



CHARACTER COUNTS!

Citizenship Pillar

Activity Quickies

Upper Elementary Activities

Good Citizen Interviews

Discuss the meaning of good citizenship with the students (e.g. working with the community, volunteering time, protecting the environment, obeying rules and laws). Ask each young person to think of an adult they would name as a good citizen. This person may model good citizenship in their personal or professional life.

Assign them the job of setting up an interview with that person. They may choose questions such as the following:

- Do you think you are a good citizen? Why?
- What do you do at work to show good citizenship?
- How do you think young people can show good citizenship?
- What kind of volunteer work do you do?

Have students share what they learn with the class.
Source: Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character, Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1996-98.

Rules for School

Divide the class into small groups of four or five students. Assign each group one of the following areas: classroom, library, lunchroom, playground, and bathrooms. Instruct each group to come up with a list of rules designed to protect the rights of school citizens who use that area. Have students write their rules on a sheet of flip chart paper. Ask them to phrase their rules as positive statements whenever possible. Have groups present their lists and discuss similarities and differences. Each group should be prepared to defend its choices.

Source: Character Education: Teaching Values for Life, Instructional Fair, Gr. 3-4, 1997.

Community Action

One aspect of citizenship involves taking pride in one's community. Have students work alone or in groups to design a brochure that highlights their community. Instruct them to use descriptions of people or places of interest, including pictures and captions. The information in their brochures should both inform and make the reader want to visit or learn more about the community. Talk about how words and images are used to show a place in its best light.

Source: Character Education: Teaching Values for Life, Instructional Fair, Gr. 3-4, 1997.

Eco-Detectives

Divide the class into three "eco-squads." Assign the first squad the task of investigating your own classroom for evidences of practices that are either friendly or harmful to the environment. Examples could be recycling paper, leaving windows open when heat is on, etc.)

Ask the second group to investigate the environmental practices of the entire school. They can observe the lunchroom, hallways and outdoor areas.

The third group should investigate their home practices. Does their family recycle, have litter on their yard, only run the washer when it's full, etc?

Have each group spend a few days to one week observing. Bring their ideas together, and encourage the group to submit one report. Have them focus on creative solutions to the concerns they found.

Source: Spotlight On Character: Plays That Show Character Counts!, Gr. 6-8, 1999.

Lower Elementary Activities

Adopt A Tree

Take a field trip outside. Have the class choose a tree on the playground or nearby. An option would be to divide into groups and have each group choose a tree. Have the children make bark rubbings by placing a piece of paper on the trunk and rubbing the paper with the side of a crayon. They can also make leaf rubbing. Help them identify their tree and find out more about it. Talk about how good citizens take care of the environment, including trees and other plants.

Source: Developing Character When It Counts, A Program for Teaching Character in the Classroom, Frank Scheffer Publications, 1999.

Citizenship is Working Together

Ask students to think about the many people it takes to make their school run smoothly – principal, teachers, janitors, cooks, secretaries, bus drivers, parents, crossing guards, etc. Help them choose one group each week to appreciate. Talk about the jobs they do and have them write thank you notes to that group. You may choose to use the real names of the people in your school and make sure each person gets a thank you note from your students.

Source: Developing Character When It Counts, A Program for Teaching Character in the Classroom, Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999.

Miniature Community

Provide small milk cartons or boxes for each student. Tell them you are going to create a miniature community like their town. Talk about the different buildings in their community and why they are each important. Let each child choose a building, they would like to make. Have them decorate their milk carton or box to look like their building. You may want to provide labels for each one. If they have extra time, they may put their “building” on a piece of construction paper and draw in a sidewalk, grass, trees, flags, etc.

Point out that the citizens who work inside the buildings are even more important than the buildings. They are good citizens responsible for serving others in the community. Many of their

parents and neighbors probably work in those buildings. Display the miniature community for in your room.

Source: Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character, Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1996-98.

Telephone Manners

As a citizen of their family, children should learn to use the telephone properly and safely. First, help them understand that they represent their family when they answer the phone. Cover phone etiquette, including what to say when adults are not home. Also cover some manners to use when they call someone else.

If you can find a real phone to bring to class, use that to have students role play the following situations:

- Someone is calling their home to ask for a parent.
- They are calling a friend’s home and reach an answering machine.
- You are the receptionist at their parent’s place of work and they call.
- You call their home and ask if they are alone.

Source: Character Education: Teaching Values for Life, Instructional Fair, Gr. K-2, 1997.

Let’s Vote

Give your students the opportunity to vote – an important responsibility of good citizens. Choose a topic, such as “What animal should we have as our class pet?” Print out ballots that have the question and two choices. You may want to include pictures or drawings along with the words for young readers. If you want to make the activity more formal, set up an election voting area with these items: as class list of registered voters to be checked off as they receive their ballot, cubicles for private voting booths, a sealed ballot box for depositing ballots. After students have voted, make a bar graph using the results. Explain the concept of “majority rules” and use the election results to decide an actual action the class will take.

Source: Spotlight On Character: Plays That Show Character Counts!, Gr. K-1, 1999.