kindness and compassion for their pets than they do for other people?
IDEA #231

Appreciations

**OVERVIEW:** Teens learn the importance of caring for others. They acknowledge their peers’ positive attributes and suggest ways these qualities are (or could be) put to use to serve others.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:** none

**PROCEDURE:**

Before beginning the activity, share the following quote:

*I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve others.*

— Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Nobel laureate

Select a diverse group of five or six students. Write their names on the board, leaving enough room underneath their names to record comments from the class. Ask everyone to think about these students and write down one sentence listing a personal quality they admire or appreciate in those whose names are on the board. Tell them that the only restriction is that they are not to write about physical appearances (e.g., “nice clothes,” “nice shoes” or “nice hair” are not acceptable responses). (Those whose names are on the board don’t need to write about themselves.)

Next, go around the room and have them share their statements. Make notes on the board under each student’s name. (But leave some space for more remarks later.)

When you have a sizable amount of positive characteristics listed under each student’s name, ask: *Which of these characteristics might be used to serve others in need? How?* Solicit comments and discuss.

In the remaining space under each student’s name, list specifically how they could use these attributes to help those in need. Tell everyone: *We all have special abilities. If you’re looking for meaning in your life, try making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.*

___________________________________________________________

Contributed by the Youth Volunteer Corps of America (3213 S. Norman St., Seattle, WA 98144).
IDEA #232

Running a Blood Drive

OVERVIEW: Students take responsibility for organizing a blood drive, working as a team with field representatives of the American Red Cross. The Red Cross representative will also provide promotional and collateral material.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- brochures, posters, fliers and promotional items (available and designed to educate and encourage students to donate blood). For the American Red Cross representative in your area, call (800) 491-2113 or visit www.redcross.org.

SPECIAL SETTING: Auditorium

PROCEDURE:

Have a talk with students about the importance of a secure supply of blood in health care. The community blood supply is everyone’s responsibility, and by letting them know they have the power to save lives, they will feel as if they can and do make a difference. You might say: Sometimes it’s hard to see ourselves as heroes. But every day, you have the power to save lives. Point out that blood is a matter of life and death to someone needing a transfusion. Yet of the Americans who could give blood, less than three percent do. For every unit of blood that is donated, up to three lives can be touched when the blood is separated into its components of red cells, plasma and platelets.

Ask students to share experiences that they may have had with someone who gave or received blood. Putting a face on the need for blood makes a powerful statement.

Contact an American Red Cross representative to help the students coordinate a blood drive. Create a student committee responsible for distributing posters and fliers, placing an article in the school and local newspapers, volunteering on the day of the drive and, most importantly, recruiting donors. According to the Red Cross, the primary reason people don’t give blood is that no one asks them to give.

After the blood drive, the committee should thank donors by creating a large poster, placing a thank-you ad in the school newspaper or creating cards for donors.

Special thanks to Julie Juliisson, communications manager, American Red Cross Blood Services, Southern California Region.
IDEA #233

A Thousand Words

OVERVIEW: To make students more aware that compassion involves a commitment to understanding and engaging in another person’s life, they view images of other people’s lives and take the time to creatively interpret what they see.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
• photo(s) cut out from various magazines (be sure these have no headlines, captions or associated articles describing the scene)

PROCEDURE:

Choose one or more photos (the amount is up to you) that provoke some sort of emotional response from the viewer. The photo should feature at least one person. Try to choose images where the emotions of the person in the photo are not displayed overtly (screaming, crying, laughing, etc.), but where their mood or situation is ambiguous.

To begin, you might say: There is an old saying: “A picture is worth a thousand words.” We are going to look at a picture and describe it in a thousand words. But before we perform this task, we need to ask ourselves what a person has to do to feel compassion for another person and why. Solicit and list answers. Point out that part of caring involves empathy — seeing another’s perspective and feeling what he or she is going through. Then say: Our purpose here is to look at the people in the photo with compassionate eyes. Imagine their lives, their thoughts, their dreams, their fears. Invent a story for them. To do that, you have to care about them.

Distribute the photo(s) and then display them for everyone to see. If you have more than one photo, direct the students to choose only one to write about. Encourage them to pretend that they are the figure in the photo(s), or that they are the photographer. Invite them to think about: what the person/photographer sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches and feels in the captured moment; why the figure in the picture is happy, scared, bored or sad; where he/she has come from and where he/she is headed; and why the photographer cares enough about him/her to take a picture. Once the stories are complete, invite students to share them. Lastly, suggest that taking the time to figure out a person’s feelings is the essence of empathy and compassion, key elements of caring. Ask them to help you explain why.

IDEA #234

Group Reports on Civic Duties

OVERVIEW: Teens come to better understand that citizens at all levels are obliged to pay a price for the privileges a civilized society offers. Students research specific duties and means of “paying to play” (fulfilling civic duties like voting and serving on a jury or paying taxes and fees).

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- art materials for visual aids (optional)

Students must have access to a library with magazine and newspaper articles and/or government reports concerning civic responsibilities as well as federal and state income taxes, sales taxes, gasoline and cigarette taxes, property taxes, inheritance taxes, licensing fees, and local/state highway tolls.

PROCEDURE:

Begin be asking the students what they have to do when they want to get inside a theater or amusement park. When the students respond that they have to pay the price of admission, explain that enjoying the privileges of a democratic society also entails a cost to each member.

Tell students: In order to enjoy services or receive goods, you have to pay the amount of money currently being charged. You have to “pay to play.” You might not realize it, but just to live here and be a part of this society, citizens must pay a price. This is true of every civilized country in the world. One of the costs of belonging is a tax, and there are many different kinds of taxes. Only working adults pay some types of taxes, and other types are paid by everyone. Money collected through taxes is used to buy things that benefit the community (e.g., roads, schools, and police and fire protection.

Say: In addition to paying taxes and other fees, citizen participation is required to make our democratic system function. Our system gives us many rights and liberties, but we cannot expect to retain them if our motto is “leave it to the experts” when it comes to politics. Ask: What are some of the non-monetary costs associated with living in a democracy? (answers should include: staying informed, making our opinions heard, acting to support what we think is right, and carrying out other civic responsibilities.)

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom . . . must undergo the fatigue of supporting it.

— Thomas Paine
responsibilities such as jury duty and voting). Make a list of these responses on the board.

Have the students form teams of three or four to investigate the costs to each individual of living in a democratic society. Give instructions: Firstly, each team is to find an example everyone agrees is an essential “payment to play.” This may be some type of tax or fee, or it may be one of the civic obligations we discussed. Next to the responses you recorded on the board, write the following examples of taxes and fees:

- Federal Income Taxes
- State Income Taxes
- State Sales Taxes
- Inheritance Taxes
- Property Taxes
- Unemployment Funds
- Disability Funds
- Gasoline Taxes
- Cigarette Taxes
- County (or State) Tolls
- Vehicle Registration Fees
- Driver’s Licenses
- Pet Licenses

Avoid duplication of topics by having each team announce theirs after a few minutes of discussion. Continue with instructions: Next, delegate responsibilities among members of your team. As a group you will have to develop a plan for gathering information, prepare a report, and then give the report to the class to support why you think your chosen duty is crucial. Stress that the teams can teach their information in a variety of ways. For example, the students may use illustrations, charts or lists, and dramatizations.

