



January's Key to Character—2012

Definitions

Elementary: Being accountable in actions and words

Secondary: Having a sense of duty to fulfill tasks with reliability and dependability

Related Words or Phrases

trustworthy dependable mission
accountable reliable job

Sunshine State Standards

HE.K.C. 1.1/HE.1.C.1.1—Recognize healthy behavior.
SS.K.C.2.1—Demonstrate the characteristics of being a good citizen.
SS.1.C.2.1—Describe the characteristics of responsible citizenship in the school community.
HE.3.P.1.1—Practice responsible personal health behaviors.
HE.4.C.1.2—Identify examples of mental/emotional, physical and social health.
HE.5.C.1.1—Describe the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.
HE.6.B.2.1/HE.7.B.2.1/HE.8.B.2.1—Determine strategies to improve effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.
HE.6.P.1.1/HE.7.P.1.1/HE.8.P.1.1—Explain the importance of assuming responsibility for personal health decisions.
HE.912.B.2.1—Explain skills needed to communicate effectively with family, peers and others to enhance health.
HE912.P.1.1—Analyze the role of individual responsibility in enhancing health.

Responsibility "D.O.s"

- ☺ Think before you act.
- ☺ Think before you talk.
- ☺ Do only good things.
- ☺ Think about what will happen if you say or do what you want to say or do.
- ☺ Fix your mistakes. Clean up your own messes.
- ☺ Be a good example.
- ☺ Think of ways to help others.
- ☺ Do your jobs.
- ☺ Do your best.
- ☺ Keep trying.
- ☺ Finish your work before you play.

Responsibility "D.O.N'Ts"

- ☹ Don't do anything before you think.
- ☹ Don't say anything before you think.
- ☹ Don't do anything that's bad or wrong.
- ☹ Don't leave mistakes or messes for someone else to fix.
- ☹ Don't blame others for your mistakes.
- ☹ Don't wait for someone to tell you to do good things.
- ☹ Don't do anything that you won't be proud of.
- ☹ Don't play until you finish your work.
- ☹ Don't pretend that you did a job you really didn't do.

Responsibility Earns Rewards

From the way my parents were acting just days before my tenth birthday, I thought for sure that I would finally get a horse of my own. I spent hours dreaming of riding across the fields, hand feeding it apples and carrots in the barn, and the fancy saddle that would make all my friends jealous. I squealed with excitement when my father walked in to my party and announced that he had a special gift for his birthday girl. Then my heart sank as he opened his cupped hands and presented me with a baby chick. My saddle dreams were dashed. Even though the disappointment was evident on my face, he smiled and handed me the chick. "It's all yours. I think you're ready to take care of this chick by yourself."

That chick turned out to be harder to raise than I thought. I had to mend all the small holes in the chicken yard fence, feed her and make sure she had fresh water. Some days the weather seemed too bad to have to trudge out to the chicken coop, but my father would remind me that my chicken was relying on me for care and out the door I would go.

My eleventh birthday rolled around without anticipation. I had given up on my dream for a horse. As I walked into the kitchen that morning, my father pointed toward a large gift-wrapped box by the back door. Tearing open the wrapper, I found a beautiful saddle with a note that read, "Take this to your new friend in the barn, you've earned her."

Source: The Foundation for a Better Life



"Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him."—Booker T. Washington

Parent



Corner

Teaching Responsibility at Home

1. Help your child see how their actions influence others.

For example, you might say —

"Tommy, when you and Jeremy fight and you hit him, how do you think his body feels? How do you think he feels about your being his friend? When someone hits you, how do you feel about him?" This habit of reflection can begin with young children. Ask simple questions. Avoid tones of guilt, blame and anger.

2. Practice discipline without always making it a punishment.

Punishment is one of the least effective ways to discipline. Really effective discipline controls behavior by using fair and respectful rules. Using this approach, if your child hits a playmate, you would:

Step 1 Remove the child from the situation.

Step 2 Calm the child down with a hug, by holding their hands, looking at the child eye-to-eye or initiating a "time-out." This contact should have a calming effect.

Step 3 Point out how the other injured child feels.

Step 4 Give the child ideas about what to do differently the next time. If the child is at least 8 years old, allow the child to generate their own ideas.

3. Regularly follow through with consequences that have been discussed in advance.

Children develop responsibility when they clearly understand the outcome of their actions and when the consequences are fairly and firmly applied. Loosing the use of a toy that has been used improperly or harmfully is a consequence related to the irresponsible action.

