

# Dilworth Elementary Character Education

## Courage (March)

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**Pre-teach:** Greet the students and tell them that today you will be discussing the trait courage. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Listed below each question are examples of the types of responses you are looking for. You may need to rephrase students' answers or guide them along.

**(Ask) What does courage mean?**

1. Doing the right thing even if it is difficult.
2. Facing your fears with confidence—being brave.

**(Ask) What are some ways you can show courage?**

1. Do the right thing, even if others are not.
2. Bravely deal with your daily challenges.
3. Be willing to try new things, even if you might fail.
4. Tell the truth regardless of the consequences.
5. Face your fears and work to overcome them.
6. Admit your mistakes and learn from them.
7. Do not give into negative peer pressure

**(Ask) Can you name some people who have shown courage?**

1. Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Susan B. Anthony, soldiers, police officers, firefighters

**Book:** Read and a discuss story that teaches a lessons about the trait courage.

**(Ask) Which action is courageous and which is foolish?**

1. Fighting, or walking away from a fight
2. Doing something dangerous that others are doing, or not participating even if someone calls you "chicken"
3. Teasing and bullying someone, or standing up for someone who is being mistreated
4. Blaming others for your mistakes, or accepting responsibility
5. Ignoring a new student, or making friends with a new student
6. Only looking out for yourself, or helping others
7. Following the crowd, or doing what's right
8. Quitting when things get tough, or working hard even when it's difficult

**Activity:** Complete an activity to go along with your lessons. (Activity suggestions are attached.) Remember, you can incorporate your activity at any time during your lesson.

**Closing comment:** It takes courage to do the right thing. Stand up for what is right, even if you stand alone.

**"Courage conquers all things." —Ovid**

## Courage Activities

### What Does Courage Look Like?—All Dilworth Kindergarten Classes

**Materials:** Drawing paper

Have students draw a picture of courage in action. Have them title their picture by completing the sentence “Courage is....” If possible, display the pictures in the classroom.

### The Courage to be Different—All Dilworth 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** Food or clothing from a different culture

Show or share the food or clothing with the class. Encourage them to try the food or allow someone to try on the clothing.

Ask if it is sometimes easier to do what others are doing, or to do something different. Is it courageous to do what feels right to you, if it’s not what everyone else is doing? Would having everyone be exactly the same be very interesting? Would it be very interesting for you to never try anything new, or to never be curious about new things? Would that be very courageous?

Discuss how it might take courage to try something new or wear clothes that are different from what others are wearing. Does it sometimes take courage to include someone who is different or who is not always included? Talk about how it takes courage to do many things in life that end up bringing about positive feelings, like making friends with a new student or admitting a mistake and thereby showing yourself to be trustworthy.

Ask the students to share examples of their own acts of courage.

### On a Roll—All Dilworth 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** One sheet of copy paper, small book

Show the class the piece of paper and ask them if there is any way the paper can hold the book at a distance from your hand by using only one hand to hold the paper. You can ask for several volunteers to try. Then take the paper and roll it tightly into a tube with a diameter of 1/2 to 1 inch. Hold the tube in one hand and carefully place the book on top of the open end of the tube. It should support the book.

Relate this unlikely ability of the paper to hold up the book to the ability we all have to turn our weaknesses into strengths and to show courage. The paper when it’s flat is flimsy, weak, and lacking backbone and character—easy to crush and overwhelm. Some people who are faced with a problem or obstacle may lack the courage to confront the problem or stand up to the opposition. But with determination we can turn our weaknesses into strengths. Just as the paper can be rolled into a sturdy tube, we can work to be strong if we have the courage to persist. We will then develop backbone to hold up under pressure.

Ask the students to give examples of what someone could do to turn a weakness into strength. Examples: Mark has to give a presentation in class and he is afraid to speak in front of his classmates. Jackie loves to play basketball but she is considered short for her age and she is afraid to sign up for the team because her skills might not measure up. (*10-Minute Life Lessons*, by Jaime Miller)

### Act It Out!—All Dilworth 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** None

Have students work in small groups to role play situations in which a person shows courage. You may want to write possible scenarios (feel free to review the examples given within various Courage activities for this month) on note cards and distribute one card to each group. Allow each group to perform their skit for the rest of the class. Afterward, ask if anyone has experienced similar situations, and allow students to share their moments of courage.

## Courage Activities, *continued*

### **Gone Fishin'—All Dilworth 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** Paper, hole punch, paper clips, wooden dowel, string, magnet, and a can

Give each student a small piece of paper. Have them fold it in half. On the upper half, have them write down something they are, or were, afraid of. On the lower half, have them write what they did or could do to get over this fear. They do not need to put their name on the paper.

Punch a hole through the top of both pieces of paper near the fold, then attach a paper clip. Have students place the pieces of paper in a can. Have the students take turns dropping the end of the “fishing pole” (a wooden dowel with string and a magnet attached to the end) into the can. The magnet will attach to the paper clip. Then students can “reel in” the paper and read what is on. Discuss how it takes courage to overcome our fears. (*The Best of Character*, Duane Hodgkin)

### **Showing Courage—All Dilworth 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** white board and white board pen

Ask students to consider each uncomfortable situation you pose, and ask them to write down how they would realistically respond. Write the situations on the board, allowing students to individually reflect and write down a response to each.

