

Teamwork Skills (Grades K-5)



Overview:

An important part of building your teamwork skills is to be reflective. When you have successes or failures, always make time to reflect on what you did well and what you could do better or differently as a team. Thinking about the skills you need to build as a team will help strengthen your team and give individuals opportunities to grow their own teamwork skills.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- work as a team to complete a task.
- reflect on the performance of their team.
- practice adapting and modifying a plan for success as a team.

Materials:

- Rope or yarn in a large circle tied together (large enough for all students to be able to stand and hold a piece of it)
- Bandanas or fabric
- Large open space

Lesson:

Large Group

1. Place the rope/yarn in a circle on the ground and have students find a spot around it. Have students place their blindfolds on themselves and then pick up their piece of the yarn.
2. Students will now need to work together to turn this circle into a square. They can do anything to make the square except take off their blindfolds.
3. Give the students five minutes to complete the task. When five minutes is up, ask students to drop the rope/yarn and step back to see how close they were to making a square.
4. Ask students to reflect on the activity with a “Praise and Polish” conversation. Instruct students to think about this reflection through the lens of teamwork.
5. First, talk about things they did well as a team. Guide the conversation by asking questions about their communication and collaboration. Then, ask students to reflect on what they could better or differently next time. This conversation may need assistance, as they may start talking strategy. Keep them on track by encouraging them to make a plan around how they will work as a team.
6. Put the rope/yarn back in the circle on the ground. Have the students find a space and put their blindfolds on.
7. Students will have the same instructions as the first time, but this time encourage them to think about their praise and polish as they work together.
8. Give the students five minutes to complete the task.

When five minutes is up, ask students to drop the rope/yarn and step back to see how close they were to making a square.

Journal/Discussion

Encourage students to journal or discuss the following prompts:

1. Was there a difference between the first time and the second time you made the square? What were some of those differences?
 2. Think about the things your team chose as things they could do better or differently for the second time. Did those changes help you be successful?
 3. Praise and polish your team's second attempt at the square.
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Respecting Differences (Grades K-5)

Respect is being tolerant and accepting of differences. To practice that skill, you need opportunities to learn about others and how they may be different than you. A great way to practice it and to learn about others is to play ice breaker games throughout the year. You'd be surprised how much you learn about even lifelong friends by doing some get-to-know-you activities.

Achieve Through Character

Although our society puts a lot of emphasis on talent, talent is just the minimum that we can achieve. In order to advance from talent to skill and then to achievement, we rely on our character skills like strong work ethic, leadership, perseverance, integrity, etc.

Respect Yourself (Grades 6-12)

Respecting yourself and thinking positively about your body, mind, skills, and situation is important to build happiness in your heart. This lesson will focus on ways to show respect to yourself, others, and your surroundings by being grateful for who you are and what you have.

Energy and Effort into What Matters



By Jeff Kluever, Director of Programs

We fill our lives by putting energy and effort into what matters. There's a popular demonstration called "Jar of Life" in which a jar is filled with big rocks (important things like family, health, work), little rocks (less important things like sports or hobbies), and sand (unimportant things like watching television or social media). When you fill the jar with the big rocks first, then the little rocks, and finally the sand, everything fits in the jar. If you reverse the process and start with sand, then little rocks, then big rocks, not everything fits in the jar.

The point of the demonstration is that when we fill our time with the most important things first, the little rocks and sand can be worked in, but when our time is consumed by unimportant things, we run out of space for what really matters.

When I perform the demonstration, however, I exchange the big rocks for balloons and pose the question – instead of trying to cram more unimportant things into our jar, what if we

decided to put more air into our balloons? In other words, what if we put more time, energy, and effort into the big things that really matter, instead of jamming more unimportant sand into our life? What will be more fulfilling – putting more into the important aspects of your life or spending more time on social media?

There's nothing wrong with having some little rocks and sand in your jar. We need variety in our lives. We need opportunities to rest and rejuvenate so that when the time comes we can be fully engaged with our balloons. But, when you feel like you're falling short, when there's just not enough time in the day, don't cram in more sand. Put air in your balloons.

60-Second Character Challenge

- What are the critically important “big rocks” or “balloons” in your life?
 - What could you do to invest more time and energy into your “balloons?”
 - What unimportant sand could you remove from your life in order to invest more energy into your “balloons?”
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Emotions (Grades K-5)



Overview: Students will practice caring by recognizing and showing compassion for the emotions of others.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- sort and label the different emotions on the Faces of Emotion Handouts.
- discuss how having compassion for another person's emotions shows you care.
- illustrate emotion and share it with a friend.

