

COURAGE

February 2009
Character Education Program

We Don't Need a Wizard to Give us Courage!

Did you know that the word "courage" comes from the Latin root word "cor", meaning "heart?" People who have courage follow their hearts. They accomplish great things that benefit either themselves or others, because they believe in themselves and trust wholeheartedly that what they're trying to do is right and good.

- While watching the news or reading the newspaper, point out instances where everyday people show courage. You might point out the firefighters who save a family from a burning building or the complete stranger who jumps into a river to save a drowning child. You might discuss how courage prompts politicians, commentators, or editors to publicly ex-

press controversial or bold opinions.

Encourage your children to stand up for what they believe in.

- Draw from the past to provide examples of courage. Many historical figures have used courage to fight injustice. Talk about Dr. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, the families who made up the Underground Railroad, or those who faced the Holocaust.
- Share stories about *your family's* past. Explain how courageous our ancestors were when they immigrated to this country—or how courageous they must have been if forced to come here as slaves.

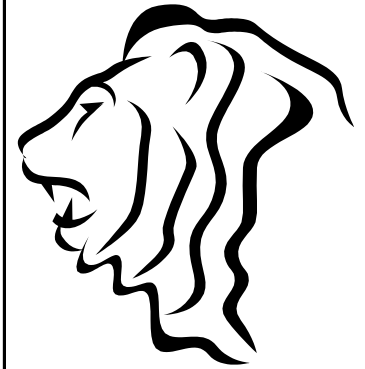
Promote self-esteem. This will provide your children with courage to try new

things and the courage to keep trying despite experiencing failure.

- Point out how proud they must feel when they finally accomplish a long sought after goal.
- Emphasize the positive things that happen even as a result of failure. Explain that mistakes are often our best teachers.

Finally, model courage. Show your child, through example, that you stand on the strength of your convictions. Be consistent. Show them you have the courage to tackle problems head on.

Try the suggestions provided above, and you'll be one step closer to raising children who stand up for what they believe in and who are bold and secure enough to express their true feelings.



AT SCHOOL

This month, our school community is focusing on the character trait, courage.

Courage is the strength of mind that enables you to face difficulties with confidence. We show courage by:

- Attempting tasks that may be difficult
- Resisting peer pressure
- Influencing others to do the right thing

Most Important of All ...

Explain the importance of saying "no" when peer pressure pushes your child toward dangerous or compromising situations. Share stories about the pressures you experienced when you were young. Try to come up with a few tactics or words your child can fall back on if they should happen to feel "peer" pressure. Have a code word with your child so that if they call you and say the word it means they need you to get

them out of an uncomfortable situation e.g., "No, you can't stay out you must come home now, I'll pick you up." Don't pass judgment or overreact if your child shares delicate information with you. Keep the lines of communication open. Emphasize to your children the importance of standing up for themselves, but also let them know you trust them to have the courage to come to you, at any time, for advice or assistance.

Character Education Committee Members

Dr. Ann Bacon, Director of Curriculum and Instruction	Carla Greene, Principal
Mary Ann Berman, Teacher	Tonya Johnson, School Psychologist
Judy Bomze, Director of Pupil Services	Kelly Keller, Teacher
Alison Gaskin, Teacher	Dr. Faye Lovrinic, School Psychologist
Elisha Gee, Librarian	Melinda Spoerl, Special Education Teacher
	Maryanne Sweeney, Teacher
	Patrick Watkins, Teacher

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES—McKinley is truly full of H.E.A.R.T.!



This year the McKinley Dragons have embraced the H.E.A.R.T. program for school-wide positive behavior support. This program has served as the guiding force behind the initiatives that have been started at McKinley Elementary School this year. The H.E.A.R.T. program focuses the five tenets of **Honesty, Excellence, Awareness, Respect, and Tolerance.**

All of the classrooms have embraced this concept and spearheaded programs and lessons to emphasize this program. The students are rewarded for their efforts in showing H.E.A.R.T. through their actions by receiving dragon coupons. The classes who achieve the greatest number of coupons are awarded the Pearl Award which is given monthly. The students who consistently demonstrate H.E.A.R.T. in their actions receive a place in the building's Dragon's Lair wall of recognition. We have also embraced this concept in our cafeteria through the issuance of the Golden Spatula Award. Classes earn this award for showing H.E.A.R.T. behaviors in the cafeteria. In November we held an assembly where all of the classes premiered elements of the H.E.A.R.T. program and revisited how

important H.E.A.R.T. is to create a community of learners at McKinley Elementary School. McKinley has embraced the tenets of H.E.A.R.T. through teamwork among students and solidifying the sense of "family". Students have volunteered to be mentors and work with younger children as buddies throughout the school year. Partnerships have been established between students and children with special needs within the school community. We also are establishing a mentorship program with adults and children to further provide a network of support for children who would benefit from additional support in our school community.

The tenets of H.E.A.R.T. help to make McKinley Elementary School as well as Abington and Rockledge Communities among the best places to live in America! We are striving to continue to be a school that models the tenets of the character education that is alive and well in Abington and at McKinley.

Kids and Courage

To many parents, courage may seem like an abstract principle which does not apply to their children or their children's lives. Certainly, our children, who live safe and protected lives, do not have the opportunity or the need to display this character trait.

But wait a minute! When you take a closer look at what courage actually is, you can see that it is an important aspect of each child's character development. Being brave in the face of fear and doing what needs to be done even when it is really hard both constitute courage. Children need courage when they:

- keep trying to master a new skill even when they are frustrated or other children laugh at their attempts.
 - do the 'right' thing when facing difficult situations, like standing up for another child who is being bullied.
- admit to mistakes and are accountable

for their behaviors, like acknowledging breaking a neighbor's window while playing ball and then apologizing and making amends.

Having high self-esteem can enable a child to have courage; conversely acting courageously can help children to persevere against adversity and challenges and, in the process, raise their self-esteem. When children feel good about themselves and see that they have the personal power to make courageous choices, they are more likely to lead rich, fulfilled and personally successful lives.

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers and, as such, have a powerful influence on their development. So how can parents use this influence to enhance the development of courage in their children?

- Make sure they understand what courage is by defining it and pointing it out when you, they or someone else demonstrates it. Praise your child when they

demonstrate courage. Highlight the positive! It will build self-esteem and result in more instances of 'brave' behavior.

- Use mistakes as learning opportunities, not as a reason to punish. Teach them what they can do differently and how they can make amends. Create a positive atmosphere that will encourage them to face and admit their mistakes openly and honestly.

- Be a constant source of support for your children. All people, and especially children, can better demonstrate courage when they know they are not alone and that someone 'has their back.'

Teach your children that sometimes asking for help is a sign of courage - let them know that they don't have to face all difficult situations by themselves and that it is a sign of strength to sometimes ask for help.

Audrey Krisbergh, The Center for Parenting Education

READING LIST

K-3	Arthur's Loose Tooth	Hoban, Lillian
K-3	Cowardly Clyde	Peet, Bill
4-8	Call it Courage	Sperry, Armstrong
5-8	Wringer	Spinelli, Jerry
Young Adult	The Boy Who Dared	Bartoletti, Susan C.
Young Adult	Infidel	Hirsi Ali, Ayaan

Websites

Educators or Guides Tab:
www.raisingcourageouskids.com

Tips, Facts, and Activities:
www.courageforkids.com