4. Model appropriate behavior.

Your actions send messages. Match your behavior to what you are saying. If you use inappropriate language that you expect your child not to use, you're sending a confusing message.



Responsibility Sample Lesson

Prioritizing Responsibilities:

Provide students with a list of tasks such as homework, brushing teeth, playing, reading, cleaning, time with friends, etc. Ask for a definition/ explanation for the word "Priority." Have students prioritize the list of tasks given, and discuss as a class or in groups why they prioritized the list the way they did.

Discuss whether or not prioritizing is a positive thing to do. Who should prioritize and why? Discuss the differences between "I must," "I should," and "I want." Finally, give your students several tasks, such as homework, or other subject related assignments. Have them prioritize the tasks, and subsequently complete these tasks. Be certain to set deadlines and follow through on collecting all completed assignments.

Poetry Corner

Review the definition of responsibility and the description of a responsible person. Stress that responsibility means being accountable for our actions and choices without making excuses. Read or duplicate the poem, "The Three Little Kittens." Lead the students in the activities and discussion suggestions below.

The Three Little Kittens

By Eliza Lee Follen

Three little kittens lost their mittens;
And they began to cry,
"Oh, mother dear,
We very much fear,
That we have lost our mittens."

"Lost your mittens!
You naughty kittens!
Then you shall have no pie!"
"Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow."
"No you shall have no pie."

The three little kittens found their mittens;
And they began to cry,
"Oh mother dear,
See here, see here!"
"Our mittens we have found."

"Put on your mittens,
You silly kittens,
And you may have some pie."

"Purr-r, purr-r, purr-r,
Oh, let us have some pie!"
"Purr-r, purr-r, purr-r."

Questions to think about:

1. What responsibility did the kittens have?
2. What mistake did they make?
3. Did they blame each other, or some other person or event?
4. What was their consequence?
5. Why were they given pie as a reward?

Activity:

Have students act out the "Three Little Kittens," substituting the mittens for homework, lunch money, sweaters or jackets, backpack, etc. For the pie, substitute a movie, video, computer time, allowance, free time, etc.

Discuss the following points:

Since being responsible means being accountable for what you do when you make a mistake, don't blame another person or say you "forgot." Instead take responsibility for it. Sometimes things just go wrong, so give an explanation for what happened and accept the consequences.



Teaching Responsibility



In order to teach responsibility we have to trust students to be responsible and extend their opportunities to do so. Elementary and middle school students love to be helpful and like to feel important. Beth Lewis has an interesting approach using classroom jobs to develop responsibility in her elementary students although the concept could be easily applied to middle school jobs also.

Step 1: Announcement

Announce to the students that they will have the opportunity to apply for classroom jobs and discuss the seriousness of the responsibilities. Explain that they can be "fired" if they do not do what they agree to do. This should be done a few days before they select their positions to build excitement.

Step 2: Decide on Duties

There are hundreds of things that need to be done to run a successful and efficient classroom, but only a couple dozen that you can trust the students to handle. Thus, you need to decide how many and which jobs to have available. Ideally, you should have one job for each student in your class. In classes of 20 or fewer, this will be relatively easy. If you have many more students, it will be more challenging and you may decide to have a few students without jobs at any given time. You will be rotating jobs on a regular basis, so every one will have a chance to participate eventually. You also have to consider your own personal comfort level, the maturity level of your class, and other factors when you decide how much responsibility you are ready to give your students. You can always change your mind later and amend the job system in the next round, but think carefully about these factors and others as you design your job program.

Here are some examples of jobs that work well in an elementary classroom; those with (*) are also useful in the middle school classroom.

- PENCIL SHARPENER—makes sure the class always has a supply of sharpened pencils
- PAPER MONITOR—passes papers back to students*
- CHAIR STACKER—In charge of stacking the chairs at the end of the day
- DOOR MONITOR—holds the door for the class to enter and exit
- LIBRARIAN—in charge of the class library
- ENERGY MONITOR—makes sure to turn off the lights when class leaves the room*
- LINE MONITOR—leads the line and keeps it quiet in the halls
- TEACHER ASSISTANT—helps the teacher at any time*
- HOMEWORK MONITOR—tells students who were absent what homework they missed*
- BULLETIN BOARD COORDINATORS—more than one student who plans and decorates one bulletin board in the classroom*

Step 3: Hold a Class Meeting

Announce and describe each job, collect applications, and emphasize the importance of each job. Explain that there will be one warning if the job isn't being done properly. If changes aren't made, the person will be "released" and someone else will be given the job.

