

## **CHARACTER EDUCATION**

### **"Trustworthiness" Grades 9-12**

#### **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:**

- Have students define specific behaviors that indicate trustworthiness. Why is being trusted and being able to trust others important?
- Discuss relationships and trust. Consider the following:
  - Friends want to trust each other.
  - Family members want to trust each other.
  - Community members want to trust their neighborhoods.
  - Citizens want to trust their leaders.
- Talk with the campus librarian about books, stories, or articles whose characters illustrate trustworthiness. An example might be the Aesop Fable of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."
- Ask students to write about a time that they lost somebody's trust or somebody lost their trust. Was this trust ever regained? How? What did they learn from the experience?
- Collect news articles about honesty and trustworthiness to share. Have students keep a class notebook or journal of news articles that they collect to share.
- Many people complain that political leaders cannot be trusted. Develop a checklist for evaluating the trustworthiness of political leaders. Have students test out the check list by listening to a politician on T.V.
- Discuss the fact that most people consider loyalty to be an important part of trustworthiness. What exactly is loyalty? Who should be loyal to whom or what and under what circumstances? When might loyalty be a bad thing? Give specific examples. Break the class into small groups and have each group give an oral report.
- Use the following questions to jump start a discussion:
  - How many times can you lie before you're considered a liar?
  - Why is it important to have an adult you trust and can talk to?
  - What are some reasons adults lose trust in kids?
  - What are some reasons that kids lose trust in adults?
  - Some adults say that your generation can't be trusted; that your values are different from past generations. Do you agree or disagree?

- Assist students in reviewing the concept of justice. In our courts, people have to swear to "Tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". What does that mean and what is the difference among the three?
- Ask students to watch a movie or sitcom with their family or friends, paying particular attention to the behaviors of the main characters. How much trustworthy behavior was observed? How much untrustworthy behavior was observed?
- Encourage each student to discuss with his/her family or caregivers a time when the student lost the family's or caregiver's trust. How did the student earn it back? How did it affect the relationship?
- Discuss the quote, "You must first trust in yourself before you can trust others."
- Brainstorm ideas to show the community that teenagers are trustworthy. How can adolescents show the community that teens are trustworthy?
- Divide students into groups. Ask them to discuss "Is it a good idea to risk losing your parents' trust for temporary pleasure?" Have each group report the key points of their discussion.
- Have students debate the following topic. "If you want someone to trust you, who has most of the responsibility-you or the other person?" "Why?"
- Lead a discussion regarding trust. "As a general policy, should we start off trusting people and only stop trusting if they prove that they're not worthy? Or should we be cautious and not trust them until they prove themselves worthy? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each position?"
- Ask students to create a character traits puzzle.

#### **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](http://www.goodcharacter.com)

[www.vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com)