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THE EFFECT OF CHARACTER EDUCATION ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

by
Cindy Patella

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved by

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Date Approved 7/1/03

ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECT OF CHARACTER EDUCATION ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

2003

Dr. Robinson

Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this study was to determine if character education addressed directly through lesson plans would have an effect on behavior of students when they are not under supervision of the classroom teacher. The researcher observed the students' social interactions in the experimental group and the control group in various settings in a pre and post observation period. Behavior was recorded on a behavior chart listing both positive and negative behaviors. There were 19 students in the experimental group and 22 students in the control group. The study found a slight positive change in behavior for those students in the experimental group. The students in the control group showed less of an improvement.

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CHAPTER I SCOPE OF STUDY

Introduction

The person that we develop into is influenced by our community, family, and school. Children need to be taught respect and responsibility because it is important, not just in response to a negative incident that occurred. A complete education meets the academic and social needs of students in a proper learning environment. Children need more than to just be told to do well in school or be on their best behavior. They need to be taught why they should act in certain ways. The goal of implementing character education is to provide children with the knowledge to become respectful of themselves and others, as well as resist negative peer pressure (Thinking Media, 2000).

To sustain a comfortable learning atmosphere students need to interact with others in a positive manner and maintain their behavior during instructional time. If the self-esteem of the student increases, it is assumed that his/her behavior will improve. “As one becomes more acceptable to one’s self, behavior is modulated and becomes more appropriate to those around” (Vandergriff & Russ, 2001, p. 177). Character education addresses the way students feel about themselves and negative behavior. In this way, applying character education practices can contribute to a proper learning environment.

Statement of the Problem

Civilizations weaken when their principles and beliefs break down. One of the most basic responsibilities of adults is to pass on values that will help children succeed in life. Children are not born with knowing how to act appropriately. “Character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue- that is objectively good human qualities that are good for the individual person and food for the whole society” (Likona, 2003). There is rising violence, crime, and drug use in our society today. Young people will bear the consequences of this environment. Children are the future and therefore need to be prepared for it by our families, communities, and education systems. Character education, as researched in this study, may be one of the ways for the educational systems to help children develop into more responsible young adults. Being a responsible young person begins with self control and strong values. The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of character education on students when they were not under the supervision of their classroom teacher. The first place we should see the carrying over of principles. This is a time where students must demonstrate self control. (Newberger, 1999)

The school setting of this study incorporated character education instruction into the current curriculum. This however, may not be as effective as taking the time to directly focus on character education principles and values. This study attempted to provide a complete character education framework implemented through specific character based activities as well as daily reinforcement in basic curriculum. This study raises the question of whether direct character education instruction be a part of curriculum.

Statement of Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that third grade students who experience character education directly will display enhanced positive character traits more so than third grade students who did not experience character education directly.

Limitation of Study

This study was conducted in the random assignment of a student teaching placement. There were variables that were out of the control of the researcher.

1. A limitation of the study was the subjective manner in which the data was obtained. It was possible that observations did not capture the true behavior of the students. The observer could not capture the root cause of the negative behavior.
2. All students received the school requirements of character education before the start of this study. Each classroom teacher brought out character education in reading and other subjects that lent themselves to it. Therefore, the amount of character education implemented by teachers of the control and experimental class before the study began varied.
3. Any positive change in behavior may have been due to maturity. Throughout the year third grade students grew intellectually, physically, and emotionally, which may have attributed to more positive behaviors at the end of the school year.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined to give a common ground. These terms were those used throughout the study.

Appropriate student behavior- Behavior by the student that allowed him/her to interact with other children in a civil manner. This allowed that child and his peers the opportunity to benefit from school to the fullest in a proper environment for learning.

Bullying- To treat others in a disrespectful manner.

Character Education- Character education is the deliberate effort to develop good character based on core virtues that are good for the individual and good for society.

Prejudice- To prejudge others based on a trivial reason which may include their religion, nationality, or handicaps.

Problem solving skills- To be able to effectively deal with any situation.

Respect- To value the differences others, the self, and property. Respect is the foundation of all character education principles.

Responsibility- To be accountable for one's actions.

Self control- To control one's desires and act in appropriate manner.

Teamwork- To work efficiently with others towards a common goal; cooperation.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The following literature has been researched on character education and its role in education. It addressed the needs for this piece of the educational process and approaches to it. Related literature was also available on the needs of students. This literature discussed self concept which is related to student behavior and achievement in school. It was hypothesized that third grade students who experience character education directly will display enhanced positive character traits more so than third grade students who did not experience character education directly.

Character Education

Character transcends religion and culture to serve the common good. "Its working assumption is that all of us possess an innate capacity for moral goodness; character resides within each of us, largely independent of the relationships we have or the communities into which we are born. These endowments only need to be coaxed out and developed within the personality." (Hunter, 2000, p10). Children need guidance to be able to manifest good character. To develop moral citizens good character needs to be brought out by family and reinforced in community values. (Hunter, 2000)

Character education will guide students to become intelligent individuals who act in thoughtful ways. Through character education, a class will, as a community, learn to cooperate and treat each other with respect, consequently making their peers feel better about themselves. A high self-concept is one of the factors necessary for achievement in school. Children develop into human beings of good character when they are surrounded by institutions of character such as religious buildings, sports leagues, schools, media, families, and government. The family is the heart for the child's character development. This does not relieve the school from any responsibility. There are children who do not receive this foundation at home who need guidance from teachers and friends. Institutions work together to make the community optimal for character development. (Likona, 2002)

Character education is an essential part to a child's education. Learning to be respectful, responsible, trustworthy, fair, caring, and to be a good citizen is just as important as learning the basic subject areas. Gloria Rambow Singh (2001) has always taught her students "such concepts as honesty and respect, but usually in response to something negative that has already happened" (Singh, 2001, p. 46). Rather than this, it is desired to foster positive social behavior at all times (Singh, 2001).

