



Roaring Fork School District

HABITS OF A SCHOLAR

During the visioning process last fall, parents, community members and staff clearly identified a desire for character education in our schools. Parents also asked us to identify a common set of “character skills” across the district to provide consistency and continuity for their children. To that end, we are excited to introduce a set of core values that will be incorporated into teaching and learning in schools across RFSD for the 2014-2015

academic year – Habits of a Scholar. The components of Habits of a Scholar are defined in the acronym **ExPECT**, **Executive Skills**, **Perseverance**, **Enthusiasm**, **Compassion**, and **Teamwork**. The new report cards this fall will reflect your student’s progress in these areas. We put together more detailed information in this document to help you understand the expectations of your student.

HABITS OF A SCHOLAR

EXECUTIVE SKILLS	plans, organizes, and manages behaviors and responsibilities
PERSEVERANCE	persists through challenges
ENTHUSIASM	pursues passions and shows love of learning
COMPASSION	considerate and respectful of self, others, and the world around us
TEAMWORK	works with others to achieve a common goal

EXECUTIVE SKILLS

Plans, organizes, and manages behaviors and responsibilities

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Strong executive skills enable a child to stay focused, plan ahead, strategize, and recall information. Habits such as time management, organization, and the ability to start a task and sustain focus are not only pertinent to success in school, but success in future careers. While these skills improve as the brain develops, parents and schools can fast-track these skills through teaching and modeling.

HOW IT CAN BE DEVELOPED AT HOME Adapted from Ann Dolin, M.Ed.

Get Your Child Started

Children can have difficulty getting themselves started, often because they feel overwhelmed or can't muster enough energy to get going. You can help by breaking down seemingly large assignments into smaller, more manageable chunks. Be sure your child understands the directions and how to do the work before beginning.

Create a Break Menu

By establishing a "menu" of breaks and rewards, your child will be better able to sustain attention while doing homework. On 3x5 cards, list small rewards for your child to choose from after completing an assignment. Good options include shooting hoops, getting a snack, building with Legos, or playing with a pet. Knowing a break is coming may be just the encouragement needed to push through challenging work and tailor the breaks to suit your child's interests.

Plan Ahead

Sit down with your child on a weekly basis to discuss upcoming projects and assignments. Encourage your child to look ahead to plan out the week by determining what needs to be accomplished each day. Seeing tasks written out in the planner will keep students on track and organized.

Take a Photograph

Children tend to need lots of encouragement to keep their rooms, backpacks, desks, and lockers organized. Take a photo of the one area that needs to stay organized. Now, post the picture in a highly visible place so your child can refer to it. This way, there will be a frame of reference for what the room or other area should look like when your child needs to clean it up. Many kids are unable to visualize what "clean" means. With this method, there's no question about it!

EXECUTIVE SKILLS

- manages goals
- organizes tasks and responsibilities
- manages time
- manages impulses
- self-monitors and reflects to improve
- follows procedures and directions
- maintains focus



PERSEVERANCE

Persists through challenges

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Angela Duckworth's research has demonstrated that a student's "grit," or ability to persevere, is a far better predictor of grade point average (GPA) and graduation than IQ measures or test scores. Perseverance is tightly tied to the growth mindset attitude of, "I can get better if I try harder," which helps children develop into more determined and hard-working people.

HOW IT CAN BE DEVELOPED AT HOME Adapted from www.CenterforResilientChildren.org

Create an Optimistic Mindset

Children who view themselves as "not good at math," or "dumb" will have a much more difficult time succeeding in school than children who view themselves as capable, able to overcome barriers, and in the case of school performance, capable of learning. Helping our children develop an optimistic mindset is one of the most important things we can do as parents. One strategy toward that goal is to share with your children a life experience that required grit. Knowing that you had to overcome adversity can inspire your children to build confidence in their own abilities. A component in cultivating a child's optimistic mindset depends in part on delivering effective praise.

Use Effective Praise

Ample research exists that demonstrates a positive correlation between how we praise children's effort and their likelihood of persevering in the future. If we only praise children's accomplishments or use language such as "you're so smart!", we run the risk of transmitting the idea that failure will be a disappointment to adults, which can actually discourage the likelihood that children will remain persistent in trying to reach their goals.

Show How to Cope with Setbacks

Inevitably, despite our children's and our best efforts, children will suffer disappointments, setbacks and failures. Children (and adults) who have well-developed grit perceive setbacks as challenges to be overcome and failures as learning opportunities. When our children fail, we need to recognize their efforts, express confidence in their ability to learn from the situation, and help them identify what they could do differently in the future. To paraphrase a Chinese proverb, children with grit fall down twice and get up three times.

Share Stories of Perseverance with your Child

Sit down with your family to watch and discuss the short video, Life=Risk—Motivation – found on YouTube. Like the Little Engine That Could, this video teaches all of us an important life lesson about the importance of grit.

