

CHARACTER EDUCATION

"Trustworthiness" Grades 5-8

DEFINITION:

Trustworthiness is the ability to keep promises, to be honest, reliable and principled while never inappropriately betraying a confidence. Trustworthiness relies on the integrity and character of the person.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

- Discuss trustworthiness as "being able to be counted on". Have students brainstorm examples.
- Have students define specific behaviors that indicate trustworthiness. Why is being trusted important?
- List trustworthy behaviors on the board as the children think of as many examples as they can. Have a class discussion about these behaviors. Assist the children in making posters of these behaviors to put up around the school. Consider the following examples:
 - BE HONEST...don't lie, cheat, or steal.
 - KEEP PROMISES...do what you say you will do.
 - BE A GOOD FRIEND...treat others like you want to be treated.
- Have students write or tell a story describing what life might be like if no one could be trusted.
- Lead students in a discussion about trust. Whom do they trust? Why?
- Have students work in groups to write a play about someone who loses the trust of friends or family. Have them present it to the class.
- Brainstorm antonyms for the word "trust." Ask students which list they would want friends to use when describing them?
- Have the class create a web of people that they can trust at school, at home, and in the community.
- Have the students watch a movie, TV drama, or sitcom paying particular attention to the behavior of the main characters with regard to trustworthiness. What trustworthy behaviors did they find? How much untrustworthy behavior did they observe? Have a class discussion about these issues.
- Create two masks--one for honesty, another for dishonesty. Have students use them to role-play situations.

- Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to draw pictures of people being trustworthy in their actions. Ask the other group to draw people being untrustworthy in their actions. Have students from each group report to the class about their drawings.
- Make a circle of "TRUST." Pass a beach ball around the circle. Lead a discussion about trusting each other to get the beach ball around the circle. As a class or team, we are all relying on each other. When one of us drops the ball (or can't be trusted), we don't work as well. Remove students one at a time. How does it affect the group if others let the class or team down with untrustworthy behaviors?
- Ask students to consider the following:
 - Are you a trustworthy person?
 - In what ways are you trustworthy?
 - In what ways are you, perhaps, not so trustworthy?
 - What could you do to improve?
 - Do your parents trust you?
 - What might cause your parents to stop trusting you?
 - What would be bad about that?
 - How important is trust in your relationships with friends, family, and teachers?
 - How would these relationships be affected if they found you had not been truthful?
- Discuss these quotes:
 - "When In Doubt Tell The Truth" - Mark Twain
 - "Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't goin' away." - Elvis Presley
 - "We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called on to perform what we cannot." - Abraham Lincoln, 19th century American President
 - "The truth is not always the same as the majority decision." - Pope John Paul
 - "How many times do you get to lie before you are a liar?" Michael Josephson, American ethicist (b. 1942)
- Talk about the concept of "Cause and Effect." If a person is trustworthy (can be trusted), then...
- Make a wheel with the word "trustworthy" as the hub. Choose words for the spokes that describe trustworthiness.
- Have students recognize examples of trustworthiness exhibited by other students. Encourage them to write the behavior and the student's name on a slip of paper and place the paper in the teacher's character box. Nominated students' names may then be read each day to the class.
- Have students list the traits of a good friend? Which words relate to being trustworthy?

- Have students' interview adults in their life. Ask the adult to explain different situations in which trustworthiness proved to be invaluable.
- Consider using the activity of the Trust Walk. Place students in pairs. Have one student lead his/her blindfolded partner through an obstacle course using words only. (Students may not physically lead each other.) Discuss how trust between the two played a part in the success or failure of the task.
- Talk with the campus librarian for reading suggestions on trustworthiness.

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BOOKS TO USE IN TEACHING "TRUSTWORTHINESS:

Aesop, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*

Clemenson, Stephanie, *The Principal's New Clothes*

Polloco, Patricia, *Pink and Say*

Sachar, Louis, *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom* (novel)

SOURCES:

Freeman, Sara. Character Education, Teaching Values for Life. Instructional Fair, 1997.

Hodgin, Duane, Ph.D. The Best of Character. Chattanooga, Tennessee: National Center for Youth Issues, 2001.

www.goodcharacter.com

www.vocabulary.com