

Dilworth Elementary Character Education: Honesty (November)

Pre-teach: Reacquaint yourself with the students and briefly review the traits you have discussed on your previous visits. Tell the students that today you will be discussing the trait *honesty*. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Below each question are examples of the type of responses you are looking for. You may need to rephrase the student's answers or guide them along.

(Ask) What does *honesty* mean?

1. To be truthful
2. To not lie, cheat, or steal.

(Ask) Why is *honesty* important?

1. Honest people are trustworthy, dependable, and respected by others.
2. It is the right thing to do. It feels good.
3. Telling the truth lets everyone know what happened and keeps the wrong person from being blamed for something they didn't do.

(Ask) What are the consequences of dishonesty?

1. Losing the trust and respect of others.
2. The need to tell more lies in order to cover up.
3. You may face punishment and embarrassment.

(Ask) What are the qualities of an honest person?

1. Tells the truth, regardless of the consequence.
2. Admits when he or she is wrong.
3. Does not cheat or steal.
4. Does not exaggerate to make things seem different than they are.
5. Keeps promises and encourages others to be truthful.

Book: Read and discuss a book that teaches a lesson about honesty. (*Refer to book suggestion list.*)

(Ask) How can you demonstrate the trait *honesty* in the following situations?

1. The cashier only charges you for one apple when you really bought two.
2. You find a \$10 bill in the hallway at school or in the sofa seat cushion at home.
3. A friend asks if he can copy your answers during a test.
4. You promised your mom or dad you would clean your room, but you watched TV instead.
5. You borrowed your friend's skateboard and lost it.
6. At the store, you see one of your friends put something in her pocket without paying for it.
7. You want to take two cookies from the tray when the sign says "One cookie per person."
8. The rule states that you must be 10 years old to ride a ride. Who will know that you're only 7?

Activity: Complete an activity to go along with your lesson. (*Activity suggestions attached*)

Concluding comment: Always tell the truth—it's the right thing to do. Your family and friends will respect you for it.

"Honesty is always the best policy." ~George Washington

Honesty Activities

The Honesty Song – All Dilworth K classes

Materials: None

Teach students to sing a song about honesty. They can help write their own lyrics to a familiar tune (Happy Birthday, Alphabet song, etc.), or you may choose teach them one like this:

(Sing to the tune of Yankee Doodle)

Honest, honest I will be; truthful and sincere.

I'll tell the truth and never lie; and will not cheat or steal.

Honest, honest, I will be; you can count on me.

I pledge to always tell the truth and answer honestly!

The Honest Mouth – All Dilworth 1st Grade Classes

Materials: Bright gumball or gobstopper-type hard candy in a dark color

Ask:

(1) When would it be tempting to lie instead of being honest and telling the truth? *(If you're afraid of getting in trouble, if you haven't done the right thing, if it would be easier in the moment or you'd get what you wanted, etc.)*

(2) And how would you feel once someone else—your parent, your friend, or your teacher—knew you hadn't been honest and hadn't told the truth? *(Ashamed, disappointed, and afraid they wouldn't trust you next time?)*

(3) Does anyone know what happens when you eat bright candy? *(Put a piece in your mouth and work it around. After sucking or chewing on the candy, open your mouth to show the result.)* Is it a secret that I just ate some candy? Is there any hiding that you've had candy? *(No, everyone can see the color in your mouth.)*

A mouth that has eaten candy with food coloring in it is discolored. Yuck! Not only is your tongue discolored, but your teeth and even your lips may be colored. It takes a long time before your mouth returns to its normal color.

(4) How is being dishonest like the stain of a candy you've eaten? *(Dishonesty has a lasting effect, just like the candy. Candy leaves our mouths colored for a long time, and we can see the negative results of telling lies long after we've told them. For example, others will lose trust in us, privileges may be taken away from us, and even friendships can be lost if we've hurt our friends with a lie. Telling lies can leave a big ugly mark--just like candy can mark or color your mouth.)*

Remember: It's always best to be honest and true. Don't let the stain of dishonesty leave its mark on you!

(Adapted from Object Talks for Any Day, V. Kokmeyer)

Honesty Activities (continued)

Oh, What A Tangled Web We Weave! – All Dilworth 2nd Grade Classes

Materials: Ball of yarn

Arrange ahead of time to have your child or another student help you with this demonstration, and secretly ask the child to give false answers to each question that you will ask.

Now ask the child to sit in a chair front of the class. Next, ask the seated child a simple question such as, "Why didn't you bring your homework for today?" As he/she answers untruthfully, such as "I didn't bring my homework because the dog ate it," raise your eyebrows at the class and wrap a long string of yarn around the helper twice. Then ask a follow-up question based on the child's reply, such as "How did the dog get your homework?" As the student makes up another clearly untrue answer, wrap the yarn around him/her two times again. Continue to ask follow-up questions until the child is entangled in a web of yarn. After the class has observed the situation, explain that you asked this person to make up false answers to all your questions (to lie).

Discuss the following with the class:

1. Ask if the students can see from the exercise what telling lies can do to someone. Is it easy to stop lying once you've started? Emphasize how one lie usually leads to another and how quickly we can become trapped and embarrassed by lies.
2. Ask them the difference between how a person who always tells the truth feels vs. how a person who lies feels. (*The person who tells the truth doesn't have to think back to a story or lie and figure out how to cover it up. Which one has peace of mind? Which one feels good about him- or herself?*)
3. Ask the students to tell about a time when they honest even when it was difficult. How do they think the person they told the truth to thinks of them for being honest?
4. Ask why it is important for us to always tell the truth (*trust, respect, because it's the right thing to do.*)
5. Ask if they easily trust people they know have lied to them. Would it take time to trust a person's word again, after knowing he or she wasn't truthful with you?