Distribute any resource materials you may have on hand and make suggestions to facilitate further research. Besides finding resources at the library, urge the teams to interview people who may have information or special experience with the topic under investigation. Provide names and phone numbers of public agencies where information may be obtained. Let the students know how many opportunities they will have to meet during class to develop their reports, and when the completed reports are due.

Be on hand to help the teams over any rough spots they may encounter during their meetings. At times, clarify the scope of each team’s investigation.

On the day of the reports, help each team convey its information as effectively as possible. Allow the class to ask questions, and acknowledge each team for its work. Ask the following discussion questions if you would like to cover more ground after the reports have been given:

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**Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.**

— J. P. Curran
1. It is said that we live in a free country. What would happen if everyone thought that meant each individual didn’t have to pay a price for living in a civilized society?

2. Who pays to live here?

3. In what ways do we pay to live here?

4. What are some of the things we get for our money?

Adapted from “Character Education in America’s Schools,” by Terri Akin, et al. (eds), (Innerchoice Publishing, Spring Valley, CA), 1995. Used with permission.
IDEA #235

World Wise Schools

*The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.*
— Leo Tolstoy

**OVERVIEW:** Students learn the worth of volunteer service and develop intercultural awareness by corresponding with a Peace Corps volunteer.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**

(Contact the “World Wise Schools” program at address below.)

**PROCEDURE:**

Involving your students in a pen-pal relationship with a Peace Corps volunteer by enrolling your class in the World Wise Schools program. Teachers may ask to be matched to a volunteer living in a certain region of the world or to one who is working in a specific program (agriculture, business, education, fisheries, forestry, or health).

In coordination with this program, discuss volunteer service as an expression of civic virtue. To add meaning to the program, clip newspaper and magazine articles related to your volunteer’s country or region.

Participating classrooms are offered a variety of services by World Wise Schools, including videotapes, study guides with background readings and worksheets, and classroom visits by returned Peace Corps volunteers.

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*Contributed by World Wise Schools, a program of the Peace Corps (1990 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20526; 202-606-3294).*
IDEA #236

The Power of the Pen

OVERVIEW: Students learn the value of civic participation by writing letters to the editor or to elected officials.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- paper for each youngster
- pen or other writing implement for each youngster
- one photocopy of the “Tips on Writing to Newspaper Editors and Elected Officials” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Begin by discussing what it means to be a good citizen. Say: *Being a responsible member of your community means more than just showing up at the polls on election day.* Ask the students what else should be included in any definition of civic virtue. Make sure the following points are mentioned:

- volunteering
- being a good neighbor and working for the common good
- protecting the environment
- obeying laws and rules
- staying informed and voicing your opinion

Then say: *Let’s focus on “staying informed and voicing your opinion.”* Discuss the importance of knowing and responding to the political and social issues of the day. If they say that they’d rather leave such matters to the “experts,” tell them that this is how dictatorships and tyrannies are run. Tell them: *A healthy democracy depends on an informed citizenry that cares and works to create a better future.*

Tell them that they are each to identify an issue that they care about and to become informed about this issue through reading newspapers, news magazines and/or tuning in to current events programs on the radio and television. Tell them that you expect each of them to become an expert on one important contemporary issue.

After they’ve had some time to reach “expert” status, tell them that it’s time to put their knowledge to work. After having each of them describe “their” issue and...
what they have learned about it, say: *Now we’re going to let your expertise reach a wider audience. Your assignment is to write a letter to an elected official or to the editor of a newspaper or magazine. Distribute the “Tips on Writing to Newspaper Editors and Elected Officials” handout and tell them to follow this guide when drafting their letters.*

When they’re finished, have them turn in their letters to you so you can edit them and evaluate them based on how well they reflect the “tips” on the handout. Then make photocopies of the letters and send them off. Save and post any replies or printed letters-to-the-editor on a bulletin board and discuss these responses.

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*See “100 Ways to Enhance Values and Morality in Schools and Youth Settings,” by Howard Kirschenbaum (Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA), 1995.*

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_T_he press in

our free country

is reliable and

useful not

because of its

good character

but because of its

great diversity.

— E. B. White
IDEA #236 Handout: Tips on Writing to Newspaper Editors and Elected Officials

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
— Anthropologist Margaret Mead

- Type or neatly print your letter.
- Rather than addressing a series of related problems, focus on one specific issue.
- Write concisely and keep your letter as brief as possible.
- If writing to an elected official, try to make reference to specific legislation (including name and number of the bill).
- If writing a letter to the editor, try to make reference to a specific article unless you are seeking to draw attention to an issue you feel the press has neglected.
- Share a relevant personal story if you have one.
- Maintain a respectful tone and be generous with praise as well as criticism.
- Be sure to include a return address on your letter.
- Sign your letter and type or print your name under your signature.

Some handy numbers and addresses . . .

The Congressional Switchboard:
202-224-3121

U.S. Congressperson:
The Honorable (Name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC  20515

U.S. Senator:
The Honorable (Name)
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC  20510

State Representative:
The Honorable (Name)
State Capitol Building
(Capital City), (State) (Zip Code)

(In Canada)
Cabinet or Prime Minister:
(Title) (Name)
Member of Parliament
Ottawa, Ontario  K1A 0R5
(No postage is required when writing to members of the Canadian Parliament.)

For additional tips see “To Save a Child,” by Audrey E. Talkington and Barbara Albers Hill (Avery Publishing Group, Garden City Park, NY), 1993.
IDEA #237

Protecting the Planet

OVERVIEW: Students discuss and write about the issue of rainforest destruction and the notion of being a “global citizen.”

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- paper for each youngster
- pen or other writing implement for each youngster
- one photocopy of the “Facts About Rainforests” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

Begin by discussing what it means to be a good citizen and how far the notion of community membership should extend. Say: Being a responsible citizen isn’t just limited to doing your share at your school, in your neighborhood, or in your country. It ultimately means having a sense of duty to and looking out for the welfare of everyone on our planet.

Ask: What are some problems that confront all of us, regardless of what part of the globe we happen to inhabit? Solicit their responses and discuss. Some answers might include: global warming, destruction of rainforests, exhaustion of energy resources, large-scale warfare, human rights abuses and acid rain. Write these on the board as they suggest them.

Distribute the “Facts About Rainforests” handout to emphasize how one such issue can affect all of us. Ask them who has the responsibility for reversing these dangerous trends. Ask: If you don’t take responsibility, who will? Tell them to think of as many ways they could affect an influence — as individuals or as part of a group — to help remedy these problems.

Ask them what one individual, business or other group should hear what they have to say about the issue of deforestation. Have them list the name of this person or group at the top of a paper. Then have them write essays on the topic, emphasizing how they can act responsibly. When they are finished, have them gather addresses and send their essays to the person or group they identified.

The chief value of money lies in the fact that we live in a world where it is overestimated.

— H. L. Mencken
IDEA #237 Handout: Facts About Rainforests

• Rainforests cover only 2% of the earth’s surface, yet they house over half the plant and animal species. They originally covered at least twice that area.