PERSEVERANCE

- completes work and fulfills responsibilities
- overcomes obstacles, frustrations and setbacks
- learns from mistakes and accepts feedback
- makes multiple attempts to reach a goal
- shows effort



ENTHUSIASM

Pursues passions and shows love of learning

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Frederick Williamson observed, "The longer I live, the more certain I am that enthusiasm is the little recognized key to success." When our students enter the workplace, enthusiasm can impact not just getting a job but succeeding in that job and advancing in a career. In fact, research shows that many employers would rather provide job skills training to an enthusiastic but inexperienced worker than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less-than-positive attitude. Cultivating this skill may be the most important when considering future workplace ramifications.

HOW IT CAN BE DEVELOPED AT HOME

Cultivate Relevance

Discuss long term goals with your child and help them link the relevance of their learning to their future success. Students who believe that education is important to their future are much more likely to be enthusiastic about learning at school.

Reinforcing Learning at Home

Parents can breathe life into school learning by finding out what children are studying in school and then planning activities or initiating conversations that connect those topics to daily life. An example would be when children are studying the earth and the solar system, watch a sunset together. Ask them, "What is happening? Why is the sun disappearing?"

Build Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm about learning is contagious, and we have to make sure our kids catch it from us. Reading books and magazines for pleasure and by choice sends the message that reading is fun, not just something that has to be done for school. Talking about hobbies or interests or something you enjoyed learning that day also shows children that learning is enjoyable.

ENTHUSIASM

- asks questions
- shows self-efficacy through positive actions and statements
- open to and interested in new learning
- take on risks and challenges
- actively engages



COMPASSION

Considerate and respectful of self, others, and the world around us

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

One of the main benefits to cultivating compassion in your child's life is that research shows that being compassionate builds happiness and happiness is contagious. Scientific studies also suggest there are physical benefits to practicing compassion — people who practice it produce 100 percent more DHEA, a hormone that counteracts the aging process, and 23 percent less cortisol, the “stress hormone.”

HOW IT CAN BE DEVELOPED AT HOME Adapted from Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D., etc.

Make a Gratitude List

This is especially helpful for turning the tide when a child is feeling down. Even a short list of a couple “I’m grateful for’s” can make a difference. Have them write the whole sentence out: “I am grateful for this new day.” “I am grateful my brother didn’t punch me on the way to school.” “I am grateful my parents love me.” You get the idea.

Offer Kindness Each Day

Suggest a child do one kind act a day for another. Helping others gets those feel-good juices going. Suggest that they surprise a friend or family member with a gracious act. Or suggest doing something kind without anyone knowing. Ask them, how does that feel?

Talk to Yourself

Nicely - Sometimes we have to practice talking positively about ourselves and others. Have children think of one or two nice things to say about themselves, family members, and friends. They can make an ongoing list and stick it on the fridge as a reminder

Participate in Community Service with your Child

Volunteer with your child to help build a trail, work in a soup kitchen, pick up trash, or even volunteer at school. Other students are watching and listening more than we think. That’s why it’s important that we...

Walk the Talk

Simply talking about compassion is not enough. A recent study found that while 96% of parents say they want to raise ethical, caring children, 80% of students reported parents were more concerned about achievement than caring for others. Whether you’re volunteering in the community or talking on the phone, model compassion and be aware of what’s called the “rhetoric/reality gap.”

COMPASSION

- helps and encourages others
- inclusive of diverse backgrounds
- show generosity and appreciation
- demonstrates kindness and empathy
- seeks to understand other perspectives
- honors strengths and challenges of self and others



TEAMWORK

Works with others to achieve a common goal

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

People working in teams tend to learn more by their interactions with each other. Brainstorming sessions can help children view the same problem from different perspectives and arrive at the best possible solution. Additionally, working in a team helps children practice appropriate social interaction and grown into more confident and social individuals who are comfortable in their own skin.

HOW IT CAN BE DEVELOPED AT HOME

Cultivate the Home Team

It will speak volumes to your teen if you display teamwork in your home or work environment, or with any of your group extracurricular activities. Reflect on these experiences with your child and point out examples of how conflict is resolved, how team members work together, and your appreciation for each team member's role.

Build Perspective

Teens usually have a tough time understanding another perspective. You can give them a chance to reflect on different points of view by questioning. For instance, questions like, "Why do you think he turned away?" or "Why do you think she made a face like that?" or "how do you think he's feeling?" If you ask questions like this, it will help the teen be mindful of others and build empathy.

Point out Examples

Examples of teamwork in society abound. Point them out and ask questions. Give your child the opportunity to ask other adults about teamwork's vital role in careers and society.

TEAMWORK

- is inclusive of all members
- fulfills role within the group
- works through conflicts and disagreements to find solutions
- shares leadership and group responsibilities
- communicates and actively listens

