

Choosing Our Words (Grades K-5)



Character Education Objective:

- Students will learn the power of the words they say to one another.

Content Objective:

- Students will create classroom expectations around the words they will use with one another.

Language Objective:

- Students will share out ideas about what responsibility sounds like.

Purpose:

Our words have the power to build others up or tear them down

and we have to be accountable to the consequences of the words we say. Sometimes when students make the mistake of using their words to harm in moments of frustration or anger they believe that an apology will smooth it all over, but the damage is done. Below is a powerful lesson of how we cannot go back and undo the harm we have done, so we have the responsibility to choose our words wisely.

Lesson:

Paper Words (10 min)

Before the activity, prepare the materials. Each student will need one clean sheet of paper

1. Ask the students to study the clean sheet of paper. Make a big deal about how smooth and clean it is.
2. Ask the students to put the paper on the ground. Tell them to imagine a friend taking something that is theirs. Ask them how they would feel. Tell them to begin to stomp on the paper to show how angry they are. Explain that sometimes when we are really frustrated we use words out of anger. Each stomp is a negative thing we say to one another.
3. Ask the students to pick the paper up and say now imagine a friend tells you that you cannot play with them. Ask them how they would feel. Tell them to begin to crumple the paper into as tight of a ball as possible in their frustration.
4. Ask the students to open the paper back up and smooth it out to how it started.
5. Now, ask the students if it sometimes feels good to say something mean when someone upsets them. Talk about how we have the responsibility to use our words kindly, even when we are angry. Our friend in the scenarios was not kind, but our words in anger altered that paper to the point where it would never return to normal.
6. On the white board, draw a chart with two columns.

Discuss that you will be coming up with ideas of the words you can use in frustration, instead of saying negative things. On one side, write “words we will say” and on the other write “words we will not say.” Ask the students to come up with both. Describing what it does not look like is just as important as describing what it looks like.

7. Explain that the class will abide by these words when there are frustration or anger with one another and that we will not use the negative words.

Family Connection

Encourage families to watch Words Matter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1ZGijbp9go&list=PLkhTlECZJKgcyq06YGfuGyxhceC32iSio&index=7&t=0s>

Give the following prompts to discuss as a family:

- Has there been a time when someone hurt you with their words?
- How do you tell someone you are frustrated or angry without using negative words?
- What words will we say in our family when someone has hurt us? What words won't we say?