
Teaching Techniques

Building Character: Discovering and Developing Character Traits

Kristen Sharp

Topic

Responsibility for discovering and developing character traits in students often falls to educators. Health educators play an important role in character education because they provide a bridge between students and their community. Public schools are rising to the challenge of providing a comprehensive approach to character education. Discovery and development of character traits offers a valuable lesson for students of any age as they learn to be considerate of others, especially in interpersonal relationships.

Lesson Objectives

As a result of this activity, students will:

- 1) Distinguish character traits (inside qualities) from appearances (outside qualities).
- 2) Identify character traits through a matching game.
- 3) List personal character traits.
- 4) Demonstrate the ability to recognize character traits in friends.

Assessment Criteria

Following this activity, students will turn in pictures that tell a story about the character traits of their friend. They will be assessed on their knowledge and comprehension of character traits from their pictures. For example, a student may draw a picture of one child telling another a secret with the word "trustworthiness" on it. The student explains that he or she can trust a friend to keep a secret. By this explanation, the teacher knows the student understands the concept of trustworthiness.

Activities and Strategies

Recognizing positive character traits in one's self and others promotes a sense of personal health, and an awareness of each student's obligation to the community. Armed with knowledge and awareness, students can be encouraged to exercise such traits as respect, responsibility, and trust-

worthiness. These traits help them individually as well as collectively as they learn to treat others with respect and consideration.

Grade Level

K-2. Works in a room is set up in three stations. The technique requires approximately 45 minutes.

Materials for Grades K-1

Materials for memory game: a large piece of blue butcher-block paper (approximately 36" wide x 28" tall); colored 8.5" x 11" construction paper that is cut into fish shapes; a black marker; scissors; access to a lamination machine (if possible)

Preparation for the Game

Cut the blue butcher block paper in the shape of a pond.

Use the bright construction paper to trace and cut out fish about the size of one piece construction paper. Do not use the same color of construction paper twice.

After the fish have been cut out, draw a jagged line vertically through the center of the fish and cut on that line, creating a head and tail of a fish in separate pieces. Write an age-appropriate character trait on each fish. Some examples of age-appropriate character traits are: shares, kind, friendly, and caring. Make sure that the same trait appears on the head and on the tail. If possible, laminate the fish so the game can be reused without worry about tearing or ripping the fish head and tail.

To Set Up the Game

First: Place the butcher-block paper, cut in the shape of a pond, on the floor. Place the fish, cut in half with the corresponding character traits written or typed on each end, with the words face down on the blue pond.

Second: Ask students: "Can anyone describe their best friend?" "Students will usually begin to describe their friend in ways like, 'they stick up for me, they play with me, they sit with me at lunch, they share, they keep secrets.' Rarely do they describe their friends appearance, but if they do, redirect the conversation by saying, 'I'd like you to describe how your friend treats you.'" Use student comments to lead the class into the activity about character traits.

Third: Tell students, "Today, we are going to fish for friends!" I'd like you to try and match the fish in the pond.

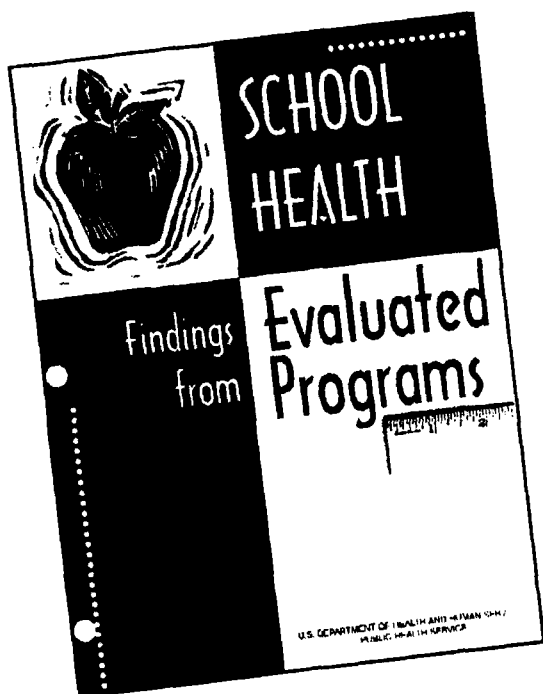
Kristen Sharp, BS, MAT, 3924 Stow Road, Stow, OH 44224; (kmssharp@kent.edu). This article was submitted October 30, 2001, and revised and accepted for publication April 15, 2002.

Written on each fish is a special word. We will talk about those special words at the end of your fishing adventure!"

Fourth: Divide the class according to the number of students, and how many ponds and fish you've made. It would be helpful to have other adults or older children at each station of help direct the game and the discussion of traits found on the fish. Ask students which traits they think they possess, then ask them to pick traits they know their best friend displays.

Fifth: After the students complete the game, write the character traits listed on each of the fish on the board. Ask students to pick a trait that their friend displays, and have them draw a picture that tells a story about it. The trait they use needs to be written somewhere on their picture.

Sixth: After everyone is finished, ask students to show and tell their pictures. Then, hang the pictures on a bulletin board or on the wall with the title: "Friends, the Catch of the Day!"



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