

Dilworth Elementary Character Education

Responsibility (October)

Pre-teach: Introduce yourself to the students and tell them which trait you will be discussing today. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Below each question are examples of responses. You may need to rephrase students' answers or guide them along.

(Ask) What is *responsibility*?

1. Being accountable for what you do, for your actions and behavior.
2. Doing the right thing at the right time, so others can trust and depend on you.

(Ask) How can you show *responsibility*?

1. Complete your homework and chores on time without being reminded.
2. Follow through on your commitments, even when you don't feel like it.
3. Accept responsibility for your mistakes. Learn from them. Don't make excuses or blame others.
4. Take care of your things and those of other people. Return items you borrow.
5. Find out what needs to be done and do it.
6. Make wise choices, such as choosing to eat healthy foods and wearing a helmet.
7. Always do your very best. Others are counting on you!

Book: Read and discuss a book teaching a lesson about responsibility. (See *Character Ed book list*.)

(Ask) How would you demonstrate *responsibility* if...

1. You broke the wheel off your brother's new skateboard?
2. Your friend asks you to play and you haven't finished your homework?
3. You're playing a really fun game at your friend's house and it's time to go home?
4. You promised your mom or dad you would clean your room but you just don't feel like it?
5. It's time to go to bed and you just remembered that your book report is due tomorrow?
6. You agreed to take care of your neighbor's dog while she is away, but now a friend has invited you to a sleepover?
7. Your mom or dad isn't feeling well and could really use some extra help around the house?
8. You forgot to bring home the book you need to study for tomorrow's test?

(Encourage students to come up with a few more situations to discuss together as a class.)

Activity: Complete an activity to go along with your lesson. (*Activity suggestions follow.*) You may choose to incorporate an activity into your lesson at any time. Visuals and experiments are very effective at the beginning of the lesson and often get your students excited about the lesson.

Closing comment: Remember, you're the only one who can take responsibility for what you say and do. Be a person others can trust and count on to do the right thing!

***"I am responsible for doing the work I need to do today, even though it may be hard."* ~Helen Keller**

Responsibility Activities

Responsibility Is My Bag! – All Dilworth K Classes

Materials: Paper bag

Give everyone a lunch-sized paper bag. Tell the students how they can show responsibility by helping keep their family car neat and tidy. Ask them to each decorate their bag. When they are finished, cut a small hole near the top so the bag can be placed over a switch or knob in the car and used as a trash catcher. Tell the students it will be their responsibility to empty the bag when it's full and put it back in its place. (*Big Activity Book for Building Little Characters*, R.Bertolini)

Responsibili-Tree – All Dilworth 1st Grade Classes

Materials: White, brown, and green construction paper. Tree trunk with branch stencil and leaf stencil made from heavy paper. (Alternative: bring one large tree shape drawn on posterboard, green construction paper, leaf stencils; glue students' responsibility leaves to one class Responsibili-Tree.)

Give each student one piece each of the white, brown, and green construction paper. Ask them to use the brown paper to trace and cut out the tree trunk and then glue it on their white paper. Then use the green paper to cut and trace out leaves and then glue the leaves on the branches of the tree trunk. Students will then write responsible actions that they perform on each of the leaves, such as take out the garbage, feed the dog, and set the table.

The "What if....?" Game – All Dilworth 2nd Grade Classes

Materials: A sample lunch, for example, a sandwich (meat, cheese, lettuce), a piece of fruit, a carton of milk

Ask the students a series of "What if...?" questions.

1. What if the farmer who grew the grain to make the bread for this sandwich decided to play ball instead of harvesting the grain? (*Explain that we wouldn't have any bread to eat, than take the bread off the sandwich.*)
2. What if the farmer who raised the animals for the meat decided he was just too tired to take the animals to market? (*Take the meat away*)
3. What if the dairy farmer decided it was too cold and rainy to go out and milk the cows in the morning? (*Take away the cheese and milk*)
4. What if the workers who harvest fruits and vegetables were too busy watching TV to work in the fields? (*Take away any fruit and vegetables*)
5. What if the store manager and employees at the grocery store didn't feel like working for a few weeks and played with friends instead? (*Take away everything else and explain that the store wouldn't be open and we could not get the things we need.*)

See what can happen when people do not show responsibility? We count on others to be responsible and do their jobs correctly and on time.

