At the Core

Key Ideas: Making choices is easier when you know what your values are/Determining one's core ethical values
Character Traits: Integrity/Respect/Responsibility/Caring
Level: Elementary

Good morning, ___name of school__. This is ___name of narrator__ with a few words of wisdom.

Here's a very important question to ask: What character traits are important? Do you think that kindness is an important character trait? What about honesty or fairness? Maybe you think all these are very important.

Now here's a little secret. Once you decide which character traits are really important to you, it will be much easier to make good choices. For example, if you decide it's important to be kind, it will be easy to be kind to a classmate others are teasing. You've already decided. You've decided to be a kind person, not a person who is mean to others.

Someone wise once said that

*It's not hard to make choices when you know what character traits are important to you.*

Today, stop and make a list of the character traits you think are most important and then make a decision to be that kind of person.

With something to think about, this is __________. Make it a great day . . . or not. The choice is yours.

*Original quote: "It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." ~ Roy Disney
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Concept: Students determine what values they hold dear and explore how those values affect the choices they make.

Materials: Suggested activities for art classes may require materials for creating a drawing, painting, or poster.

Directions: Read or ask a student to read aloud the Project Wisdom message that accompanies this lesson plan. Ask for volunteers to share responses to the following questions.

Discussion Generators
1. Name the character traits you believe are important. Character traits are simply qualities that you have as a person that make you unique and special. What are some positive qualities that you have that you believe are important?
2. Which of these character traits is most important to you as a person? as a student? as a family member? as a member of this school community? Do you think that having these qualities helps you to be a better student? to get along with your friends? Does having positive character traits help you at home? How?
3. Do you believe that most human beings believe these are important character traits? Why or why not? What would our world be like if everyone thought these character traits are important?
4. Do you think that knowing what traits you possess can help you to make good choices? For example, if you make a decision to be an honest person, is it easier to say no if someone wants to copy your homework? Why or why not?
5. Why is it a good idea to write down the character traits that you think are important and then decide to be that kind of person?

Closing Comments – If you want to be a successful human being, it's important to think about the character traits you believe are important. It's even a good idea to make a list and then put your list in a safe place. When you have an important choice to make, you can look at your list and remember what's important. Deciding what character traits are important to you will make it much easier to make wise choices along the way.
At the Core

Follow-up Activities

Grades K-1

- For the youngest citizens, defining the character traits may need to be done before the Discussion Generators can be used. Centers/workstations can be set up so that the students can rotate through them, being introduced to each one. Books can be recorded so that the students can listen to one book in each center. In each center, children can be asked to draw a picture of how they can demonstrate each of the traits in class, on the playground, in the cafeteria, and at home. Have students brainstorm adjectives that describe themselves and list those words on a large chart paper. After a few minutes of brainstorming, review the words with the students and circle those words which are positive traits. Have students give examples of actions that reflect those positive traits. Give students a large piece of construction paper folded into fourths. In the middle, instruct students to draw a self-portrait, and in the four squares around the portrait have students draw and/or write about four traits that they possess (e.g., showing kindness by sharing, etc.).

- Create a large chart on the board or a poster where students can reach it. List in columns the traits that the students have identified as being most important. As the week progresses and books are read in the class, post the names of characters from the book in the columns that represent character traits that the character has exhibited.

Grades 2-5

- Have the students prepare the class to open the school's Museum of Character Traits. Decide which character traits are important to students. This can be done by vote or teacher's decision. Divide the students into groups of 3-4, allowing each group one of the traits. Using the Reading List below, have each student read some of the books and journal about the trait. Have the members plan an exhibit about their character trait. Each group can include artifacts (books, everyday objects, adult-authored articles, student-made brochures), artwork (both 2- and 3-dimensional), photographs, pieces of writing (student-authored stories, poems), even music that teaches visitors about their trait. Invite other classes and parents to the museum.

- Choose one of the books from the Reading List and either read it aloud or assign it to be read individually. Have students write journals in first person as the main character. Students focus particularly on the character traits that are evident in the story, inferring how hard/easy it was to be respectful, responsible, and/or honest. As the journal entries are discussed, students should pay attention to what the characters had to consider when choosing between the right and wrong choice.

- Have students make acrostic poems using character traits. Post these on a board for all to see and then have students share their poems, highlighting examples of when they exhibited those traits.

- Make a "Gotcha" board and have students put sticky notes up listing student names when they are caught showing good character. Extend this to students finding examples of real-life people exhibiting good character in the world. Encourage them to find articles in the magazines and newspapers highlighting good character. Each morning choose an article to discuss with the students.
Reading List

K-5
- *The Empty Pot*, Demi
- *Grandpa's Teeth*, R. Clement
- *The Great Kapok Tree*, L. Cherry
- *Have You Filled a Bucket Today*, C. McCloud
- *Ish*, P.H. Reynolds
- *Miss Rumphius*, B. Cooney
- *Old Turtle*, D. Wood
- *Only One You*, L. Kranz
- *Peace Begins With You*, K. Scholes
- *The Principal's New Clothes*, S. Calmenson
- *The Three Questions*, J. Muth
- *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, M. Fox

3-5
- *The City of Ember*, J. DuPrau
- *The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps*, S. Krensky
- *The Janitor's Boy*, A. Clements
- *The Landry News*, A. Clements
- *Number the Stars*, L. Lowry
- *Poppy*, Avi
- *The Sign of the Beaver*, E. G. Speare
- *Twenty and Ten*, C. H. Bishop