It is effective to integrate character education principles into the basic subject lessons. For the younger grades it is necessary to set aside time to focus on character education. Although children may be able to behave in proper ways, they may need help defining the words central to character education. Incorporating the language used with character education into daily occurrences will help students realize that

these behaviors are an expected part of life. Character traits can be incorporated into daily education. A good start is to create a sense of community among the students. Using role-playing in an interactive way will help students understand the character traits. Character puppets are another fun way to get the children excited about doing kind acts or being helpful. Each student can take the puppet home to see what kind of chores the child did. Cooperative learning activities provide students with the opportunity to practice cooperation, teamwork, respect, and responsibility. In a study, 90 % of the students increased their understanding of character education. Classroom behavior improved significantly. (Singh, 2001)

Outside factors play a role in a student's performance in school. Although educators may have no control over many of these factors, they can maximize student achievement by creating environments conducive to learning. Supporting character education and implementing cooperative learning in your classroom "offers students the opportunity to further develop and practice caring towards their peers" (Vincent, 1999, p77). A supportive environment could lead to students taking on more challenges in the classroom. Classrooms will become inclusive communities where children help each other. (Vincent, 1999)

Influences on the Student

Academic achievement is not solely the result of classroom learning. The school is a dynamic environment consisting of many aspects. Achievement in school is attributable to many factors including personal, social, and academic influences. A student's self concept, whether in a negative or positive way, can affect academic

performance. A student's social skills and behavior can also affect that student's academic performance as well as that of the peers with whom he/she interacts. The implementation of character education, "the teaching of caring, respect and common virtues", is one step that the school can take to help improve these overall dynamics (Kagan, 2001).

Much research has been conducted on the interactions among self-concept, behavior, and achievement. Eccles & Wigfield (2002) discuss the theories of locus of control and self-efficacy. Both of these theories are expectancy based. Locus of control theory proposes that an individual will expect to succeed to the extent that that he/she feels in control of his/her successes and failures. A person may have an internal or external locus of control. Students with an internal locus of control may feel that a good grade was the result of hard work, while those with an external locus of control may attribute success to something outside of themselves, such as luck. From the control theories, Connell and Wellborn (as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) put forth three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. These needs are satisfied by family, friends, and school contexts. They concluded that the child would be less motivated if these needs are not fulfilled. The school should to work to satisfy the needs of the students. Its main function is to educate the individual, but creating self motivated, respectful citizens is part of this education. Character education is one way to give students the support they need to be positive thinkers. (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)

Self-efficacy refers to an individuals' self-assurance in their capability to organize and carry out what is needed to accomplish a task or solve a problem. "High personal

academic expectations predict subsequent performance, course enrollment, and occupational aspirations choice” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p.3). They also found that the extent to which a child is interested in a subject depends on his/her sense of self-efficacy. School should therefore put forth effort to boost the self-efficacy beliefs of their students through encouragement. The more positive the student’s outlook, the more he/she will select learning experiences in a variety of areas and will put forth more effort; therefore getting more out of the experience. Character education encourages self respect and consequently helps students feel positive about their own abilities. (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)

Jinks and Morgan (1999) are other researchers who studied perceived academic self-efficacy in elementary school children. They did so through the use of the Motivational Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. It was found that efficacy beliefs indirectly affect academic performance by bringing about the behaviors that contribute to achievement. Students’ judgments about their performance can matter more than their actual ability. Educators who create positive and supportive environments will support the self-efficacy of their students and help them stay motivated. (Jinks and Morgan, 1999)

Sharp and Muller “report that when self-concept was lowered by presenting failure information in a supportive accepting manner, subsequent learning task performance was not affected, but when it was lowered by presenting failure information in a judgmental, critical manner, subsequent learning was impaired” (as cited in Larned & Muller, 2001, p.152). Teachers should be aware of the effect of the interactions with students regarding poor grades. A student’s self-esteem and

subsequent academic performances may be affected by the way in which feedback regarding grades is given. (Larned & Muller, 2001)

A healthy attitude can influence every aspect of one's life. The outcome of character education instruction includes three sets of virtues: personal, relationship, and community (Kagan, 2001). The school environment is a place where it is essential for a child to have these virtues. Acquiring personal virtues such as integrity, good judgment, perseverance, self-motivation, and impulse control are needed for appropriate classroom behavior and work habits. Relationship virtues, including courtesy, cooperation, helpfulness, respect, and tolerance are necessary to interact with peers during cooperative learning activities and in socialization. It is also important to learn about and to practice community virtues, including citizenship, leadership, and responsibility while in school. These virtues, taken as a whole, should guide the way educated individuals should act for their lifetime. (Kagan, 2001)

There are developmental changes that children experience as they progress through their school years. These changes contribute to how they feel about themselves and how well they do in school. Donald Larned and Douglas Muller (1979) researched the development of self-concept in grades one through nine. This study assessed self-concept and self-esteem in four areas: physical maturity, relationships with peers, academic success, and school adaptiveness. In physical maturity and peer relations, the level of self-concept and self-esteem persisted in a stable manner across grades. There was, however, a remarkable decline in self-concept and self-esteem in the areas of academic success and school adaptiveness across grade levels. These results

suggest that schools need to work to give positive feedback and encourage persistence and self-motivation. (Larned and Muller, 1979)

Paul Burnett (1998) studied the use of the Behavioral Academic Self-esteem Scale (BASE) in measuring areas of classroom behavior. The areas studied were student initiative, social attention, success/failure, social attraction, and self-confidence. Thirteen behaviors were identified as indicators of self-esteem. Among these behaviors are a student's confidence in what he or she does, display of communication skills, getting along well with others, and exhibition of leadership qualities. These behaviors are generally found to be associated with students with high and low self-concepts. Each of these areas is addressed in character education curriculum. Teaching about these behaviors therefore may improve one's self-concept. (Burnett, 1998)

Hamachek (1995) reviews the past 25 years of research examining the relationship between self-concept and academic ability. These aspects are found to be reciprocal and interactive. Identified are fourteen behaviors or experiences that have been established in research to affect whether a student maintains a positive or negative self-concept. Some of these behaviors are the tendency to feel upbeat, popularity with peers, assertiveness, number of school related failures, and supportiveness of parents. Each item reflects a different behavioral dynamic which, when taken together, provide a look at the inner feelings of a student. In early years of elementary school, children's perceptions of ability tend to be inflated. By middle school years children are better able to realistically interpret feedback from their academic performance. In helping children do better in school, educators must first

help them feel better about themselves as learners. Conversely, bettering school performance is a necessary component in improving self-attitudes. (Hamachek, 1995)

Gose, Wooden and Muller (1980) conducted a study on 96 fifth graders. The research, in following with the theme of the others mentioned, revealed that achievement was related to self-concept of academic success. They found, however, that physical maturity, peer relations, and school adaptiveness self-concepts were not related to academic achievement. Achievement in content areas was found only to be related to self-concepts in that specific subject. They found that self-concept measures combined with intelligence are more reflective of academic achievement than intelligence measures alone. Academic success may be predicted through self-concept measures. (Gose, Wooden and Muller, 1980)

Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral, and Pedro (2002) examined students threatened by a negative school competence. This study used Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents and Scale of Attitudes Towards School as a means of measurement. It was found that low achieving students suffered from low self-esteem in seventh grade, however, this was not true of students in eighth and ninth grade. Self-evaluation of high achievers in school competence and behavior was greater than that of low achievers. Students with low levels of academic achievement also held more negative attitudes towards school. Teaching character education could help to boost the negative attitudes towards school. Encouraging perseverance and self-motivation for example may push that student to give extra effort. (Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral, and Pedro, 2002)

Other researchers, Murdock, Anderman, and Hodge (2000), studied middle-grade predictors of students' motivation and behavior in high school. This study examined students' perceptions, motivational beliefs, and behaviors as they progress from middle school to high school. Questionnaires evaluating academic self-concept as well as contexts shaped by teachers, peers, and economic structure were employed. It was found that teacher expectations affected students' self-concept and values of their schools. Peer aspirations were predictors of self-concept and effort which reflects the fact that children tend to spend more time with those who are similar to themselves. Students' views of the larger economic world such as job market opportunities are also predictors of classroom behavior. (Murdock, Anderman, and Hodge, 2000)

Vandergriff and Rust (2001) discuss a study on second grade students on the relationship between classroom behavior and self-concept using academic achievement, behavior level, gender, and birth order. It was found that children who behave well and are high achievers have high self-concepts. (Vandergriff and Rust, 2001)

Martin Covington (2002) researched the necessity of motivation in education. The self-worth theory assumes that the goals held by students bring about a lifelong struggle to establish and maintain a sense of worth in a society that stresses competency and success. Many children therefore judge themselves by their grades. There are three defense strategies that are brought to life when self-worth is threatened: self-worth protection, self-handicapping, and defensive pessimism. To compensate for a threatened self-worth that may manifest in students, educational

changes can be made. A change proposed by Covington includes widening learning areas and means for achievement, culturally or otherwise. (Covington, 2002)

CHAPTER III PROCEDURE AND DESIGN

Introduction

“Children’s social development and academic growth are intertwined” (Vincent, 1999, p78). The scope of the effects that character education could have in the classroom is extensive. A complete character education unit was planned to give the students a well rounded exposure to good character. School is the ideal place to practice these values. Classroom and recreation times provide for a great amount of interaction. Here, the students have many opportunities to put into practice personal, peer, and community values (Vincent, 1999). This study attempted to measure the effect of character education instruction through observations of social interaction. The principles addressed in character education were hoped to be internalized and carried with students throughout their experiences.

Population and Subjects

The elementary school used in this study was located in a small town in New Jersey. It is a kindergarten through fifth grade school with approximately 400 students. This was an upper middle class school district that was predominantly white (Census 2000). The research subjects were the students in two, third grade classrooms. There were approximately 43 subjects. In the experimental group were 19 students consisting of seven girls and twelve boys. In this group was one special

needs student and one mildly autistic student. The autistic student worked one on one with a special education teacher for the entire school day. The special needs student was pulled out for help and received in class support two times per cycle. This student as well as another student received math help two days a week before school. One student received help in reading two days a cycle before the start of the school day. During school hours two other students received reading help outside of the classroom twice a week. According to the DRA reading test, there were 3 students reading at beginning third grade level by the end of the school year. Nine students were on a fourth grade reading level and all other were reading on grade level.

The control group was made up of 23 students. The gender of the students consisted of 8 girls and 15 boys. There were no special education students in this group. Three of these students received help in math before school once a week. Ten students were reading at a fourth grade reading level while all others were on grade level readers.

Experimental Design

The dependent variable in the study was the behavior of the students when they were not under the supervision of the classroom teacher. The data was collected in a single group pre-observation/ post-observation design. The students were observed for two weeks at the beginning of the study. Observations took place in art class, physical education class, lunch, and recess. Physical education takes place twice in the six day cycle for 45 minutes. Art class takes place once in the six day cycle for 60 minutes. Students were also observed every day during lunch and recess for 25

minutes. The intervention, character education instruction, took place daily for a 10 week period. Finally, a post-observation of behavior was taken again, for two weeks in the same time and place as the pre-observation.

Procedure

Character education was implemented on a daily basis for twelve weeks. The topics covered were respect, team work, prejudice, bullying, resolving conflicts, giving compliments, and heroes (see appendix). The results of the pre-observation and post-observation were analyzed to see if the intervention period made an impact. For both the control group and experimental group, the frequency of positive behaviors were totaled for the class in the pre-observation and post-observation. The same steps were taken for negative behaviors. An analysis was conducted to determine what difference, if any, exists between the pre-observation and post-observation for both groups. The results before and after the implementation of character education were recorded on bar graphs.

Character education activities were collected from various sources including Character Plus and GoodCharacter.com. Each site promoted the core character traits of responsibility, citizenship, respect, honesty, self control, tolerance, problem solving, and cooperation. The teacher implemented character education into the regular curriculum by bringing out these principles in every subject and through the daily emphasis on elements of good character. Supplemental stories were also selected with a special theme. Throughout the implementation period of character

education the students role-played, complete group activities, listened to a read aloud, created artwork, and wrote stories pertaining to character education principles.

Description of Instruments

A student behavior checklist was used to determine the behavior of the students. All behaviors, good and bad, that may be related to a student's character were observed. Positive behaviors include being helpful, polite and respectful, and making extra effort to show kindness. The observer recorded only behaviors of students who were self motivated to make an extra effort to act in a positive way. For example, if a teacher asked for help or had to prompt the students to act a certain way the behaviors were not recorded. Negative behaviors were as follows: does not keep hands and feet to self which includes any behavior by which one student aggressively touched another, teasing, and poor sportsmanship. Also observed were bickering that demonstrates that a student does not resolve conflict effectively and lastly refusing to comply with teacher's wishes including speaking out or talking at an inappropriate time. A category labeled 'other' was available for both positive and negative behaviors to account for any demonstration of character that does not clearly fall into a specific category. The researcher made observations and checked the frequency of the behaviors for each student everyday for two weeks at the initial and final phases of the study.

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Character education teaches values that help students feel positive about themselves and to have positive social interactions (www.learning-for-life-org). Students in this study were given character education through lessons that directly focused on positive character traits and behaviors. Other classes at this school were not given the same treatment. It was hypothesized that the students who received this instruction would display more positive behavior traits than those that did not. The following is an analysis of the findings of this study.