(Adapted from *10-Minute Life Lesson*, Jaime Miller)

The Honesty Pledge – All Dilworth 3rd Grade Classes

Materials: None

Ask each student to write his or her own honesty pledge for school. This is the student's set of promises to always be truthful in their words and actions. Ask them to make sure the pledge addresses the times when it's essential to be honest (when doing work they're expected to do by themselves, when answering for their actions and taking responsibility, when telling what really happened). After they have finished writing, students may decorate, date, and solemnly sign their pledges. Their final versions may read something like this:

I will always tell the truth no matter what. I will admit when I am wrong.

I will do my own work. I will be honest and trustworthy.

Honesty Activities (continued)

The Tower of Flour – All Dilworth 4th Grade Classes

Materials: Flour, spoon or scoop, dime, hard plastic cup, newspaper, butter knife, paper plate

Begin by spreading newspaper on a table. Place the dime in the center of the bottom of the plastic cup. Scoop flour into the cup. Pile it to the brim and press down firmly to make it compact. Place the paper plate on top of the cup and turn them over together on the newspaper. Tap the cup gently, then carefully lift it off. The flour should remain standing in the shape of the cup, with the dime on top.

Explain that the dime represents the trait *honesty*. The flour is our reputation and the trust others have in us. We can all see that honesty is sitting right on top.

Next, take the knife and carefully slice off the side edge of the “flour tower,” being careful not to cut too deeply.

Explain that this represents what happens when we tell lies. Our reputation is weakened. Others will not be likely to trust or respect us. Notice how each time more flour is removed, the dime’s position becomes more precarious. Continue until the dime drops and the tower of trust falls.

(10-Minute Life Lessons, by Jaime Miller)

The Cover-Up – All Dilworth 5th Grade Classes

Materials: Bucket or large cooking pot (about 8 inches across), one quarter, and enough pennies for each student to have one.

Fill the bucket with 6–8 inches of water and put the quarter at the bottom, in the center. Begin by saying that telling a lie may seem like a simple way out of a problem. However, usually when we tell a lie we end up telling even more lies in order to cover up the first lie. *(Give an example, either made up or from your own personal experience.)*

Explain to the students that their challenge is to cover up the quarter by using a penny. Have students come up one at a time and try to drop their penny *(from at least 2 inches above the water)* into the bucket and try to cover up the quarter. After everyone has had a turn to drop a penny in the bucket, discuss the following questions:

1. How well did the penny cover the quarter?
2. How many pennies actually landed on the quarter?
3. How does this activity compare to trying to cover up a lie that we told?
4. Does a person have to tell more lies to cover up the first lie?
5. What happens when you are caught lying?
6. How easy is it for others to trust you again?
7. Why is telling the truth easier than lying, even if the truth may get you in trouble?

(Activities That Teach Family Values, by Tom Jackson)

Unless otherwise noted, lessons above came 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).

Additional Honesty Activity Options

Simon Says: Let's Talk about Honesty (Suggested for grades K-1)

Materials: None

Ask the students to sit in a circle. Tell them: (1) Simon says raise your hands and keep them up if it's important to you that your friends tell you the truth. (2) Simon says keep your hands up if you think it's okay to be dishonest if someone else has lied to you first. (3) Put down your hands if it's okay to lie once. (Did anyone get tricked?) (4) Simon says to keep your hands up if it makes you feel good when people are honest with you. (5) Put your hands down if you feel better when you tell the truth. (Did anyone get tricked?)

Simon says this class is full of honest and trustworthy friends!

Honesty in Advertising (Suggested for grades 2-5)

Materials: A printed ad for a toy or other product

Copy or print an advertisement that makes assertions or promises about a product. Ask the students to examine the claims in the ad. Does the ad state or seem to show something you think may be untrue? Is the ad aimed at making you believe something that might not be true?

If you think the ad is misleading, is it lying by omission (leaving out important information or facts that would make a difference to you)? Does it offer only part of the truth?

Why might a company be dishonest or omit the truth about a product? How would you feel if you'd saved money to buy this product and it didn't work the way you expected? Would you trust the company's ads in the future? Has this ever happened to you?

Why Lie? (Suggested for grades 3-5)

Materials: None

Divide the students into small groups. Ask each group to come up with reasons and rationalizations people use for being dishonest—either by omitting the truth or telling lies. (*It seems easier than taking responsibility, it may prevent you from getting into immediate trouble, others won't be mad at you for what you did wrong, it gives you more time to figure out how to handle the situation, etc.*)

Ask the groups to figure out the weaknesses of each of these reasons. (*Eventually the truth catches up with you, others doubt your word, you get in trouble for lying on top of being in trouble for what you did wrong in the first place, you have to keep telling lies to cover up the first lies—until you're caught.*)

Explore situations when it's difficult to tell the truth. (*When you don't want to hurt someone's feelings, when you're afraid, when you're embarrassed, etc.*) Ask the students to offer specific situations when it was tough for them to be honest. How did they feel after they told the truth (or didn't)? How do they feel about it now?

Additional Honesty Activity Options (continued)

Honesty Role Play (Suggested for grades 3-5)

Materials: None

Divide the students into small groups. Ask each group to write a short skit to present to the rest of the class in which a person has a choice to be either honest or dishonest. Be sure the students include consequences of the choice in their skit.

Some examples to explore could include:

- Finding \$100 at the bank machine.
- Having accidentally broken a grumpy neighbor's window with a ball.
- Wanting to play, but your parent asks if you've done your homework, and you haven't.

Ask them to explore the risks of being honest and the risks of being dishonest. Which risks are greater? Which consequences last longer?