



What A Parent Can Do To Bring the Five Marks of Character into the Home

- **Use the language of the Five Marks of Character every day.** Use the language of the Five Marks specifically as you move through the day with your child. If your child helps take care of a pet or family member, you can use the opportunity to discuss kindness and/or accountability. Picking up a piece of trash you find on the sidewalk is a chance to talk about citizenship. Waiting patiently in line at the store demonstrates kindness. Making sure to say “please” and “thank you” shows respect for the people serving you. We do these things every day, so take the opportunity to point out to your children the positive traits you are showing.
- **Look for the Five Marks of Character in the classroom.** The Five Marks can play a big role in preschool, so asking your child what he or she did with to practice the Five Marks of Character that day reinforces the lessons. Take a moment to look for art projects or spaces in the classroom that represent the Five Marks of Character. Ask your child to explain them to you or tell you about a story he or she heard that day. Spending time going over these things with your child lets him or her know that the Five Marks of Character are really important.
- **Use household chores to demonstrate the Five Marks of Character.** Since cooking and cleaning goes on in your house anyway, use these moments to talk about accountability and kindness. It is not fair if mom or dad does all of the work, so show your child that everyone pitches in at your house. Preschoolers can help set and clear the table, gather up dirty laundry, get ingredients out of the refrigerator (make sure they are not in glass jars), put away their toys and crayons, give the pet a treat, etc. Keep the chores simple and applaud your child for being helpful.

- **Connect children’s reading to the Five Marks of Character.** Young children love to be read to, and reading is very important for building a solid foundation for education. Expand your reading time to include the Marks of Character. Once children move from picture books to stories, there are many opportunities to talk about the Five Marks. Most of the conflicts in children’s books come from a character’s failure to be accountable or kind, so point this out to your child as you read the story. Stopping a story to ask how a child thinks it will turn out or what a character will do also provides an opportunity to talk about making good decisions. Saying something like, “Oh no! Little Bear has broken his mother’s favorite vase! Do you think he will be accountable for his actions and tell her?” will help teach children important lessons about actions and consequences.
- **Encourage imaginative play around the Five Marks of Character.** At this age, children love to pretend. They often act out adult roles, and these provide excellent opportunities for children to practice the Five Marks of Character. If your children are playing school, ask them to show you what kind teachers and respectful students they are. If they are running a bakery, ask them how they will respect their customers and listen for “please” and “thank you.” If they are pretending to cook, help remind them of all the acts of accountability that go with that, including cOoking healthy food and doing the dishes.