The jobs you have are important. (*Ask the students to give examples of their jobs.*) When you do what is expected of you to the best of your ability, you are being responsible and others know they can count on you. (www.charactercenter.com)

Responsibility Activities (continued)

Sweet Responsibility – All Dilworth 3rd Grade Classes

Materials: Small apples and wrapped candy miniatures, one for each student

Show the students what you have. Ask them one by one which of the two items they would like and let them take the one of their choice. First speak to those that chose the candy, saying something like, "You have chosen the food that will give you quick energy. It's very sweet. But it doesn't last very long and it is mostly empty calories. A few minutes after you eat it, you'll be hungry for more." To those who chose the apple say something along the lines of, "The apple will also give you energy and tastes sweet. But the apple is nutritious and will give you extra vitamins. You will feel more satisfied and benefit from the energy it gives for a longer period of time. The decision to take the apple was a wise one."

Now ask the children how you can compare the apple and candy to our responsibilities and the choices we face every day. Some of the choices we make bring us immediate pleasure but have no long-lasting value (like the candy). Wise and responsible choices (like the apple) will bring us a longer-lasting type of happiness and satisfaction.

Responsi-bill-ity – All Dilworth 4th Grade Classes

Materials: A dollar bill

Look what I brought with me today. (*Hold up the dollar bill for the students to see.*) Ask: Do we all need money? What do we use money for? (*Discuss needs and wants.*) Which things do we all *need* to spend money on, and which things would you *want* to spend money on?

When I hold this dollar bill in my hand, it doesn't block my vision of the things around me. I can see wonderful things like my family, friends, people who might need help, and I can see work that needs to be done. But if I hold money too close to me (*hold dollar in front of your eyes*), that's all I can see or care about. So if I love money too much, that can lead to trouble. I might begin to make foolish and selfish purchases, thinking only of myself and of this moment instead of making responsible choices and thinking about the needs of others.

1. Have you ever spent money on something, then wished you'd saved it for later instead?
2. Are there *experiences* you remember and enjoy for longer than a gadget, toy, or something you spend money on? What about a day spent with friends?
3. How does it feel when you share with others who need a little more, instead of holding money too close and only thinking of yourself?

Having money is not a problem. But if I love money too much—and hold it too close—it becomes a problem.

What are some good and responsible things we can do with money? (*Object Talks for Any Day, by Verna L. Kokmeyer*)

Responsibility Role Play – All Dilworth 5th Grade Classes**Materials:** None

Divide the students into small groups and ask them to develop a skit about responsibility. Have each group present to the class. Discuss each skit and the responsible (and irresponsible) behavior it explored.

Examples of situations they might explore:

Which choice will probably give immediate pleasure and which choice would give you long-term satisfaction? Which is the responsible choice?

1. You're working on your homework when a friend calls and invites you to come over and watch a movie.
2. You've been saving your money to buy a new skateboard, but as you walk by the arcade you think about spending the money to play a few arcade games instead.
3. You have the opportunity to finish your science project ahead of schedule or play basketball with your friends.