Analysis of Data

The researcher observed many student behaviors typical for their age level. Six negative behaviors were the focus in this study. Of the six negative behaviors observed for the experimental group, five of the categories decreased in occurrence of behavior in the post-observation period. The frequency of one of the behaviors stayed the same.

For the experimental group the behavior of teasing was recorded three times in the pre-observation period and in the post-observation period it was recorded only once. Teasing decreased by two occurrences which was a larger decrease than any other category after the intervention.

The behaviors of not keeping hands and feet to self, bickering, refusing to comply with teacher's wishes, and the category labeled other each decreased by one occurrence. The behavior of not keeping hands and feet to one's self was observed two times in the pre-observation period and one time in the post observation period. Bickering was recorded five times before the intervention took place and four times after the intervention. Refusing to comply with the teacher's wishes occurred the greatest number of times of all other categories. This was observed in both the pre and post periods. It occurred six times in the pre-observation period and five times in the post-observation period.

The results also showed that and demonstration of poor sportsmanship stayed the same in the post observation period. It was observed one time both before and after the intervention. (See table 1 and table 2)

table 1
Pre-Observation of Experimental Group

Student	Helpful	Polite and respectful	Shows Kindness	Other	Does not keep hands and feet to self	Teasing	Poor Sportsmanship	Bickering	Refuses to comply with teacher's wishes	Other
1					/	//				
2	/									
3		/								
4										
5		/								
6	/									
7										
8							/		/	/
9										
10			/					/		
11										

12		/								
13										
14						/			//	
15									/	
16	/		/					/		
17										
18					/			/		
19								//	//	

table 2
Post-Observation of Experimental Group

Student	Helpful	Polite and respectful	Shows Kindness	Other	Does not keep hands and feel to self	Teasing	Poor Sportsmanship	Bickering	Refuses to comply with teacher's wishes	Other
1			/					/	/	
2		/								
3		/								
4										
5										
6										
7	/							/		
8						/		/	/	
9				/						
10	/									
11										
12		/	/							
13								/		
14					/				/	
15										
16	/						/			
17			/							
18										
19									//	

For the control group, increases and decreases of negative behavior varied. It was recorded that two categories increased negative behavior, one stayed the same, and three decreased instances.

Not keeping hands and feet to one's self increased by two occurrences for the control group. This behavior was not observed in the pre-observation period but was observed twice in the post-observation period. Refusing to comply with the teacher's wishes increased by three instances. Like the experimental group, this behavior was observed more than the other five negative behaviors. It occurred five times at the beginning of the study and increased to eight times at the end of the study.

Demonstration of poor sportsmanship stayed the same in the pre-observation and post-observation period occurring one time in both. Both the teasing and the category labeled other decreased by two occurrences. Instances of teasing occurred four times in the pre-observation period and two times in the post-observation period. Negative behaviors in the other category were observed three times in the pre-observation period and one time in the post-observation period. Bickering decreased by one instance. It was observed three times at the beginning of the study and two times at the end. (See table 3 and table 4)

table 3
Pre-Observation of Control Group

Student	Helpful	Polite and respectful	Shows Kindness	Other	Does not keep hands and feet to self	Teasing	Poor Sportsmanship	Bickering	Refuses to comply with teacher's wishes	Other
1	/									

2										
3		/								
4						/			/	
5									/	
6		/						/		
7			/							
8									/	
9										
10	/									
11										
12						/				
13										
14									/	
15						//				/
16	/									
17								/		
18										
19			/				/			
20									/	//
21								/		
22										

table 4
Post-Observation of Control Group

Student	Helpful	Polite and respectful	Shows Kindness	Other	Does not keep hands and feel to self	Teasing	Poor Sportsmanship	Bickering	Refuses to comply with teacher's wishes	Other
1		/	/							
2		/								
3										
4							/		/	/
5		/								
6									//	
7										
8										
9				/						
10			/					/		
11									/	

12											
13								/			
14	/				/						
15									/		
16			/								
17											
18											
19					/				/		
20						//			/		
21									/		
22			/								

Four categories of positive behaviors were also observed in this study. In the experimental group two of the categories increased occurrences by one. The results of two of the categories stayed the same.

The categories for acts of kindness and other behaviors both increased by one. Demonstration of kindness was observed two times before the intervention and three times after the intervention. The category for other behaviors had no observations before the intervention but one occurrence after the intervention. The occurrences of helping and demonstration of respect and politeness made no change. Both of these behaviors were observed to take place three times in the pre observation and also three times in the post observation. After the intervention helping, politeness and respect, and kindness were all recorded to occurred an equal amount of times. (See table 1 and table 2)

In the control group the results of three categories showed an increase in behavior. One category decreased its behavior. Demonstration of politeness and respect and the category labeled other increased by one occurrence of behavior. Politeness and respect were observed two times in the pre observation period and three times in the post observations period. In the category labeled other a positive behavior was not

recorded in the pre observation period but one was recorded in the post observation period. Kindness increased by two occurrences. Acts of kindness were recorded two times in the pre observation period and four times in the post observation period.

Acts of helping was the only category observed to decrease for the control group. It decreased by two occurrences. In the pre-observation period helping was observed three times and in the post-observation period it was observed only once. (See table 3 and table 4)

Overall, the negative behaviors of the experimental group decreased by four instances after the intervention of character education instruction. Negative behaviors of the control group at the end of the study decreased by only two instances. Positive behaviors of both the experimental and control groups increased by two occurrences.

CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Character education attempts to guide youth to make the right decisions and enhance self-confidence and life skills. This better prepares children for the future by giving children the resources within themselves to succeed to their potential.

(www.learning-for-life-org). Observations of student behavior in this study took place when the students were not with their classroom teacher. This is a time when students would be expected to act in good character without the prompting of their main authority figure at school. The purpose of this study was to determine if character education addressed through lesson plans had a greater effect on student behavior than students who received did not.

Summary of Problem

Children need support from their environment to cope with this increasingly complex society. Children can't be expected to know how to act appropriately without being taught by the adults they are surrounded by. Part of the school system's responsibility is to encourage students to grow in to mature individuals who are prepared socially and intellectually (Thinking Media, 2000). This study questioned whether students need more straight forward education approach in addition to bringing out character education in basic curriculum.

Summary of Hypothesis

There has been research to support the positive effects of character education on children. In this study the students were observed in settings when they were not under the supervision of their classroom teacher. At this time during school, students are not with their main authority figure and may need to demonstrate more self control. In this study it was hypothesized that students who received direct character education instruction will display better behavior than those who do not.

