

A red fox with a white chest patch is sitting in the snow, looking towards a small chickadee. The fox has a surprised or excited expression. The chickadee is perched on a branch, looking back at the fox. The background is a snowy forest with tall trees under a clear blue sky.

The FOX and the CHICKADEE

Educator's Guide

The activity proposed in this guide focuses on character development and will find a fit in Ethics, Personal Development and Health curricula.

It is designed for Grades 3 and 4 at the elementary level.

Purpose

To engage students in a discussion about the development of character traits.

To explore the role and importance of trust in relationships and group life, including the classroom.

Brief outline

Following the screening of *The Fox and the Chickadee*, students are introduced to the notion of character, and they identify the main traits of both animals in the story. They correlate actions and choices with character traits for both the fox and the chickadee. They then duplicate the exercise to identify their own main character traits in order to bring attention to their identity and personality. In order to symbolize their personality, they choose a Canadian animal that best represents their character and share this choice with their peers. Finally, as the chickadee in the story is “untrustworthy,” a discussion on the role of trust in healthy relationships follows. The concept of trust is discussed to promote a positive, safe and collaborative classroom culture.

Learning objectives

I want my students to...

UNDERSTAND (big idea, concept)	KNOW (knowledge, information)	DO (skills)
Everyone's personality is made of positive and negative character traits that evolve over time.	All the aspects of a person's behaviour and attitudes that make up someone's personality are character traits.	Reflect on one's own main character traits.
Good knowledge of ourselves (intrapersonal intelligence) leads to an empathetic understanding of others (interpersonal intelligence).	Character traits can be positive or negative in nature.	Represent his/her prominent character traits with symbolic depiction.
	Opposing character traits can make up our personality.	Identify the role of trust in relationships.
	Trust is an essential component of positive relationships in groups.	Discuss the importance of trust in relationships.

Material and resources

The Fox and the Chickadee

This charming stop-motion animated fable tells the story of a starving fox who stumbles upon a lone chickadee caught in a farmer's trap. Despite his hapless predicament, the chickadee turns the tables by proposing a plan that would provide the fox with food for the whole winter, rather than just a snack. He promises the fox a feast, but there's a catch: he'll need the chickadee's help to get it.

Table with character traits (see page 5)

Link to information on Canadian animals :

Canadian Geographic

canadiangeographic.ca/kids/animal-facts/animals.asp

Teaching strategies

Journaling, Think-Pair-Share, Discussion

Links to instructional strategies online:

olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/journal/index.html

olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/think/index.html

olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/discussion/index.html

Activity

Introduction

- Introduce the film *The Fox and the Chickadee* to your class by reading the description of the film.
- Ask students to carefully watch the film to determine “What is this film really about?”
- Ask students to “Think-Pair-Share” before launching a short discussion to answer the question of what the film is about. Guide the discussion toward the topics of character and trust. Use the information below to select references on the topics of character and trust to include in your discussion with the students, ensuring that they have an understanding of what a “character trait” is.

About character traits

All the aspects of someone's behaviour and attitudes that make up that person's personality are CHARACTER TRAITS. For the students, it can be helpful to compare character traits to the ingredients in cake recipes. There are many different types of cake, with similar or different ingredients combined in different ways, just like there are many different types of people, with different character traits combined in different ways. Everyone has their own list of “ingredients,” or traits, that form their own character, and everyone has character traits that are positive and negative.

Some of our character traits are based on our values. Our values are the foundation, the guide for our actions. So the saying “actions speak louder than words” is true when it comes to defining one's character. Others know us by what we DO rather than what we say we are. For example, a person can claim to be respectful of others, but if he or she speaks to friends in a demeaning manner, others will know this person to be disrespectful in this context.

Surprisingly, our traits can sometimes be opposite in nature and actually balance our character. For example, a person can be very generous and always helpful to his or her friends, but also selfish when it comes to sharing personal belongings. This may seem to be contradictory, but being too generous can sometimes mean that a person never thinks about what is good for him/herself but only about others. Being somewhat “selfish” about certain things can help us protect ourselves from others taking advantage of our generosity. It may also help a person to strike a balance between caring for him/herself and for others at the same time.

Character traits are not static: they evolve and change over time. Reflecting on our character traits and the impact of our behaviour and attitudes can help develop our most positive traits and our personal identity. It also guides us in adhering to positive values for group life. Good knowledge of ourselves (intrapersonal intelligence) leads to an empathetic understanding of others (interpersonal intelligence). In turn, empathy and acceptance lead to trust.

About trust

Trust is the firm belief in a person's reliability, benevolence and honesty. Studies have shown that nurturing trusting relationships between teacher and students is a key element in improving student learning. Group life associated with a classroom and school must be protected by a culture of trust and respect for students in which they can take risks, collaborate, grow and thrive.

Opening a dialogue with students about the meaning and importance of trust is a valuable exercise to help build a classroom culture that is inclusive, empathetic and safe. Everyone has experience with trust and can speak about the impact of its presence or absence in a variety of contexts and relationships.

All healthy relationships are based on trust. Trusting implies vulnerability, and being trusted implies a sense of responsibility. In the classroom ecosystem, all members—teachers and students alike—depend on others to achieve desired outcomes. This dependency creates a sense of vulnerability in everyone involved. Therefore, all actions taken to reduce this sense of vulnerability in others build trust in the learning community. Modelling relationships of trust and respect for students is foundational to the development of a respectful and collaborative classroom culture. It also guides students in developing their own values and character with regards to trust. Trust in the classroom leads to acceptance of self and of diversity in characters.