• Tropical rainforests are the Earth’s oldest continuos ecosystems. Fossil records show that the forests of Southeast Asia have existed in more or less their present form for 70 to 100 million years.

• Rainforests are being destroyed at a staggering rate. According to the National Academy of Science, at least 50 million acres a year are lost, an areas the size of England, Wales and Scotland combined.

• All the primary rainforests in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Haiti have been destroyed already. The Ivory Coast’s rainforests have been almost completely logged out. The Philippines lost 55% of its forest between 1960 and 1985; Thailand lost 45% between 1961 and 1985.

• Despite the small land area they cover, rainforests are home to about half of the 5 to 10 million plant and animal species on the globe. Rainforests support 90,000 of the 250,000 identified plant species. Scientists estimate that there are at least 30,000 as yet undiscovered plants, most of which are rainforest species.

• One fourth of the medicines available today owe their existence to plants. Seventy percent of the plants identified by the National Cancer Institute as useful in cancer treatment are found only in the rainforest. Drugs used to treat childhood leukemia, Hodgkin’s disease and other cancers come from rainforest plants, as do medicines for heart ailments, hypertension, arthritis, and birth control. Yet fewer than 1% of tropical forest species have been thoroughly examined for their pharmaceutical value.

• Rainforests play a critical role in the atmosphere in part because they hold vast reserves of carbon in their vegetation. When rainforests are burned, or the trees are cut and left to decay, the carbon is released into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. This is the second largest factor contributing to the greenhouse effect.

• A typical four-square-mile patch of rainforest contains as many as 1,500 species of flowering plants, 750 species of trees, 125 mammal species, 400 species of birds, 100 of reptiles, 60 of amphibians, and 150 different species of butterflies. In one study, one square meter of leaf litter was found to contain 50 species of ants alone.

• The tropics are the Earth’s richest natural reserves. One-fifth of all the birds and plants on Earth evolved in the Amazon Basin.

(Facts compiled by the Rainforest Action Network.)
IDEA #238

Marks of a Good Citizen

OVERVIEW: Students discuss and write about citizenship and how it is relevant to their behavior at school and in their personal lives.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

• one photocopy of the “Marks of a Good Citizen” handout for each youngster

PROCEDURE:

If every American donated five hours a week, it would equal the labor of 20 million full-time volunteers.

— Whoopi Goldberg

Contributed by Patricia Braun, Changes for Youth Program, Toledo Public Schools (Toledo, OH).
IDEA #238 Handout: Marks of a Good Citizen

A person of character is a good citizen. He/she knows that it is his/her duty to maintain and improve the community. He/she protects the environment and respects authority and the law.

CITIZENSHIP

DO: 

. . . be a good neighbor. Care about and pursue the common good.
. . . your share to make your school and community better, cleaner and safer.
. . . conserve resources by practicing the three R’s: “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.”
. . . stay informed, voice your opinion and vote on issues affecting the community.

DON’T:

. . . look out only for yourself.
. . . litter and waste resources.
. . . leave all political matters to the “experts.”

• • •

Write an essay about citizenship. Consider the “do’s and don’t’s” above and respond to one of the following questions:

1. In his book The End of Education, contemporary social critic Neil Postman asks, “Is it unrealistic to have [students] clean and paint their own schools, plant trees and flowers, produce a community newspaper, create a community theater? Is it unrealistic for older students to teach younger ones?” How might this be an expression of civic virtue? Do you agree that students, teachers and staff are all citizens of their school and, therefore, should all do their share to protect and improve it?

2. Think about the city you live in. Have you ever lived anywhere else? What do you think is good about your current home town? Do you have the ability to make it better? How?

3. A popular bumper sticker reads, “Think globally, act locally.” Do you think we are all citizens of the world? That is, do we all share a responsibility for protecting our planet? If not, then who does?
IDEA #239

Opportunity in Crisis

OVERVIEW: Somewhere in the world a community is facing a crisis — an earthquake, flood, tornado, the “Jerry Springer Show.” The next community, the next crisis, could be yours. Learning to prepare yourself and others is a noble — and prudent — thing to do. It is an act of good citizenship. With the threat, if not fact, of crisis and breakdown comes opportunity, an opportunity to research and reflect on the essential needs of self, family and community. This exercise encourages young people to explore how their complex society is put together, how people are interdependent, and how it shows good character to be prepared and to share information and resources with others.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
Research a crisis that you think is relevant to your class and your area (extreme weather, etc.). For assistance, you might contact the American Red Cross: (800) 491-2113 / www.redcross.org/youth/hip/disaster.html.

PROCEDURE:

Define relevant terms such as: hurricane, earthquake, crisis, catastrophe, environmental, disaster, etc.).

Point out to students the interdependence of human societies, making the whole vulnerable when one part is damaged. This is increasingly true in our highly complex modern world, where almost everything depends on artificial power: water and sewage systems; electric generators (which deliver power to everything from hospitals to grocery stores to homes to airports); data storage (banks, the government, etc.).

Say something like: As human needs and wants have grown, so has the complexity of the systems and institutions we have created to satisfy those needs and wants. But crisis happens, not just to individuals, but to whole communities. Discuss various kinds of crises. Then say: Crises shake us up, but that’s life. You need to prepare for what life can throw at you and the communities you are responsible for — just like you have to prepare to take care of yourself by maintaining your health, studying hard and saving money and staying out of debt. Hopefully, you will never need to deal with a major catastrophe. But you need to prepare, so you take care of yourself and others. Select a specific community crisis and tell the students that you will be focusing on this type of crisis.
Say: *In preparing for crisis, you need to think about your needs and the needs of your family and community.* Use a visual aid like a chalkboard or a large piece of paper taped to a wall and make two columns: “NEEDS” and “WANTS.”

If you have a small group, solicit their opinions about daily needs and wants. If you have a large group, break it up into smaller groups of six or so each, giving the groups 15 minutes to come up with their lists. Then collect the lists and write them up on your board, eliminating redundancies. The NEEDS should come down to true essentials: clean water, food (including for pets), shelter, warmth, dry clothes, means of shedding light (batteries, flashlights, candles, matches), means of preparing/storing unrefrigerated food. Everything else is usually a want. (As a side benefit, this discussion may encourage students to recognize that many of the things we take for granted or feel entitled to are luxuries, extraneous to what is really important in life.)

Ask the whole group if they have enough of these essentials in their household to take care of family needs for a given period of time (say, two weeks) if outside services (such as gas, water and electrical power) are not available. Ask them how much food and water they think they and their family consume each day. If they don’t know exactly, ask them how they could find out.

Now divide the students into small groups to create an “action plan” for their families. If their families were to designate a special area for emergency supplies, what would be stored there? (Look for answers such as canned/dried food, bottled water, manual can-opener, matches, candles, etc.) What would be the first thing the family would do? The second? What about the neighbors? Consolidate the reports from the groups and create a general action plan.

Ask the students how they could spread the word about preparation to their families and neighbors. (Another activity would be to have students design and write a brochure or flier about the essentials for the home — with a reminder for everyone to be calm and considerate of others in a stressful situation.)