Materials:

- Faces of Emotion Handout (1-4)
 1. Students will write in the emotion
 2. Students will trace the emotion
 3. Students will cut and paste an emotion
 4. Students will draw the emotion
- I Feel Handout
 - The teacher can also take pictures of familiar faces around the school posing with different faces of emotion to make the lesson more personal to the students in the building
- Discussion prompts (below)
- Family Connection Handout

Lesson Plan:

- Students work in a group or individually to sort and label the *Faces of Emotion Handouts* (5 min)
 - Depending on skill levels students can write, trace, or use a drawing or emoticon to label.
- Discussion Prompts (5-7 mins)
 - What emotion do you feel today?
 - Teacher: I feel happy because I get to teach you today.
 - What is hard about knowing how other people feel?
 - Why do some people cry, and some people yell when they are angry?
 - How can you show you care for someone when they are feeling (insert emotion)?
- Complete the I Feel Handout (5-7 mins)
 - Choose an emotion you feel.
 - Draw a picture of yourself when you feel that emotion.
 - Write (depending on skill level) what emotion you are feeling and why.
- Share your picture with a friend (1-2 mins)

References

Images are from: <https://www.pexels.com/> are free and attribution is not required.

Positive Impact (Grades 6-12)

Overview:

A critical component of citizenship is doing what you can to engage with your community. Everyone has the power to use their interests and passions to make a positive impact on their community, the country, and the world. In this lesson,

participants will reflect on how their interests and passions can be used to make their community a better place to live, work, and go to school.

Character education objectives:

- Study how Amanda Gorman's passion for poetry allowed her to positively impact her country.
- Students will explore how their own interests and passions can make a difference in their community.
- Put the citizenship Pillar into action by crafting a plan to use their interests and passions to positively impact their school or community.

Materials:

- Amanda Gorman's 2021 Presidential Inauguration speech
- Written text of Amanda's poem
- Goal Map tool

Lesson Plan:

Discussion Prompt: With a partner, share your interests and passions. Examples could include: music, animals, sports, video games, reading, and so on.

Activity: At the conclusion of the partner discussion, introduce students to Amanda Gorman, the young woman who wrote and delivered the poem "The Hill We Climb" at the 2021 Presidential Inauguration Ceremony.

Watch Amanda Gorman's speech at the 2021 Presidential Inauguration (5:47)

Optional – have students read the written text of her poem.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss the following questions in pairs, small groups, or as a full group.

Discussion Questions:

- Which of the Six Pillars of Character does this poem/speech align with? Explain your answer.
- Why do you think Amanda wrote this poem?
- How did Amanda use her passion for poetry to positively impact her community and country?
- How could you use your passions and interests to make a positive difference in your community?

Ask students to write down how they could use one of their passions or interests to make a positive impact in their community. Then, direct them to use the Goal Map tool to create a plan to put their passion to work.

For example, if a student is passionate about caring for animals, they could use that passion to volunteer at the Animal Rescue League. Action steps to put that plan into action could be:

1. Locate an animal shelter in need of volunteers
2. Fulfill any requirements necessary for being a volunteer at their facility
 - Fill out application
 - Ensure my availability and skill set matches their needs
3. Schedule time to volunteer
 - Make sure I have transportation to and from the facility

Follow-Up: Several weeks after the completion of this lesson, ask students to share whether they have put their plan into action. If so, how much progress have they made on their plan? How are they positively impacting their community? If not, why?

T.E.A.M.

CHARACTER COUNTS! is designed to work in partnership with students, parents and faculty to make your school a great place to learn. The acronym T.E.A.M (T-Teach, E-Enforce, A-Advocate, M- Model) is a process for you to use in the implementation of CHARACTER COUNTS!

The Impact of Lies (Grades K-5)

This lesson allows students to explore how telling a lie impacts both their relationships and themselves and the decision to be honest, even when it's the hard path, is the best long-term decision.

Resilience(Grades 6-12)

Students need opportunities to see success and triumph in the midst of struggle. This lesson provides a video that discusses resilience from a young man who faced a lot of trials in his life. The discussion will provide an opportunity for the classroom to share ideas about trust, growth, and overcoming obstacles while building resilience for all the changes that

life throws at you.