Summary of Procedure

The students were observed using a behavior checklist for two weeks at the beginning of the study. The list consisted of five positive traits and six negative ones. Observations took place in an experimental and a control group in physical education, art class, lunch and recess. Character education was then implemented to the experimental group for ten weeks through specific lesson plans targeting a variety of core character traits. The students were exposed to a range of themes to help them develop problem solving skills in various situations, ethical behavior, and social skills. The teacher also gave continuous positive feedback and encouragement to help the students act appropriately. After the ten weeks of character education the students were observed for two weeks in the previously selected settings to determine if the character education had an effect on behavior.

Summary of Findings

It was found that the total positive behaviors observed in the experimental group increased by two occurrences after the intervention of character education instruction. It was also found that the total negative behaviors of the experimental group decreased by four instances. Like the experimental group, the positive actions of the control group increased by two occurrences. As a whole, negative behaviors of the control group at the end of the study decreased by only two instances.

Conclusions

Character education may have a positive influence on student behavior. The occurrence of negative behavior for the experimental group decreased after character instruction and the positive actions increased. This study showed that character education may have had a slight positive effect on these students. The control group made slightly less of a change in behavior.

Implications and Recommendations

Although this study did not show drastic results, character education is still a valued part of a child's education. Character education may be most effective if begun in kindergarten and carried out through every grade. The words describing good character should be familiar to every child and a part of his/her vocabulary. It should be automatic to act in good character.

There is a plethora of character education approaches and lesson plans available. Conducting this study in a longer period of time would make it possible for each trait to be further developed. In a longer study each trait could be focused on with

numerous activities that could be dispersed over a few days. It would also be possible to teach a broader selection of character traits in addition to the core values that were taught in this study.

This study was conducted using two third grade classrooms, the experimental and control group. A future study may consider using a greater number of classrooms. This would allow the researcher to see if the results found in this study would generalize to a larger population.

**APPENDIX A
CHARACTER EDUCATION**

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Differences, Patchwork Quilt

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will understand that they respect the differences among their classmates when creating a patchwork quilt.

INTROCUCTION:

Brainstorm things about the students in this class. Ask them to tell likes, dislikes, qualities or words describing who they are. Ask students if they have ever seen a patchwork quilt. Discuss how many different smaller pieces add to the uniqueness of the larger quilt. Explain that they will create a paper quilt from squares which represent the individuality of each student. These squares, when pieced together, will reflect the uniqueness of the class as a whole.

DEVELOPMENT:

Give each student a quilt square, a 6" x 6" piece of colored construction paper. Include squares cut from wallpaper sample books or stiffened fabric for added variety. Instruct them to write their name on the square and decorate it to illustrate qualities, talents and experiences they respect in themselves. Drawings, pictures clipped from magazines, words and photographs can be incorporated. Art supplies, including tissue paper, foils (gold and silver), glitter, sequins, markers and fabric, add dimension and variety.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Tell student that I will glue these pieces together on poster board or a long stretch of white craft paper to create their patchwork quilt. Hang on wall in the classroom.

Character Education
Grade 3
Complete in two class periods

TOPIC: Respect and Prejudice

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will understand the meaning of respect when creating a patchwork quilt.
At the end of the lesson the students will know how to react to a situation involving prejudice.

INTRODUCTION: Post patchwork quilt in front of classroom. Point to various words or drawings on each quilt. Ask students if these are words describing things they too like or are. Continue until we have said something about each student's patch.

DEVELOPMENT: Talk about how they are all friends despite the differences. Ask why they think that. Discuss respect and how we respect others. We don't judge people and let them have their own opinions. Discuss the meaning and examples of prejudging and prejudice. Discuss strategies to solve those kinds of situations. Encourage students to stand up for themselves and their friends. Discuss the golden rule: Treat others how you would like to be treated. Read scenarios and ask the class to give a thumbs up if it is a respectful situation and a thumbs down for a disrespectful one.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION: Review respect and prejudice. The students will write on the topic "What does respect mean to me". They may also illustrate their writing.

Students complete Join Dr. King's Peace Patrol with a partner. Share ideas with the class after students have had time to work.

Name: _____

Join Dr. King's Peace Patrol

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed in solving problems peacefully. He set an example for the whole world. Read about each problem below, then describe how you could follow Dr. King's example.



1. This happened to Dr. King...

When King was little, a white man called his dad a mean name. It upset King and made him want to work for peace and equality when he grew up.

This could happen to you...

Imagine that someone is picking on your friend and calling him or her mean names. How would you feel? How would you respond?

2. This happened to Dr. King...

Once, King and some other African-American men sat at a lunch counter that was supposed to be for white people only. They were arrested! But they did not mind because they wanted to show that the lunch shop's rule was unfair. They made sure people everywhere learned what had happened.

This could happen to you...

Imagine that some other kids will not let you play a game because you look different from them. Why is that unfair? What would you say to the kids?

3. This happened to Dr. King...

Some people did not agree with King's message of peace and equality. When he became famous, people sometimes threw rocks and other dangerous things at his house. But King stayed calm and did not use violence against his enemies.

This could happen to you...

Imagine that a classmate pushes you while you are in line to go outside. Why would it be a bad idea to use violence to solve the problem? What could you do instead?

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Teamwork, Chicken Run

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will understand the benefits of working as a team after hearing the chicken story.

INTRODUCTION:

Pass out Part of the Team worksheet. Tell story to class: The chickens are trapped in a chicken coop. Each one of them has been trying to think of a way to escape but they couldn't. Finally they started to talk to each other and everyone realized that they were trying to solve the same problem. They decided to work together to figure out a way to escape the coop. Each one of these chickens has a special talent. Complete worksheet Part of the Team together. Assign talents.

DEVELOPMENT:

Talk about how each talent could contribute to helping the chickens escape the coop:
Ginger- the inventor- Once someone gives her an idea, she's the one that can invent a way to carry it out or make it.

Mac- the thinker – He is the one to think of all the bright ideas but doesn't know what to do with them.

Fowler- soldier- He can keep everyone in line when they are goofing off. He is also good at following directions.

Rocky- Flier – He can't really fly, he is the adventurous one that is determined and persistent.

Babs- Knitter- She can sew team uniforms.

Chicky- Jokester- Keeps things fun. Outgoing personality.

Honey- A really good cook. She cooks up team breakfast.