Conclude by discussing these points as a whole group:

- Discuss the character traits that are most valued and needed in times of crisis. Again, you might want to list these on the board. Talk about the need to think clearly and creatively and to be courteous to others.
- Talk about the need to show a good example to other people who may be panicking or acting irresponsibly (grabbing and pushing at grocery stores, etc).
- Talk about the need to get information from the media, but to be aware of the occasional tendency of the deadline-driven, competitive and entertainment-minded media to inspire fear and paranoia rather than helpfulness.

— Charles-Louis de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu
17th/18th-century French jurist and philosopher
IDEA #240

Budgeting Priorities

**OVERVIEW:** Students discuss how the people’s representatives decide how to allocate funds, then role-play decision makers and learn about budgeting and deliberation. The goal of the exercise is to realize that communities have many demands for spending tax dollars and that interests must compete for limited funds.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- paper; pens or pencils

**PROCEDURE:**

Start a discussion about the different roles and responsibilities of government. Draw boxes on the blackboard to represent the federal government’s major administrative functions and divisions: defense, social security, justice, commerce, energy, health, education, agriculture, treasury, state (foreign affairs), transportation, etc. Include major regulatory agencies such as the Federal Communications Commission, Federal Trade Commission, Food and Drug Administration, etc. Discuss what each department does, as necessary.

Explain what is at stake with government budgetary decisions, such as people’s jobs and fortunes. If an army base is closed, for instance, it saves money, but people are put out of work. Cutting back on agriculture subsidies may mean some farmers go bankrupt. Naturally, people will see themselves as winners and losers with almost any decision. Therefore, there will often be conflict, even bitter arguments.

In a democracy, everyone has a say, even if this means the decision making process is drawn-out, clumsy and noisy. Discuss the virtues and drawbacks of this system. Pick some students to be lobbyists (advocates) for certain interest groups (e.g., business/industry, environmental, labor, military, peace movement).

Give your class a budget (say $500 billion) and divide them into small groups. Have each group allocate its money to each of the departments on the blackboard. Tell them to be ready to defend their decisions. The lobbyists can circulate among the groups to advocate for their cause.

Write down societal categories on the board: elderly, middle age, students, children, etc.; very rich, well-off (affluent), middle-class, poor; race, religion, etc. After decisions are made assign students to certain categories of your (or their) choosing: e.g., poor, religious immigrant. How do students in these categories view the budget choices made? How would they re-order priorities?

*Inspired by the “Candy Store” exercise posted on The American Promise (www.americanpromise.com/ap3510.html).*
IDEA #241

School Safety Survey Project

OVERVIEW: Students discuss possible safety issues in their school environment, then create, conduct and assess a school-wide survey about them. They present findings with possible solutions to the school board/administration.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper; pencils or pens
- access to resources (for student research)
- access to a photocopier

PROCEDURE:

Relay an appropriate personal incident in which you felt fearful. Write the word “fear” on the board. Ask the students to think about a time or place in which they felt fearful. Ask them to articulate how feeling afraid affected their behavior. Suggest that even if nothing happens, fear can be damaging. Say: It can preoccupy a person and keep people from being able to give their best and stay focused on a task or responsibility at hand. Explain how this can have a domino-effect. Offer a school-related example involving a safety issue. Invite students to offer ways this situation could be made less fearful. Say: Providing an environment that people feel is safe can take away a lot of that damaging fear. Ask the students to explain how this might apply to their school, citing examples. List their answers on the board.

Explain that they are going to have to find out more accurately what safety concerns their school community has through a survey project. Ask them to explain why you would have them do this. Reiterate the role of a good citizen and the responsibility that they have to make their community a better, safer, less fearful, place for it to be its most productive.

Next, assign them the task of each looking up articles about school safety. Have them summarize their findings in a chart form appropriate to the class level. (The chart or graph they include should reinforce the processes and critical thinking skills needed to analyze and convert data into accurate percentages.)

Have the class brainstorm to create survey questions and write them down. Clarify who the survey participants will be and decide if they accurately represent the makeup of your school community. Together select and edit the questions that will be on the survey.

More

dangers have deceived men than forced them.

— Francis Bacon
16th-century English essayist
Decide how and when to conduct the survey and assign specific students to specific tasks.

Once the data have been collected, instruct the students to convert this information into charts that can be distributed and analyzed by the whole class. Assign certain students to assess the numbers for designated questions on the survey. Have them summarize what the numbers signify. Inform them that they will present their findings to the class.

Once the findings have been presented and discussed, have the class figure out possible, practical solutions that students, faculty and administration could carry out to alleviate fears and increase confidence in school safety. Assign the same groups who analyzed certain survey data to write out a step-by-step implementation strategy for one of the solutions proposed.

Finally, gather all the survey information and plans for solutions and compile it into a binder for presentation to the school administration or board.

Reiterate the role awareness plays in our ability to be good citizens.


*Zeal will do more than knowledge.*

— William Hazlitt
18th-century English essayist and literary critic
IDEA #242

Six-Pillar Flags

OVERVIEW: Students explore the Six Pillars and learn how flags act as symbols. Each student designs a flag representing a Pillar and describes its meaning.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- colored markers
- white paper

PROCEDURE:

Ask the students: What does a flag do? Solicit comments and discuss their observations. Compliment them on their answers and tell them that flags are symbols: they describe and stand for concepts.

Explain how symbols work. Say: Symbols are shorthand references to larger things or abstractions. Good symbols are concrete and use an association, such as a part, to evoke the whole. The flag of the old Soviet Union shows tools — a hammer and a sickle — and they stand for human labor. Sometimes the symbol is a metaphor: The red circle of Japan’s flag is a rising sun, which implies rising greatness. Sometimes the symbol is more complex. On the American flag, the 13 stripes stand for the 13 colonies, and the 50 stars for the 50 states. The flag captures not only the origins of this country, in the stripes, but also the union of states in a single whole. The original flag worked even better as a symbol. It had 13 stars, and the Continental Congress said they symbolized a “new constellation,” that is, both a union and a new kind of state.

Then ask: What are some of the things at the heart of the Six Pillars of Character? Go through each one and get suggestions. Look for possible symbols, such as a handshake (trustworthiness), the scales of justice (fairness), a gavel (fairness), a bag on shoulders (responsibility), Atlas holding up the world (responsibility), a heart (caring), a ballot box (citizenship).

Tell them they are now going to make flags representing the Pillars. Have each student choose a Pillar and think of examples, metaphors or associations that might stand for it. Then have them set to work.

When they are finished, have each of them write a 500-word essay describing his or her flag, and why it represents the chosen Pillar.

The work will teach you how to do it.

— Estonian proverb
IDEA #243

Decision-Making Guide

OVERVIEW: Students learn to use the Josephson Institute’s model for making ethical decisions. They apply this model to a realistic situation.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Ethical Decision Making” worksheet for each student

PROCEDURE:

Discuss the Josephson Institute’s three-step “Golden Kantian Consequentialism” (“GKC”) decision-making model with the students. Explain the derivation of this name by going over the three points below:

1. Decisions must take into account the interests and well-being of all stakeholders (i.e., people affected by the decisions — both directly and indirectly). Guide your actions with the Golden Rule (“do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) when considering the interests of these stakeholders. (This is the “Golden” part.)