1. If I heard a student tease another about race or differences, I would probably...
2. If I saw one student grab another student’s hat and run off with it, I would probably...
3. If I heard one student threatening another, I would probably...
4. If I came upon a fight between students outside school, I would probably...
5. If I saw someone threaten someone else with a weapon, I would probably...

Ask a few students to share their answer for the first situation. Discuss as a group for each response:

- What are the consequences of this reaction?
- What could happen as a result?

Continue to ask for examples of responses, and discuss likely outcomes and consequences.

To end, ask the students:

- Why is it sometimes most courageous to allow someone else to handle a situation?
- Which of the given situations would it be inappropriate for someone your age to get involved in?

(*Character Education Activities for K–6 Classrooms*, Sandra Peyser and Miriam McLaughlin, Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation. 1997.)

## Additional Courage Activity Options

Feel free to add one of these activities to your lesson, or replace your grade's assigned lesson with one below.

### Student Superhero! (Suggested for grades K–2)

**Materials:** Superhero “mask” or “cape” (can be made from paper, an inside-out and cut paper grocery bag with two holes punched and string run through the holes, maybe with an S drawn on)

Allow willing students to take turns wearing the mask or cape and playing the role of Student Superhero. Pose a situation to each willing participant in turn, and ask the student what their most courageous response would be.

1. You want to try an art class or learn another language, but you're afraid you won't be very good at it. What do you do?
2. You're with a parent and selling cookies in your neighborhood for a fundraiser, and neighbors you don't know are gardening in their yard. What do you do?
3. You want to sleep over at a friend's, but you're afraid of sleeping without a night light on. What do you do?
4. You see two students threatening each other and starting to fight on the playground. What do you do?
5. You're asked to go to a roller-skating party but you've never skated before and you know you might fall down. What do you do?
6. You wrote a great story and your teacher wants you to read it in front of the school, and you feel a little nervous about it. What do you do?
7. You aren't a strong swimmer and your friends want to play in the deep end of the pool. What do you do?

Ask the students:

- Does courage sometimes mean doing something you're uncomfortable with or afraid to fail at?
- Does courage *always* mean listening to your inner voice about if a situation isn't right? (Yes.)
- Can someone your age solve any problem you come across? Should you try, or is that sometimes not the right thing to do?
- Does being courageous always mean getting in the middle of a situation? Might it mean going and getting a grown-up to help?

### The Courage to Say No (Suggested for grades 1–3)

**Materials:** None

Ask the class to count off by 2s. Ask all number 1s to form a circle, and ask all number 2s to form a circle *around* the number 1s.

Ask each person in the circle of 1s to think of a favor they could ask a friend. (Could I borrow a pencil? Could I get a ride home today? Would you help me after school? Could you help me with this project?) Ask the 2s to imagine they're absolutely unable to help for some reason and will need to say no.

Ask the inner circle to turn so each person in each circle is facing someone in the other circle. Have the 1s all ask the person across from them to do their chosen favor, and ask the 2s to politely but firmly refuse. (I'm sorry, I can't. No, I'm sorry. No, maybe another time.)

Shift the 1s to the right one person, so they ask their favor of someone new. Instruct the 2s to politely but firmly refuse the request. Continue the cycle of shifting right one person, request, and refusal until each person in a circle has asked or refused each person in the other circle. (*continued on next page*)

## Additional Courage Activity Options, *continued*

Ask the students:

- When was it most difficult to say no, at the beginning or at the end? Why?
- Was it easier or tougher to say no to a close friend? Why?
- Have you ever needed to say no in order to do the right thing for yourself or for someone else? If someone asked you to go along with something that wasn't right? Was it tough to say no? Is it more difficult to say no to someone you consider a friend, even if what that person is doing doesn't feel right?
- Have you ever known you should refuse someone but didn't? How did you feel after you went along with something you weren't comfortable with?
- Do you think practice could help you get comfortable saying no when you know you should?

(*Character Education Activities for K-6 Classrooms*, Sandra Peyser and Miriam McLaughlin, Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation. 1997.)

**A Quote to Ponder** (Suggested for grades 3 -5)

**Materials:** None

Write this quote on the board and discuss it with the students:

“Courage is being scared to death...and saddling up anyway.” —John Wayne

Ask the students to write and illustrate their own quote for courage. If possible, display the quotes in the classroom.

**The Courageous Egg** (Suggested for any grade)

**Materials:** Wide-mouthed glass or jar, uncooked rice, egg

Place the egg in the middle of the glass completely covered by rice. Explain that the egg represents someone who hanging with the crowd.

One day the group starts making fun of other people. The egg doesn't like it so he tells them to stop (tap the top of the rim, and the egg will rise up from the rice with each tap). Next, the group of friends starts excluding others from their games (tap the rim) and they start telling lies. Each time the egg refuses to go along with his friends and stands up for what's right (tap again). Continue until the egg has completely risen above the rice. Tell the students it takes courage to do the right thing when others are not doing what is right. A courageous person will rise to the top and stand out from the rest!