(*10-Minute Life Lessons for Kids*, J Miller)

Additional Responsibility Activity Options**Mr. "No Excuse" Moose** (Suggested for grades K–2)**Materials:** A stuffed moose or a picture of one

Discuss what *excuses* are (ways of getting out of doing something, or trying to find a reason not to do a job or be responsible for it). To help students understand the importance of accepting responsibility and following through, introduce them to your friend Mr. "No Excuse" Moose. Mr. Moose shows responsibility by doing what is expected of him. He does not blame others or make excuses. Role play with the students different ways Mr. Moose would respond to given situations. For example, it's time for Mr. Moose to take out the trash. Does he say "I'm too tired" or "Ask someone else"? (Option: Ask the students to think of silly or outlandish excuses an Excuse Moose might offer: "I can't, my foot is sore," "I can't, I'm too hungry," and others. Ask if the students would have faith in Excuse Moose the next time they need to rely on him, if he gave excuses and didn't take responsibility.) Mr. "No Excuse" Moose *never* makes excuses...he takes responsibility and gets the job done. People know they can count on Mr. Moose!

Strega Nona Helpers (Suggested for grades K–2)**Materials:** *Strega Nona* or *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons* by Tomie dePaola, paper and crayons

Read *Strega Nona*. Talk about helping others, and being careful to pay attention, unlike Big Anthony in the story. Have each student fold a paper in thirds and unfold it to make three sections. Ask the students to draw themselves helping by acting responsibly in three different situations (at home, school, and in the community). For example, they may draw pictures showing them cleaning their rooms, listening in class, sharing, or picking up trash. Encourage the students to write a sentence describing each picture including responsible actions: helping, making good choices, completing tasks, or being a good citizen. Share the pictures with the class.

(<http://www.character.org/lessons/lesson-plans/elementary/julian-elementary-school/>)

People You Can Count On (Suggested for grades 2–4)**Materials:** Index cards, large butcher paper or posterboard

Ask the students to raise hands and list six to 8 occupations that require varied responsibility (for example, police officer, teacher, judge, mail carrier, janitor, doctor, crossing guard, store salesperson, dog walker, babysitter). Write each on an index card. Break the class into small groups, and distribute one card to each group. Ask each group to decide (1) Why is it important for this person to be responsible and reliable? and (2) What might happen if the person was not responsible?

Label the large paper or posterboard: People We Count On. Ask a student from each group to draw someone doing the group's given occupation, and allow others to draw additional people and jobs mentioned during your discussion. For older students, instead of figures, ask students to write the name of the occupation and list the most important responsibility associated with it.

(Adapted from *Character Education Activities for K–6 Classrooms*, Sandra Peyser and Miriam McLaughlin, 1997, p. 61.)

Get a Job! (Suggested for grades 3–6)**Materials:** White board or chalkboard and writing utensil, paper and pencils for students

Write a list of jobs on the board (firefighter, teacher, doctor, carpenter, cook, car salesman, banker, store clerk, mechanic, police officer, truck driver, farmer), leaving space between each. Divide the students into small groups and assign two jobs from the list to each group. Ask each group to make lists of the responsibilities that are associated with each job (include things like being on time, cleanliness, etc.).

Once the groups have finished their lists, ask each group to read aloud the responsibilities for each job. Write them on the board beside their associated job title. Work with the class to identify the responsibilities that apply to more than one or even all of the jobs. Circle them. Ask if these responsibilities are universal for all jobs? What might happen if someone in a given job didn't meet their basic responsibilities? Would others' or their own safety, trust, health, or other factors be at risk?

(*Character Education Activities for K–6 Classrooms*, Sandra Peyser and Miriam McLaughlin, 1997, pp. 45–46.)

A Symphony of Character (Suggested for all grades)**Materials:** Musical instrument that you are able to play.

Bring in your instrument and draw a line of music on the board with notes. Play the music as written. Next, erase several of the notes and replay the music. Notice how different the music sounds. Explain the importance of each note in the composition. They all have a purpose to make the music work. It can be beautiful and complete only when each note is doing its part. Each of us is like a note in a musical composition. When we do our part and take responsibility for our actions, then we can make beautiful "music" in our lives and for those around us.

Unless otherwise noted, lessons are from *The Parent/Community Connection in the Classroom: Connecting your classroom to parents, community, and character education*, Julie L. Gaines, 2005 (reproduction is permissible for school use only).