2. When choosing a course of action, the “Six Pillars of Character” — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship — always take precedence over other values (such as being popular, making money, having fun, etc.). (This is the “Kantian” part, from philosopher Immanuel Kant who argued that actions must be based on unchanging fundamental moral principles.)

3. If two of these core values come into conflict, choose the one that will provide the greatest good for the most people. (This is the “Consequentialism” part, which is based on the philosophy of utilitarian thinkers like John Stuart Mill.)

Then distribute the “Ethical Decision Making” worksheets and have the students (in small groups or individually) complete them. When they are finished, have them share their responses. Discuss any differences, running the decision through the “Golden Kantian Consequentialism” process.

Contributed by Woodbridge High School students (Irvine, CA).
IDEA #243 Worksheet: Ethical Decision Making

Follow the instructions as they relate to this scenario:

A good friend confides that he isn’t feeling very well and thinks his symptoms may be related to taking steroids. Because he feels steroids are enhancing his athletic ability, he won’t stop. How do you respond?

STEPS:

1. Make a list of all the stakeholders. Identify each as a “primary” (directly affected) or “secondary” (indirectly affected) stakeholder.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

2. List your possible courses of action. Determine which of the Six Pillars of Character — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship — is (are) involved in each option. How is each stakeholder affected?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

3. Are any of these core values in conflict? If so, list them. What is your final course of action? Does your decision seek to produce the greatest good for the greatest number of stakeholders?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
IDEA #244

Writing Exercise on Ethical Decision Making

OVERVIEW: Students learn to use the Josephson Institute’s “Golden Kantian Consequentialism” model for making ethical decisions. They apply this model to a realistic situation.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Ethical Decision Making” worksheet for each student

PROCEDURE:

Follow the instructions at the beginning of Idea #132, “Decision Making Guide.” Then distribute one photocopy of the “Writing Exercise on Ethical Decision Making” handout to each student.

When everyone has finished writing their scenarios, have them divide into groups to discuss each one using the questions at the end of the handout. (Or have each student present his/her scenario in front of the class for discussion.)

Contributed by Woodbridge High School students (Irvine, CA).

Goodness is the only investment that never fails.
— Henry David Thoreau
IDEA #244 Handout: Writing Exercise on Ethical Decision Making

Adhering to the following guidelines, write a brief scenario which is centered around an everyday moral dilemma. These will be presented in class for discussion.

1. The topic should be relevant to your age group.

2. The scenario should raise a clear conflict between at least two values — one ethical and one nonethical — making it very tempting to do the wrong thing.

3. Make sure that the dilemma involves at least one of the Six Pillars of Character.

4. State it succinctly — in 500 words or less.

5. Incorporate “planned ambiguity.” In other words, it shouldn’t be immediately obvious what the “right thing” is. Don’t make it too easy on the decision maker!

6. Make it solvable. Don’t let your scenario be a “no-win situation” (e.g., a choice between death by fire or death by poison).

Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the Six Pillars is (are) involved? How?

2. Who are the stakeholders? Identify each as “primary” or “secondary.”

3. What are the possible choices one could make? What would be the likely consequences of each of those decisions?

4. Which is the best option?

5. Now that you’ve made a decision, go back and analyze which of the Six Pillars was central to your choice. If two or more of these core ethical values conflicted, did you make the choice that was best for the greatest number of people?
IDEA #245

Focusing on Our Behavior

OVERVIEW: Students identify one area in which they would like to improve their behavior. After formulating an “action plan” to do this, they assess their progress in a journal writing exercise.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- one photocopy of the “Focusing on Our Behavior” handout for each student

PROCEDURE:

Tell them to use the “three C’s” to understand good character: consciousness, competency and commitment. Say: Our task is to know what the right thing is, to know how to do it, and to make it a ground-rule for life. Use the Six Pillars of Character as a guide and you’ll be surprised how much more life has to offer. But remember... ethics is easier said than done!

Then tell them: Living ethically takes patience and self-discipline. A first step in building our moral character is becoming more aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, this assignment is an ongoing one. But what better time to start than right now?

Distribute the “Focusing on Our Behavior” handout and have them follow the instructions. When commenting on their journal entries, pose questions to them to further stimulate their thinking about these issues. Throughout the journal writing period, have them reflect as a class on the activity.

Contributed by Woodbridge High School students (Irvine, CA).
**IDEA #245 Handout: Focusing on Our Behavior**

1. Choose one of the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring or citizenship) and place that value at the top of your page.

2. In one or two paragraphs, write about what you feel are your strengths in this area. Provide examples to demonstrate this. Then identify your weaknesses in this area. Again, provide examples showing why you think you need to improve here.

3. At the top of the second page, identify an “AREA OF IMPROVEMENT” (one of the Six Pillars). Then make an “ACTION PLAN.” List three specific things you will do to improve your ethical behavior in this area. Be realistic — don’t make your goals unachievable!

**Daily Journal Entries:**

Keep a daily journal in which you reflect on this activity. Write a short paragraph each weeknight to assess how well you are carrying out your “ACTION PLAN.” Be sure to give yourself credit where credit is due . . . but be honest when you’ve blown it! Record the date and time of each entry. These will be collected, read, commented on, and returned — all confidentially (i.e., no one else will see your journals).

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*(Sample “ACTION PLAN” from Woodbridge High School student)*

**CORE ETHICAL VALUE: RESPONSIBILITY**

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:** Complete more responsibilities at home without my mom having to be on my case!

**ACTION PLAN:**

1. Make a daily calendar with each chore listed on day it’s due (garbage out on Thursday; dishes cleared and stacked each night; Monday: brush the dog).

2. Each day do one nice thing for my family that isn’t a chore assigned to me.

3. Read a story to my little brother at least two times during the week without being asked.
IDEA #246

Character Comics

OVERVIEW: Students discuss character development in children, then contribute to it by creating comic books for young children based on the Six Pillars of Character.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- paper
- enough coloring pens for small group to create a short comic book
- a stapler and staples

PROCEDURE:

Begin by making arrangements with an elementary school teacher or other adult who works with 6-11-year-old students. Tell this adult you would like to have your teenagers make comic books based on the Six Pillars of Character for the children.

Precede the creation of these comic books with a brief discussion about the Six Pillars of Character. Specifically, discuss the development of these values in children. Ask the group how they think children might learn these core ethical values and how important this is.

Then tell the group you want to see them contribute to this character development process. Divide the students into small groups and have each group select a Pillar to base their comic book on. Advise them to make their story appropriate for the targeted age group and have them start by brainstorming story ideas, then divide production duties among themselves.

Tell them to come up with a strategy which includes the story idea and how the responsibilities will be divided. Go over this strategy with each group before they proceed. Make sure the message of their story is clear, age-appropriate and feasible for a short comic book.