The Flying Machine worksheet - Describe the machine that the chickens made to escape. Difficult to describe, but easier when working with other.

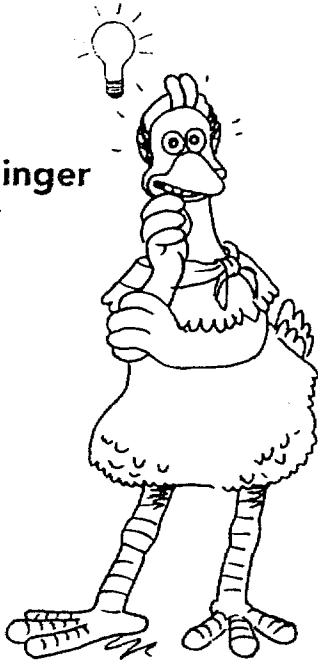
SUMMARY AND EVALUTION:

Discussion of teamwork.

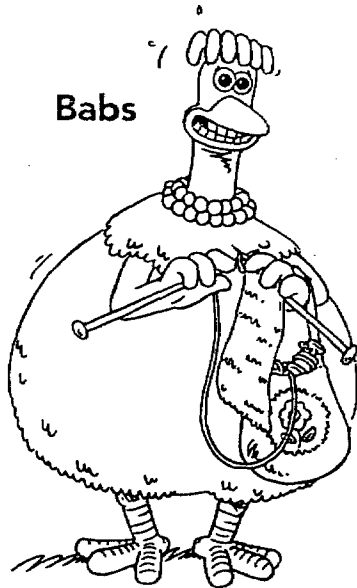
Part of the Team

All chickens have a special job that they do well. When you do something well, it's called a **talent**. Everyone on this page has a special talent.

Ginger



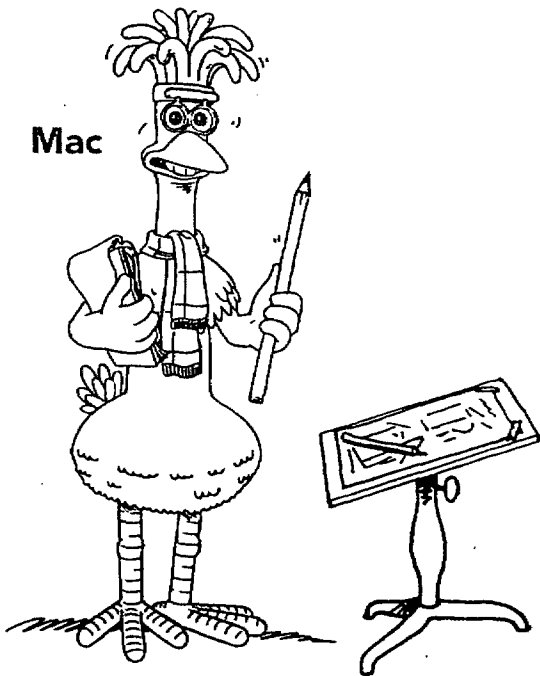
Babs



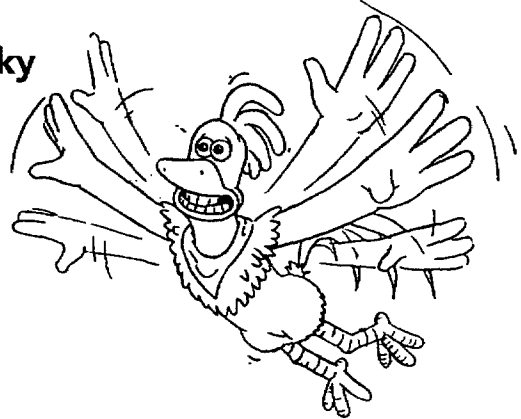
Fowler



Mac



Rocky



Look carefully at the pictures. Which word would you use to tell about each chicken's talent?

- Knitter
- Inventor
- Thinker
- Soldier
- Flier

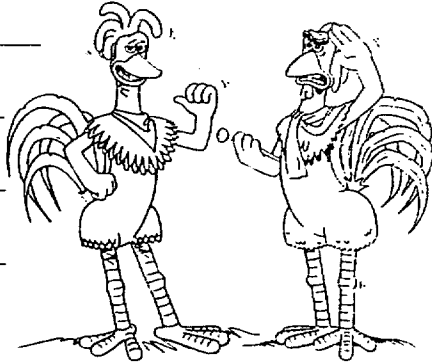
Every team member is special.

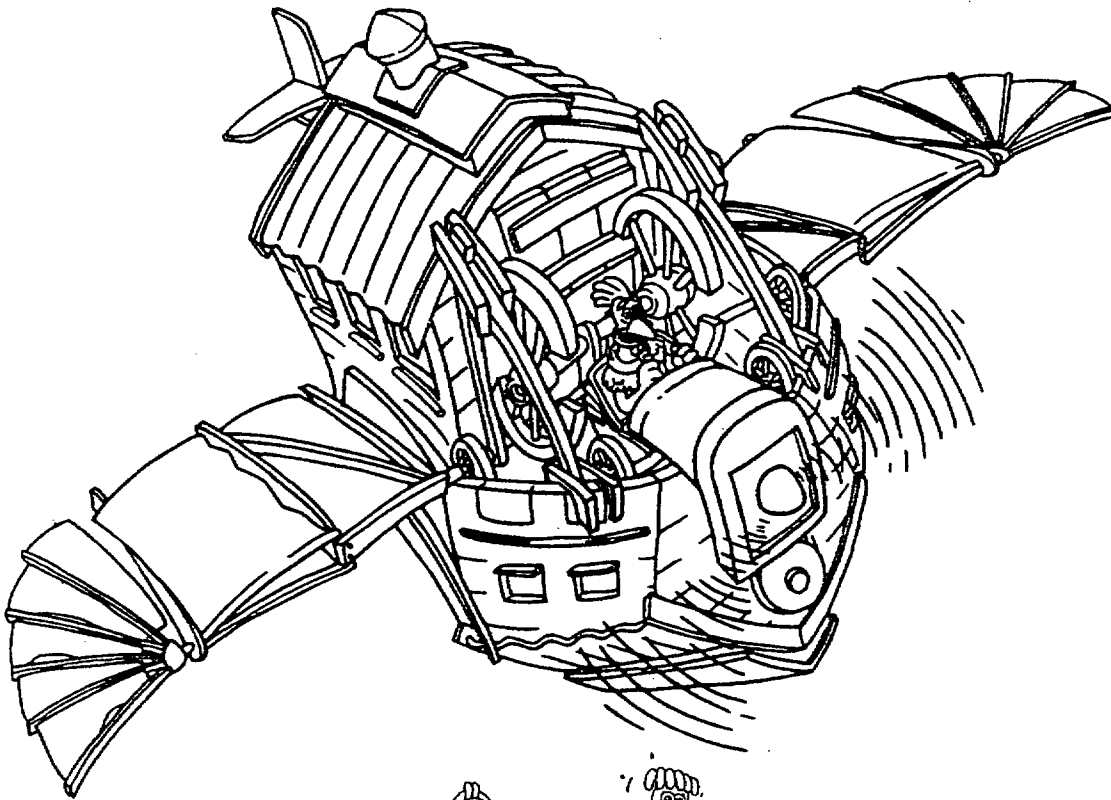
Write your choice in each blank.