Part 1 – Character traits for *The Fox and the Chickadee*

- Screening the film a second time, ask students to pay attention to evidence of character traits for both the fox and the chickadee.
- Using the list of character traits as a guide, have students identify the three most prominent character traits observed in the fox (e.g.: greedy, cunning, merciful, naive, curious, impatient, trusting, ambitious) and note them in their journal, justifying their choice with some observations.
- Once again, using the list of character traits as a guide, have students identify the three most prominent character traits observed in the chickadee (e.g.: untrustworthy, deceitful, helpful, creative, convincing, clever, resourceful, persuasive) and note them in their journal, justifying their choice with some observations.
- Students think-pair-share to review their answers before a class discussion is led to select the most prominent character traits for each animal in the story. Display this information in the classroom.

Part 2 – Personal character traits

- Once again using the list of character traits as a guide, have students identify the three most prominent character traits for themselves and note them in their journal, justifying their choice.
- Invite students to find a Canadian animal that best represents their character. Students can refer to the following link (canadiangeographic.ca/kids/animal-facts/animals.asp) to get ideas and information about Canadian wildlife. They must justify their choice of animal and explain how this creature's behaviour and attitudes resemble their own character.
- This information can then be presented in a creative manner and displayed in the classroom as the "ecosystem of your class" and as a celebration of diversity. For example, each student could cut out an outline in the shape of their animal and write inside this shape.

"Like a (name of animal),
I am (list three character traits)"
(NAME of STUDENT)

Alternatively, each student can create a slide on the computer with the same information. All the slides can be assembled in a collaborative presentation. It is very powerful if the teacher also participates in this activity and displays his or her profile along with those of the students.

Following are a few examples of character traits that can be associated with animals:

- Canada goose: adventurous, sociable, dependable
- Wolf: intelligent, social, team player, cunning
- Raccoon: curious, intrepid, silly
- Monarch: determined, courageous, gentle, gregarious

Part 3 – Discussion about trust and group life

- To launch the discussion about the role and importance of trust in relationships and group life, give the students the following journal prompt: In the film *The Fox and the Chickadee*, the relationship between the two animals is not a healthy one. Why? Relate the actions and choices that each animal makes with their respective character traits.
- Based on the story of *The Fox and the Chickadee*, launch a discussion about the possible consequences of the absence of trust in a relationship.
- Propose an exploration of the concept of trust in the context of group life in the classroom. Ask students to brainstorm answers to the following question in small groups of four or five: "What classroom situations require that we trust each other?" Give students a large piece of paper on which they can note their ideas.
- Ask students to then switch their notes with another team. Allow a few minutes for each team to review the new list of situations they've just received. Ask each team to select three situations and describe what might be the consequences of violating the trust. Debrief this exercise with the full group, underlining the importance of being trustworthy and of nurturing trust in the classroom.

Options for further exploration of character education

- Several months after having done parts 1 and 2 of this activity, or as a conclusion to the school year, invite students to look at their work and reflect on their growth over that time. Students respond in their journal to the question “How has your character evolved over time?”
- Each student prepares a note to him/herself completing the sentence “I am proud of myself because I am...” (description of at least one positive character trait).
- Each student can also prepare a note for another student that completes the sentence “You are great because you are...” (description of at least one positive character trait).
- The notes are placed in self-addressed envelopes that are mailed to the students’ respective home addresses, by the teacher, several months later. A note to oneself, and by a peer, about positive character traits promotes self-esteem.

Assessment options

- Give students the following exit card: In the film, both the fox and the chickadee say, “It’s in our nature, we can’t help it...” Do you agree with this statement, that “we can’t help it” when it comes to character traits or our “nature”? Why?
- Collect anecdotes on students’ participation and contributions.
- Ask students to self-evaluate their contribution to the team.

CHARACTER TRAITS			
Adventurous	Agreeable	Ambitious	Amiable
Artful	Anxious	Appreciative	Argumentative
Bossy	Articulate	Assertive	Balanced
Careless	Brave	Calm	Carefree
Clever	Caring	Charismatic	Cheerful
Confident	Colourful	Compassionate	Competitive
Cooperative	Conscientious	Considerate	Contemplative
Curious	Courageous	Creative	Critical
Dependent	Daring	Demanding	Dependable
Dishonest	Determined	Disciplined	Discreet
Dynamic	Disobedient	Disrespectful	Dominating
Faithful	Empathetic	Energetic	Envious
Friendly	Flexible	Forgetful	Forgiving
Gentle	Fun-loving	Funny	Generous
Helpful	Gracious	Greedy	Hardworking
Imaginative	Honest	Humble	Humorous
Insecure	Impatient	Impulsive	Independent
Kind	Insightful	Intelligent	Inventive
Modest	Lazy	Loyal	Mischievous
Optimistic	Obedient	Objective	Opinionated
Practical	Patient	Peaceful	Persuasive
Reliable	Realistic	Reasonable	Reflective
Rude	Resourceful	Respectful	Responsible
Selfless	Self-centred	Self-confident	Selfish
Timid	Sensitive	Sociable	Thoughtful
Vivacious	Tolerant	Trusting	Understanding

References

goodcharacter.com

ascd.org/publications/books/111011/chapters/Knowing-Our-Students-as-Learners.aspx

resources.curriculum.org/LSA/files/LSANextLevelAug07.pdf