Before they present their creations to the younger children, you or the adult who works with the children should introduce the activity to the younger ones. Then facilitate small group discussions focusing on the Six Pillars (each group of teens should present their comic books to small groups of children). Try to foster as much independent interaction between the teenagers and the students as possible. When the comic books have been read and discussed, the teenagers can help the students do drawings about the lessons in the comic books.
After the activity, reflect with the group on what they learned by teaching character development to kids.

(A related activity: Have teens produce a newspaper/newsletter for their peers focusing on character and those in the community or school who show it. Their publication might include profiles of local heroes, commentary on a designated “Pillar of the month” along with reporting on community improvement endeavors, related artwork and poetry.)

Artwork and idea by Leander Morgan, Eldorado High School student (Albuquerque, NM).

Like its politicians and its wars, society has the teenagers it deserves.
— J. B. Priestly
IDEA #247

The Ideal Parent

**OVERVIEW:** It’s not easy being a good parent, especially to a teenager who is simultaneously looking for direction and for independence. What do teens themselves think they need from parents — and how would they be a good parent to a teen? This exercise finds out.

**PREPARATION / MATERIALS:**
- paper; pens or pencils

**PROCEDURE:**

Say: What makes a good parent? Today we are going to create a code of behavior for parents — the kind of parents we would like to be one day.

Write the following questions on a board for all to see, or create a handout using the questions and distribute a sheet to each pupil. Give the students time to write down brief answers. Then go down the list of questions, writing down volunteered answers. Encourage the students to write down whatever responses they like so they can add them to their own initial responses. After 15 minutes, direct the students to write their own code, based on the answers they like best. Tell the students to write the code as a series of declarative statements (e.g., “the good parent sets clear rules and enforces them consistently,” or “good parents never do anything they say is bad for kids,” etc.). Finally, encourage the kids to discuss their codes with their parents.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What should parents do when they are angry?
2. What effect do parents’ personal habits have on their kids?
3. How strict should parents be about rules (homework, chores, curfew, etc.)?
4. What should parents do when kids break the rules?
5. Should parents try to act more like kids (in the way they talk, dress or dance)?
6. How tough should parents be when a kid is caught lying, stealing or being cruel?
7. Should parents give kids everything they want? How should they say no?
8. Which is more important to being a good parent: honesty or kindness?
9. What do good parents say or do when kids do something right or good?

*Inspired by a “Dear Abby” column, printed in the Los Angeles Times, Sept. 29, 1999.*
IDEA #248

Pursuing Victory With Honor: The All-Character Team

OVERVIEW: Teens select athletes with winning character and honor them with awards.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:
- copies of certificates (master provided)

PROCEDURE:

To introduce the exercise, you might say: Athletes are honored for their on-field and on-court achievements by being named to “All” teams, like All-Pro, All-Star, All-American, etc. You are going to nominate and award athletes to an “All-Character” team. Explain that the criteria for selection is the athlete’s demonstrated commitment to pursuing victory with honor. This means that he or she demonstrates the Six Pillars of Character in his or her life. It doesn’t matter what sport the athlete plays; coaches can also be nominated.

Each student chooses a nominee and writes a one-page profile of that athlete (or coach) extolling his or her virtues. Instruct the students to submit these nominations in two weeks, with oral presentations in front of the class explaining why their nominees should be chosen. Then have the students vote on the athletes by secret ballot. The top ten athletes will be the “winners” of certificates.

Instruct the teens to look for:

- demonstrated, outstanding commitment to the community
- behavior toward teammates, opponents, coaches, referees and fans

You might take this a step further by actually sending the certificates to the winning athletes and writing (with the students) a press release announcing your awards and the recipients.

— Benjamin Franklin
18th-century American Founding Father, inventor and statesman

Energy and persistence conquer all things.
All-Character Team

For consistent adherence to the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

is hereby appointed to the All-Character Team

Thank you for your good example!

Winner’s Creed

trustworthiness
respect
responsibility
fairness
caring
citizenship

CHARACTER COUNTS! Sports and Pursuing Victory With Honor are service marks of Josephson Institute
IDEA #249

Writing Vir-Ku (Virtue Haiku)

OVERVIEW: Teens write haiku, a Japanese form of poetry, using one or more of the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) or other “virtue” words.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- paper; pens or pencils
- other resources:
  - *The Haiku Anthology*, edited by Cor van den Heuvel, with over 800 English-language haiku (Norton, 1999)

PROCEDURE:

Explain that haiku is a centuries-old Japanese poetry form which makes a simple, sometimes profound or oddly moving observation about a moment in time. Provide some background by saying something like: *Haiku is usually about nature. The haiku we’ll be writing will suggest something positive about human nature, using one or more of the words that reflect ethical values known as the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.* You might write the Six Pillars on the board and ask students to add other “virtue” words to the list (e.g., courage, honor, compassion, honesty, etc.).

Explain the structure of haiku: It contains 17 syllables in three lines (five, seven, five); has a nature theme; and is written in the present tense about a single moment.

Explain that haiku poets make close observations about nature and think small. Focusing on a single tree or leaf or petal, for example, often works better in haiku than trying to take in the whole forest. The idea is to create a word picture, not to tell a story. (If the syllable count is off a bit, that’s OK.)

Here is a sample “vir-ku” (virtue haiku) you might share with students:

*Kindness in his words, / the tutor explains the task / the young pupil smiles*

Tell the students that their haiku will be collected and shared with everyone in the class. Put together an anthology of student work by compiling a binder of work for everyone to view. You might choose some of the better efforts and ask the poets to read their work aloud to the class.

*Some haiku explanation from Scholastic Instructor (March 2000).*
IDEA #250

The C.Q. Test

OVERVIEW: Teens answer hypothetical challenges to their character. (This quiz is the work of an editor, not a psychologist, and should not be seen as a comprehensive or scientific test of someone’s character. It is meant to be an engaging way to start a discussion about how to be successful in life — and what success really means.)

PROCEDURE:

Introduce the subject of “emotional intelligence,” which involves many valuable skills, from anger management and politeness to planning for the future. You might say: Psychologists and educators now widely recognize that there is more than one kind of intelligence. We can be “smart” in one thing, “dumb” in another. We can excel in certain endeavors but habitually do and say things that turn others away from us or thwart us from true happiness — things that are untrustworthy, disrespectful, irresponsible, uncaring or unfair (or on a really bad day, all of the above).

Draw attention to Emotional Intelligence, the best-selling work of psychologist Daniel Goleman, according to whom the basics of emotional intelligence include:

- Knowing your feelings and using them to make decisions you can live with.
- Being able to manage your emotional life, not being controlled by it — not being paralyzed by depression or worry, or swept away by anger.
- Persisting through setbacks; pursuing your goals.
- Reading other people’s emotions without their having to tell you what they are feeling (i.e., being empathetic).
- Handling feelings in relationships with skill and harmony — being able to articulate the unspoken mood of a group, for example.

Say: Because these skills often involve anticipating others’ needs and weighing consequences when making choices, we might call a measurement of one’s emotional intelligence a test of one’s “character quotient” — let’s call it our C.Q.