Step 4: Monitor Job Performance

Conference with students who are not performing their job properly and make it very clear what changes need to be made. If changes are not made within a reasonable time, you may have to consider finding a replacement if the job is essential. Make sure they are included in the next round of job assignments. Make sure to schedule a certain time each day for the jobs to be performed.



Heroes

Chorus from: "Hero" by Walter Afanasieff and Mariah Carey

"And then a hero comes along with the strength to carry on,
And you cast your fears aside and you know you can survive.
So when you feel like hope is gone, look inside you and be strong,
And you'll finally see the truth that a hero lies in you."



Ask students who their heroes are. Write them all on the board; ask them to: list character traits they have in common, what risks each of them have taken, and who they helped by their actions. Help them distinguish between heroes and celebrities and to know which ones to emulate. Discuss the meaning of "hero lies in you," and how each of us must look inside ourselves to find courage. Explain how heroes are a great example of responsible action.

FCAT Prompt - Read the lyrics to the chorus of the song "Heroes." Think about who is your hero and why. Write about that person and explain why you think he/she is a hero.

Tell Me a Story: RESPONSIBILITY



Responsible Kids in Action

There are many types of responsibility. We have a moral responsibility to care for, defend, help build up, and sustain other people, animals and the earth. We should treat other people justly and fairly, honor other living things and be environmentally aware. We have a community responsibility to treat others as we want to be treated, to participate in community activities and decisions, and to be an active, contributing citizen. The stories below are great examples of responsibility.

David Levitt

David Levitt was all of 11-years-old when he decided he could do something about feeding the hungry. What about all the food that wasn't served each day in the school cafeteria? He was told that several adults had tried to get the school to donate but the response had been, "Too much red tape." Undaunted, he took the question straight to the county school board and got their agreement to donate food from all 92 schools in the county.

When his accomplishment made local papers, some classmates taunted and insulted him. David forged on, enlisting restaurant owners and the hosts of private events to donate unserved food, getting manufacturers to donate the proper containers for transporting food to shelters and soup kitchens, and taking food from a local supermarket to a feeding agency.

At David's Bar Mitzvah, he asked guests to bring food donations in support of his project. Over 500 pounds of food were donated, and he was presented with a Giraffe Project commendation for sticking his neck out to champion the hungry.

Source: Giraffe Heroes

Birthday Party in a Box

Birthdays should be a special time for children. At R. L. Pink Elementary School in Richmond Texas, students wanted to ensure that children less fortunate were not left out of important days like birthdays. They created the "Birthday Party in a Box" program for children living in local women's shelters or in foster care. Children make birthday boxes from shoe boxes and fill them with streamers, napkins, paper plates, decorations, balloons and gift cards for pizza and cake. In addition to the goodies inside the box, a note is attached which explains the concept of "Pay it Forward" and encourages the recipients to find a way of extending some sort of kindness to others.

Source: payitforwardmovement.org

As a responsible citizen, what do you see as needs in your school or home community? What can you do, either as an individual or as a group, to help meet the needs you see? If you would like further information on how to start a Pay It Forward initiative in your school, please visit the Pay It Forward website at the address above.

An Insignificant Task

by Pedro Pablo Sacristan
(freestoriesforkids.com)

The day when the jobs were handed out was one of the most exciting for all the children in the class. It took place during the first week of the term. On that day, every boy and girl was given a job for which they would be responsible for the rest of that school year. As with everything, some jobs were more interesting than others, and the children were eager to be given one of the best ones. When giving them out, the teacher took into account which pupils had been most responsible during the previous year, and those children were the ones who most looked forward to this day. Among them, Rita stood out. She was a kind and quiet girl; and during the previous year she had carried out the teacher's instructions perfectly. All the children knew Rita was most likely to be given the best job of all: to look after the class dog.

But that year there was a big surprise. Each child received one of the normal jobs, like handing out papers for the lessons, telling the time, cleaning the blackboard, or looking after one of the pets. But Rita's job was very different. She was given a little box containing some sand and one ant. Even though the teacher insisted that this ant was a very special ant, Rita could not help feeling disappointed. Most of her classmates felt sorry for her. They sympathized with her, and remarked at how unfair it was that she had been given that job. Even her father became very angry with the teacher, and, as an act of protest, he encouraged Rita to pay no attention to this insignificant pet. However, Rita, who liked her teacher very much, preferred to show the teacher her error by doing something special with that job of such little interest.