**CHICKEN
RUN**
Now on Video
and DVD

The Flying Machine

Can you and your partner help Rocky and Ginger describe the wonderful flying machine the "Team Chicken" has built? Write your ideas or words in the blanks.





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Share what you have written with other teams in the classroom.

Team up for adventure!

**CHICKEN
RUN**
Now on Video
and DVD

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Teamwork, Chicken Run continued

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will work as team to solve a problem.

INTRODUCTION:

Review what we talked about in the previous class.

DEVELOPMENT:

Shared Stories worksheet - Students work in groups to create a flying machine to escape the coop. Each member tells what their talent is and uses it to contribute to the solution.

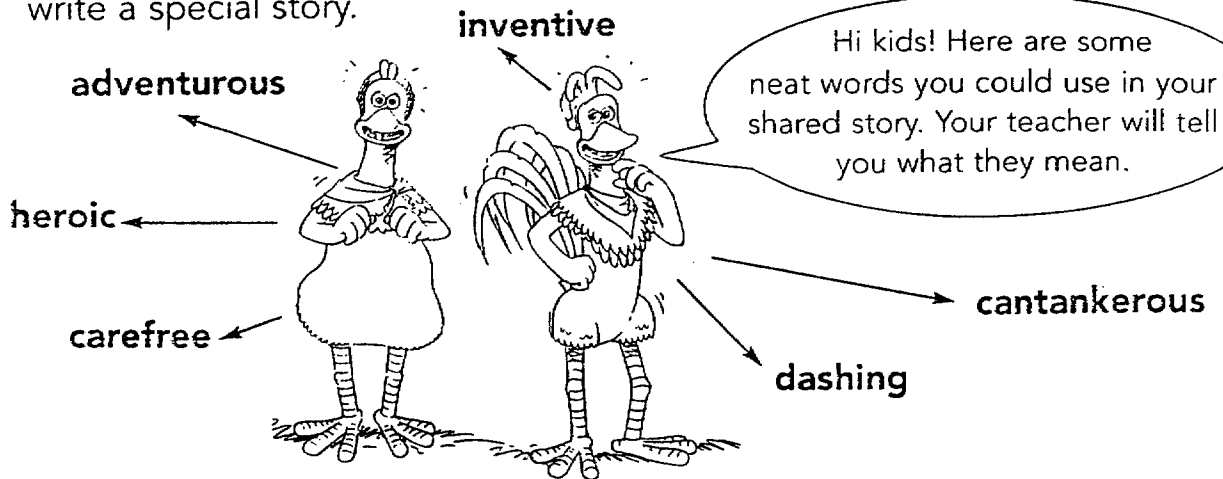
As students finish they play The Path to Freedom game with a partner. They can help each other answer in order to get across.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Groups present the flying machines and tell how they escaped the coop. Conduct a closing discussion on teamwork.

Shared Stories

Have you ever heard somebody say "Two heads are better than one?" What do you think this means? Put your head together with a partner to write a special story.



Take turns with your partner filling in each blank below when you write your story.



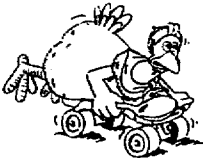
Rocky and Ginger want to lead the chickens to freedom.
What are the names you will give the chickens?



They will try to invent a special machine to help them get out.
Describe what it does.



There will be other people or animals trying to stop them. Who are these characters and what are they doing?



How will the story end?

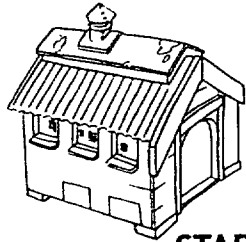
Now that you have your ideas, work with your partner to write your shared story. See if you can use some of the special words above.

Teammates think together.

**CHICKEN
RUN**
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and DVD

The Path to Freedom

Rocky and Ginger want to help lead all of the chickens to freedom. To do this they must get from the chicken coop to the beautiful meadow. Can you and your teammates help by answering the questions? Roll the die, follow the path, and begin the adventure!