Distribute copies of the following quiz or project it with an overhead onto a screen or wall. Add or delete questions as you see fit. Tell the students the quiz is not a scientific test of their character, but just a fun way to see what it takes to be successful in life (and what success really means). Say: There are not always right and wrong answers to these questions, but if you’re stumped it helps to remember the Golden Rule of treating others the way you want them to treat you. That can usually take a person pretty far in life.
1. What would you do if you were fired from a job?
   a. □ Not worry about it. There are plenty of other jobs out there.
   b. □ Reflect on why you were dismissed and create a specific plan of action to do better next time (whether or not you were at fault).
   c. □ Write a scathing letter to your former boss and bad-mouth him to your friends and family. What a jerk!

2. What would you say to a very good friend who wants your help in cheating on a test? The person is very upset and desperate and will fail the class and maybe not get into college if the test is failed. (This friend has helped you out a lot.)
   a. □ “I’m really sorry, but you’re on your own. I can’t jeopardize my future because you thought other things were more important than studying.”
   b. □ “Of course, I’ll help. We’re buds!”
   c. □ “Can I help you find a way to approach the teacher about a make-up exam?”
   d. □ “Uh, can I get back to you on that?”

3. What would you say to someone whose appearance has changed in some way you don’t think is attractive (weight gain, bad haircut, skin problems, etc.)?
   a. □ “Are you pregnant?” (if the friend is heavier ... and female)
   b. □ “I love your new look!”
   c. □ “Wow, what the heck is happening to you?”
   d. □ Nothing. Talk about it only if the friend brings up the subject.

4. Your friend is furious about something that happened to him/her. You:
   a. □ Say, “Calm down. It’s not that bad.”
   b. □ Are sympathetic, but try to change the subject.
   c. □ Show solidarity by joining your friend in his/her rant.
   d. □ Tell him/her about a time something like this happened to you and how you felt just as mad, but later realized you didn’t know the whole story.
   e. □ Nothing; wait for the storm to pass.

5. You’re in a group of popular kids. You want them to like you. One of them makes a cruel remark about someone who is not there (and definitely not considered a candidate for coolness). Everyone laughs. You:
   a. □ Laugh too. (Hey, it’s funny.)
   b. □ Scowl and say, “I don’t think that’s right.”
   c. □ Just smile and say nothing.
   d. □ Say nothing at the time, but plan to later tell each person in the group about the ridiculed person’s good qualities.
   e. □ Walk away, deciding this is not a group you want to be part of.

6. You’re trying to get on a team, but you’ve been cut twice in a row. You:
   a. □ Call it quits.
   b. □ Assess qualities in yourself that may be undermining your ability to make the cut, and create a step-by-step strategy to make the team the next time.
   c. □ Consider another sport/activity.
7 You were planning to get an A in a course, but just got a C on the midterm exam (making that A very tough to get now). What do you do?

- Develop a plan to improve your grade.
- Resolve to do better in the future.
- Tell yourself it really doesn’t matter that much how you do in the course, and resolve to concentrate on classes where your grades are higher.
- Go see the teacher and try to talk her into giving you a better grade.


**Fame**

is a vapor,

**popularity**

an accident,

**riches take**

wing. Only

**character**

endures.

— Horace Greeley
19th-century American journalist

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**Answers**

1. B is best. It’s grown-up time, folks.

2. C. You need to be a supportive friend but maintain your own honor and integrity at the same time; you’ll be a more valuable friend in the long run.

3. D. Even though this a trusting relationship, candor isn’t necessarily called for if it involves gratuitous judgments about one’s appearance. Unless you are seriously concerned about your friend’s mental or physical health, say nothing unless your friend invites comment. And then be tactful and supportive.

4. B is best. This is a tricky one (D may also be appropriate), but sometimes it is best to help divert an angry’s person’s attention away from the source of his/her wrath so he/she can gain perspective. This question was adapted from a question developed by Daniel Goleman, who cites data on rage and how to calm it. He shows the effectiveness of distracting the angry person from the focus of his/her rage, empathizing with his/her feelings and perspective, and suggesting a less anger-provoking way of seeing the situation. To say nothing might be called for in some instances.

5. Another tricky one. Certainly “B” is an option (and is admirable in the courage it requires) — but that scowl part, what’s up with that? That’s a little over the top and may show that you don’t know how to communicate effectively and persuasively with others. “D” is tempting, but isn’t it a little too easy to rationalize your cowardice with the promise to do something later, when it’s safe? While it doesn’t mandate direct confrontation, perhaps “E” is best; at least you have some class.

6. B or C. Come on, stick with it! But be smart about it; if you’re not good enough make an effort to turn it around. Or find another outlet for your energy — that’s fine too. Just don’t quit.

7. A is better than B because it involves an actual plan. Good intentions often lead nowhere and the smart thing to do is to plan and execute.
Books and Other Character Education Resources

**BOOKS**

Adrienne, Carol  

Akin, Terry; Dunne, Gerry; Palomares, Susanna; and Schilling, Dianne  
*Character Education in America's Schools* (Spring Valley, CA: Innerchoice Publishing, 1995)

Allman, Barbara (grades K-1 and 2-3 booklets); and Steele, Anne (grades 4-5 and 6-8 booklets)  
*Developing Character When It Counts* (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999)

Almeder, Robert  

Andrews, Sharon Vincz; Martin, Donna M.  
*Teaching Kids to Care* (Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic, Inc., 1987)

Bauer, David G.  

Bennett, William  

Benson, Peter L.  

Benson, Peter L.; Galbraith, Judy; and Espeland, Pamela  

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Bevan, E. Dean  
*What to Do When You're Angry* (Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, Inc., 1994)

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*The Case for Character Education: The Role of the School in Teaching Values and Virtue*  
(Northridge, CA; Studio 4 Productions, 1997)

Byrnes, John Carroll  
*A Book of Values*  
(Baltimore, MD: John Carroll Byrnes, 1995)

Chappelle, Sharon and Bigman, Lisa  
*Diversity in Action*  
(Covington, GA: Project Adventure, Inc., 1998)

Cohen-Posey, Kate  
*How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies*  
(Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, 1995)

Colby, Anne; James, Jacquelyn; and Hart, Daniel  
*Competence and Character Through Life*  
(Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Coleman, Sally and Anderson, David S.  
*Charting Your Course: A Life-Long Guide to Health and Compassion*  
(Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998)

Connolly, Theresa; Dowd, Tom; Criste, Andrea; Nelson, Cathy; and Tobias, Lisa  
*The Well-Managed Classroom*  
(Boys Town, NE: The Boys Town Press, 1995)

Davitz, Lois Leiderman and Davitz, Joel R.  
*20 Tough Questions Teenagers Ask: And 20 Tough Answers*  
(Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998)

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*Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*  
(San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999)

Delisle, Deb and Delisle, Jim  
*Growing Good Kids: 28 Activities to Enhance Self-Awareness, Compassion and Leadership*  

Dellabough, Robin; Hollister, Ben; Marlin, Alice Tepper; Swaab, Emily; Rose, Jonathan; and Will, Rosalyn  
*Students Shopping 4 a Better World*  

Dinkmeyer, Don and McKay, Gary D.  
*Raising a Responsible Child*  

Durst, Mose  
*Principled Education*  
(Hayward, CA: The Principled Academy, 1998)