"I will turn this little task into something great," Rita said to herself. So it was that Rita started investigating all about her little ant. She learned about the different species, and studied everything about their habitats and behavior. She modified the little box to make it perfect for the ant. Rita gave the ant the very best food, and it ended up growing quite a bit bigger than anyone had expected.

One day in spring, when they were in the classroom, the door opened, revealing a man who looked rather important. The teacher interrupted the class with great joy, and said, "This is Doctor Martinez. He has come to tell us a wonderful piece of news!"

"Exactly," said the Doctor. "Today they have published the results of the competition, and this class has been chosen to accompany me, this summer, on a journey to the tropical rainforest, where we will be investigating all kinds of insects. Among all the schools of this region, without doubt it is this one which has best cared for the delicate little ant given to you. Congratulations! You will be wonderful assistants!"

That day the school was filled with joy and celebration. Everyone congratulated the teacher for entering them in the competition, and they thanked Rita for having been so patient and responsible. And so it was that many children learned that to be given the most important tasks you have to know how to be responsible in the smallest tasks. And without doubt, it was Rita who was most pleased at this, having said to herself so many times, "I will turn this little job into something really great."

Suggested Reading List

Elementary:

Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Doreen Rappaport - In this picture book biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., Rappaport's spare text and carefully chosen quotes are carried to a powerful emotional level by Collier's art. From the smiling, inviting image on the cover to each striking double spread the artist portrays significant events evoking King's purpose, telling readers that "his big words are alive for us today." A 2002 Caldecott Honor Book and a 2002 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Book.



The Three Pigs, David Wiesner - The plot and form of a familiar folktale unravels as the pigs are huffed and puffed off the page and into a new world. The 2002 Caldecott Medal Winner.

Olivia Saves the Circus, Ian Falconer - Olivia, the spunky porcine dynamo, regales her class with her imagined triumphs when "all the circus people were out sick with ear infections," and she fills in as lion tamer, juggler and tightrope walker.

Goin' Somewhere Special, McKissack, Patricia C. - Pinkney's illustrations focus the eye on 'Tricia Ann, who braves the segregated buses in 1950s Nashville to visit her special place - the integrated public library where "all are welcome."

Secondary:

Downriver, Hobbs - Discovery Unlimited or "Hoods in the Woods" teens act irresponsibly and suffer the consequences on a white water rafting trip.

Forged by Fire, Draper - A substance-abusing mother and a brutal step-father cause Gerald to be responsible for his life and Angel, his sister.

Goodnight, Maman, Mazar - A Jewish Girl, Karin, has to take responsibility for herself and her brother as they hide from the Germans. (K. Davis 4/03)

Make Lemonade, Wolfe - LaVaughn learns through a babysitting job how to manage her own life, while watching an unmarried mother struggle to care for two children.

Moving Mama to Town, Young - Thirteen-year-old Freddy moves Mama to town as man of the family when his father leaves them.

Night Hoops, Deuker- While trying to prove that he is good enough to play on his high school's varsity basketball team, Nick must also deal with his parents' divorce and the erratic behavior of a troubled classmate who lives across the street.

Martin Luther King, Jr.: Tribute to a Hero

Grades K-8: Language Arts/ I Have a Dream

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is celebrated on January 16th and has become a National holiday. Have students raise their hand and respond if they know anything about Dr. King.

Have older students listen to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic address to civil rights marchers that took place on August 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Talk with students about Dr. King's dream for the future. Ask them to think about their dreams for the future. Have students draw an outline of a cloud, then inside the cloud, write about one of their hopes and dreams.

Grades K-8: Language Arts / Is It Fair?

When Martin Luther King, Jr., was a boy, African American children and white children were not allowed to go to the same schools, eat in the same restaurants, or drink from the same water fountains in some places in the United States. Have students imagine that their school makes a new rule that separates all children into two groups. How would they feel if the two groups were not allowed to play together at recess, sit together in the lunchroom, or sit together on the bus? Lead a discussion about why or why not this kind of rule would be fair.

Grades K-5: Social Studies / Picture Timeline or Dr. King Poster

A great way for young students to understand the concept of a time is to have them create a picture timeline. In this activity they can create one that shows the important dates in the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Have students make a poster of photographs that celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life.