START



Rocky



Ginger

Cut out figures for game pieces

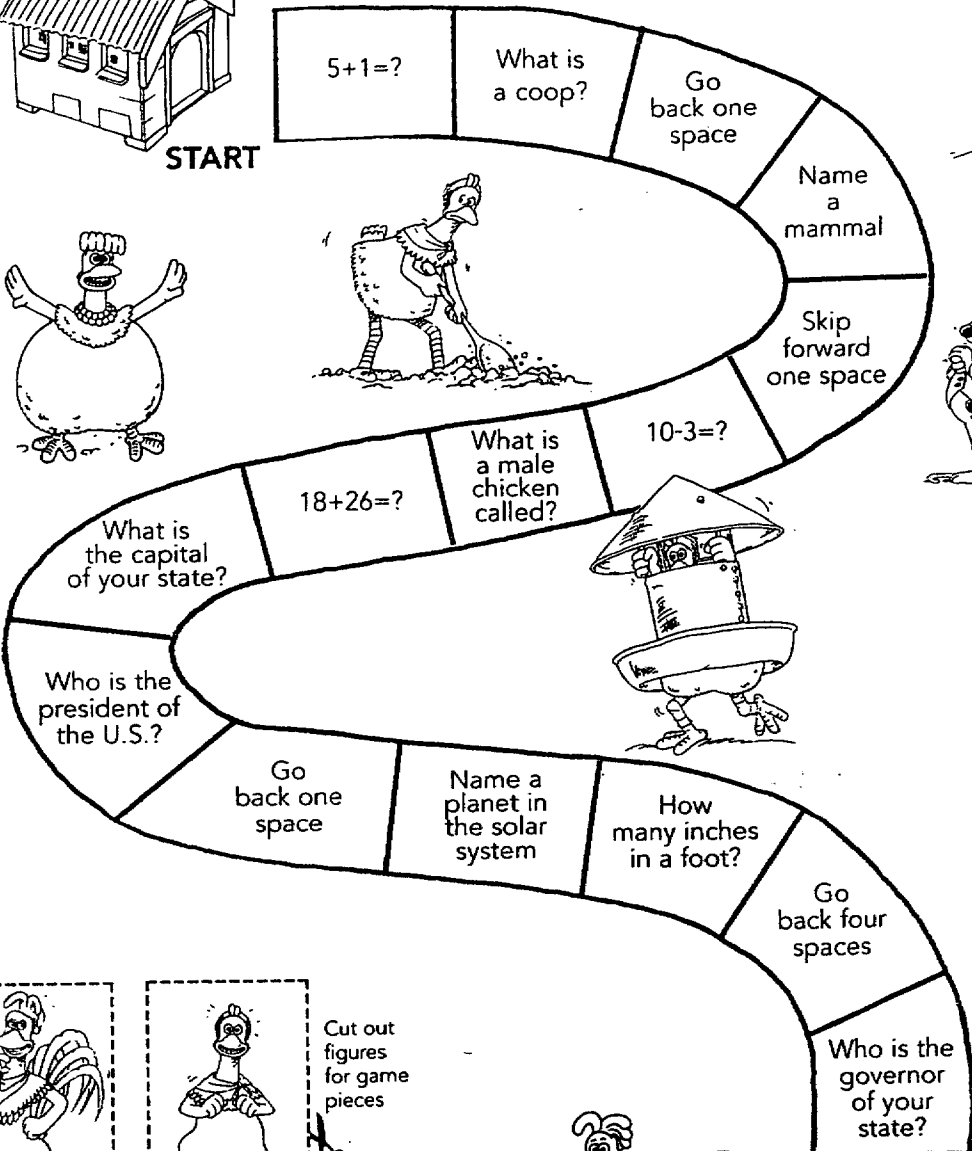


FREEDOM



CHICKEN RUN
Now on Video and DVD

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Team players are winners!

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Resolving Conflicts

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will learn strategies to effectively resolve conflicts.

INTROCUCTION:

Discussion: Have you ever seen a small disagreement turn into a big fight? What do you think made that happen?

DEVELOPMENT:

Ask students to recall conflicts they have seen or been in at school and list them on the board. Choose a few from the list and talk through the scenario. Help students come up with the steps to 1. stop and think 2. talk and listen 3. choose a positive solution. Apply these steps to solve each problem.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Students work in pairs to complete the Be a Peacemaker! activity. Share with the class.

Name _____

Be a Peacemaker!

Can you help solve the problems below? After each problem, write a few sentences telling what you would do. Remember: Work it out, don't fight it out!

1. Sarah wants to play basketball. But some other kids are already using the court. Sarah says it is her turn to play. But the other kids say they were on the court first. How could Sarah and the other children solve their disagreement?

2. Tariq sits down to read his favorite book, and he discovers that a page is torn. Tariq is sure that his little brother ripped the page. He is really angry. If you were Tariq, what would you do? What would you say?

3. Kyle is eating lunch in the school cafeteria. He hears some kids from his class call him a mean name. How do you think Kyle feels? If you were Kyle, how would you handle the situation?

Some Tips for Making Peace

1. If you start to get angry, count to 10.
2. Listen to what the other person has to say.
3. Don't punch, hit, or kick.
4. Try to reach a compromise, or agreement that makes both sides happy.



DO IT

Make a list of peace tips for your classroom and playground. Illustrate your tips.



WRITE ABOUT IT

Write about a disagreement that you really experienced. Tell how you ended the disagreement. Do you wish it ended differently?

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Bullying

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will learn how to approach a bullying situation after hearing a story and discussing.

INTROCUCTION:

Review topics that we studied previously: respect, resolving conflict, team work.

DEVELOPMENT:

Read aloud book to class, Bully by Judith Caseley. Students predict throughout the story and tell what they might have done.

Talk about if anyone has ever been bullied. Ask students how it felt.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Brainstorm ways to solve the problem. Tie in what we have already learned to talk about a bullying situation.

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Friendship and Feelings

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will increase self awareness and socialization skills when completing the activity.

INTROCUCTION:

Ask students what makes a good friend. Students may respond: someone who looks out for you, respects you, someone to play with, someone who makes you happy. Do best friends always have to do everything together? Do best friends always have to have the same friends?

DEVELOPMENT:

Help students become aware of the feelings of others. Do Pat On The Back activity. Students trace their hands on a piece of paper. The select a name from a box and write something nice about that person. Class shares their pats on the back with the person they selected.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Talk about how students felt when the received their pat on the back. Paying a compliment to a friend shows your feelings and makes your friend feel special.

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Responsibility

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will learn how to be responsible.

INTROCUCTION:

Discuss what the word trustworthy means. Do you think a responsible person is trustworthy? Students act out play "All My Friends".

DEVELOPMENT:

Discuss each character in the play and their actions. Ask students what they would have done if they were in their characters place.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Give students some situations relating to school and home and ask them to tell you the responsible way to respond.

Character Education
Grade 3
Complete in two class periods

TOPIC: Heroes

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will write the qualities that they believe a hero should have when completing a project.

INTROCUCTION:

Share with the class who my hero is and why. Ask students who are some of their heroes. Talk about why these people are their heroes. List characteristics of a hero on the board. Make clear that people don't deserve to be heroes just because they are rich, good looking, or famous.

DEVELOPMENT:

Students create a hero sandwich. They cut and color each piece of the sandwich and on the meat and lettuce they write a characteristic of a hero. Students glue the sandwich together to create their own hero sandwich.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

After all students complete their sandwich they share some of the words they wrote about their hero. Write words on board. Ask them if they notice anything about the words. Talk about how each one of them can possess these qualities.

Character Education
Grade 3

TOPIC: Culminating activity

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson the students will review what they have learned about good character by role playing situations.

INTROCUCTION:

Have the class recall all the topics that were covered. Write them on the board.

DEVELOPMENT:

Students sit in groups and pick an index card from a box. On the card is a situation that the group must role play for the class. The group must decide how to portray the character trait or solve the situation. The class will guess what the students are demonstrating. Allow time for students to script their skit.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION:

Groups role play their skits.

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