Elias, Maurice J.; Tobias, Steven E.; and Friedlander, Brian S.  
*Emotionally Intelligent Parenting: How to Raise a Self-Disciplined, Responsible, Socially Skilled Child*  

Ender, Steven; Newton, Fred; and Caple, Richard  
*Contributing to Learning: The Role of Student Affairs*  

Eyre, Linda and Eyre, Richard  
*Teaching Your Children Responsibility*  

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*Teaching Your Children Values*  

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*Lesson Plans for Character Education, Elementary Edition*  
(Manhattan, KS: MASTER Teacher, 1998)

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*You Already Know What To Do: 10 Invitations to the Intuitive Life*  
(New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1999)

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*The Kindness of Strangers: Adult Mentors, Urban Youth, and the New Voluntarism*  

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(New York, NY: Bantam, 1995)

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Los Angeles Unified School District

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*Practicing Moral Decision Making* (Kingston, NJ: Compass Editions, 1995)

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*Advisor/Advisee: Lessons for Teachers and Counselors* (Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Group, 1998)

St. Romain, Philip

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*Community Building in the Classroom* (San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing, 1992)

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*To Save a Child* (Garden City Park, NY: Avery Publishing Group, 1993)

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*Golden Nuggets* (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 1997)

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20 Teachable Virtues: Practical Ways to Pass on Lessons of Virtue and Character to Your Children  
(New York, NY: Perigee Books/The Berkley Publishing Group, 1985)

Unell, Barbara C.; Jerry L. Wyckoff  

Van Linden, Josephine A. and Fertman, Carl I.  
Youth Leadership: A Guide to Understanding Leadership Development in Adolescents  

Vessels, Gordon G.  

Vincent, Philip Fitch (ed.)  
*Promising Practices in Character Education*  

Wattles, Jeffrey  

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**OTHER CHARACTER-EDUCATION RESOURCES**

America the Beautiful Fund  
1730 K St., NW, Suite 1002  
Washington, DC 20006  
www.america-the-beautiful.org

Bread and Roses Cultural Project  
330 West 42nd St., 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 631-4565  
www.breadandroses.com

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs  
State University of New York College at Cortland  
P.O. Box 2000  
Cortland, NY 13045

Children to Children (group that collects duffle bags and stuffed animals for foster children)  
3262 Superior Lane, PMB #288  
Bowie, MD 20715  
www.childrentochildren.com

“Exercising Character in School”  
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service  
Louisiana State University Agricultural Ctr.  
P.O. Box 25100  
Baton Rouge, LA 770894  
(225) 388-4141

*Hope* magazine (Hope Publishing)  
P.O. Box 160, Naskeag Rd.  
Brooklin, ME 04616  
(800) 273-7447

“In the Palm of Your Hand” activity (1998)  
YMCA Earth Service Corps  
(Y Care International, CreActivity)  
www.mightymedia.com

*Instructor* magazine (Scholastic, Inc.)  
555 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012-3999  
(212) 343-6400  
www.scholastic.com/instructor

“Learning for Life: A Partner in Education”  
(curriculum booklet, 1995)  
Boy Scouts of America  
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane  
P.O. Box 152079  
Irving, TX 75015-2079

National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (the youth education division of The Humane Society of the U.S.)  
P.O. Box 362  
East Haddam, CT 06423-0362  
(860) 434-8666  
nah@nah@nahee.org

Points of Light Foundation  
1737 H St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20006  
(202) 729-8000  
www.pointsoflight.org

“Show-Me Character All Star Curriculum”  
4-H Youth Program  
University of Missouri System, Lincoln  
University, 210 Whitten Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(573) 882-3226
“Teaching Tolerance” (an educational project of the Southern Poverty Law Center)
400 Washington Ave.
Montgomery, AL 36104
www.tolerance.org

“Youth Leadership in Action: A Guide to Cooperative Games and Group Activities”
Project Adventure, Inc.
P.O. Box 100, Hamilton, MA 01936
(508) 468-7981
www.pa.org

RESOURCES ON SPORTS
BOOKS

Asinof, Eliot

Bates, Bill
Shoot for the Star: An Inspiring Story of Beating the Odds to Fulfill a Lifelong Dream (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1994)

Bigelow, Bob; Moroney, Tom; and Hall, Linda
Just Let the Kids Play: How to Stop Other Adults from Ruining Your Child’s Fun and Success in Youth Sports (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 2001)

Bowman, John

Bradley, Bill

Buzby, Jonathan H.
Coaching Kids: It’s More Than X’s and O’s (Bear, DE: Kids-n-Sports, 1998)

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Isenberg, Marc and Rhoads, Rick

Klatell, David A. and Marcus, Norman

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Lapchick, Richard E. and Slaughter, John B.

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Mad as Hell: How Sports Got Away from the Fans and How We Get It Back (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1996)

National Federation of State High School Associations
Citizenship Through Sports (Kansas City, MO: NFSHSA, 1997)

Rosen, Roger and McSharry, Patra
Sack, Allen L. and Staurowsky, Ellen J.  

Selleck, George A.  

Sheehy, Harry with Peary, Danny  
*Raising a Team Player: Teaching Kids Lasting Values on the Field, on the Court, and on the Bench* (North Adams, MA: Storey Books, 2002)

Summit, Pat  

Walton, Gary.  

**OTHER SPORTS RESOURCES**

Athletes for a Better World  
1740 Barnesdale Way NE  
Atlanta, GA 30309  
(404) 892-2328  
www.aforbw.org

Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport  
2197 Riverside Drive Suite 202  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1H 7X3  
(613) 521-3340  
www.cces.ca

Institute for International Sport  
University of Rhode Island  
3045 Kingstown Road  
Kingston, RI 02881-1710  
(800) 447-9889  
www.internationalsport.com

The Institute for the Study of Youth Sports  
134 Erickson Hall  
College of Education  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1034  
(517) 353-9680  
http://edwp.educ.msu.edu/isys/

Michigan High School Athletic Association  
1661 Ramblewood Drive  
East Lansing, MI 48823  
(517) 332-5046  
www.mhsaa.com

National Alliance for Youth Sports  
2050 Vista Parkway  
West Palm Beach, FL 33411  
(561) 684-1141  
www.nays.org

National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics  
23500 W. 105th St.  
Olathe, KS 66051  
(913) 791-0044  
www.naia.org

Positive Coaching Alliance  
375 Santa Teresa St  
Stanford, CA 94305  
(650) 725-0024  
www.positivecoach.org

St. Louis Sports Commission’s Sportmanship Initiative  
308 N. 21st St., Suite 500  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
(314) 345-5130  
http://www.stlouissports.org/sportmanship

World T.E.A.M. Sports  
2108 South Boulevard Suite 101  
Charlotte, NC 28203  
(704) 370-6070  
www.worldteamsports.org
CHARACTER COUNTS! gives you the tools to help young people learn and model the Six Pillars of Character. With support materials (like this book) and a broad array of training programs for schools and youth-serving organizations, CHARACTER COUNTS! reaches millions of youth across the U.S. and abroad.

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- Caring
- Responsibility
- Citizenship

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