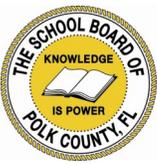
Grades 9-12: Language Arts / Debate

Discuss with students key events leading up to the establishment of Martin Luther King Day. Have students participate in a debate like one that would have occurred in Congress to discuss whether or not there should be a national holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Grades 9-12: Language Arts / From the Birmingham Jail

Read Dr. King's famous letter that he wrote from a jail cell in Birmingham. Have students outline the main points of the letter, and explain why they think it is, or is not, effective. Suggest that they use quotations from the letter to support their ideas. Write a one-page report answering the following questions: What were some of the strategies that Martin Luther King, Jr. used to gain support and recognition for the civil rights movement? How successful were these strategies? How did the philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi influence Dr. King?

Letter from Birmingham Jail - <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf>



Quotes About Responsibility



Week 1

"The willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life is the source from which self-respect springs."
~Joan Didion

"We need to restore the full meaning of that old word, duty. It is the other side of rights."
~Pearl Buck

"I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession a duty."
~John D. Rockefeller

"When you blame others, you give up your power to change."
~Author Unknown

"When a man points a finger at someone else, he should remember that four of his fingers are pointing at himself."
~Louis Nizer

Week 2

"You may not be responsible for being down, but you must be responsible for getting up."
~Jesse Jackson

"The world is a dangerous place; not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."
~Albert Einstein

"Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him."
~Booker T. Washington

"Make it a point to do something every day that you don't want to do. This is the golden rule for acquiring the habit of doing your duty without pain."
~Mark Twain

Week 3

"Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else."
~Les Brown

"Remember the three R's- Respect for self; Respect for others; Responsibility for all your actions."
~Unknown

"Accountability breeds responsibility."
~Stephen Covey

"You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say."
~Martin Luther

"Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the high road to pride, self-esteem and personal satisfaction."
~Margaret Thatcher

Week 4

"You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of."
~Jim Rohn

"Freedom is the will to be responsible to ourselves."
~Friedrich Nietzsche

"You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."
~Abraham Lincoln

"Success on any major scale requires you to accept responsibility... in the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have... is the ability to take on responsibility."
~Michael Korda

"If you take responsibility for yourself you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams."
~Les Brown

Ways to Improve Personal Responsibility

By practicing the following six behaviors, you will earn the reputation as a responsible, "go-to" person who "gets things done."

- Do what you agree to do; follow through on tasks.** If you let people down, they'll stop believing in you. When you follow through on your commitments, people take you seriously.
- Be accountable for your own actions.** Don't make excuses or blame others for what you do. By taking responsibility for your actions, you say, "I am the one who's in charge of my life."
- Take care of your own schedule and activities.** Don't rely on an adult to remind you of when and where you are to be at a certain time and what you are to take with you. Use some type of planner and calendar, whether written or electronic, to keep activities organized.
- Make sure people can trust you.** If you borrow something, return it in the same condition that it was borrowed. If you are taking care of something for someone, take good care of it. If people know that they can depend on you, it is more likely that you will be able to depend on them.
- Think before you act.** Make sure you have all the information before making a decision. By using good judgment, you will make good choices and your friends and family will know that they can trust you.
- Complete your work on time and in advance when possible.** Completing work on time shows that you have control of your life. Emergencies can happen at the last minute that can keep you from getting it done; therefore, advance planning is a key to success.

Ideas for Bulletin Board

- ◇ Discuss the definition of a responsible person. List specific actions that show evidence of responsibility. Challenge the students to recognize responsible actions or habits in each other and discuss their observations in a weekly class meeting. Record their responses on a bulletin board or poster. Each response could be written, or could become a leaf on a tree, petal on a flower, or coin in a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.
- ◇ Use the heading "Education Served Here" for a bulletin board with a waiter named "Mr. Responsible" holding a tray in the center. Place a picture of a bottle labeled "education" on the tray. In a balloon coming from the waiter's mouth, write the phrase, "It all depends on me."
- ◇ Use the phrase, "A responsible student brings..." for the heading, and place a cut-out of a student in the center of the board. Around the image of the student, place samples or pictures of supplies that students need for class each day (pencil, paper, books, folders, binders, homework, jackets, etc.)
- ◇ Dedicate a bulletin board to "Responsible Students of the Week." Draw a silhouette of each selected student or take their picture to post on the board. Choose two or three students each week to highlight. Rewarding responsible behavior in this way will encourage all students to be more responsible.

RESPONSIBILITY