What Makes Good Character? Learn From Firefighters of the Past.
Paul Evans

Overview:
Using the example of firefighters from years past, the students will analyze photographs and documents to learn the timeless lesson of the value of good character. This lesson will follow the inquiry process in the following relative order: Ask, Investigate, Discuss, Apply, Reflect. After the investigative question has been posed, the students will work in groups to analyze documents and photographs to determine character qualities by observation and inference. The students will discuss these qualities in their groups and create a list of character qualities that a good citizen should possess.

Goal:
This lesson will allow the students to learn about character qualities that a good citizen should possess, and the students will learn the importance of exhibiting good character qualities at all times.

Objectives:
1. The students will identify character traits commonly associated with firefighters.
2. Given scenarios, the students will predict actions or behaviors that persons of admirable character might take in those situations.
3. The students will assess the importance of specific character qualities.

Investigative question:
What would be some character qualities of a person who would be a good role model?

Time required:
One or two 40 minute class periods.

Recommended grade range: 3-5, 6-8

Subjects:
Social Studies (Civics), Language Arts.

PA Standards:
Civics and Government
5.2.6.D, 5.2.6.G.

Language Arts
1.6.8.A, 1.6.8.D.

Credits: Paul Anthony Evans

Preparation:
Materials, teacher:
Prints of primary source documents and photographs from the Library of Congress (Listed under Resources Used).
Firefighting gear and a few hand tools may be used to reinforce the lesson (helmet, flashlight, nozzle, etc. These items are not necessary, but may arouse the students’ interest).
Materials, students:
Photo analysis worksheet, Document analysis worksheet (listed under Resources Used). These will be used to investigate our primary sources.

Resources used:


Procedure:

Introduction:
1. Begin with the statement, “The things that you do show others what kind of person you are. These things make up your character.”

What are some words that might be used to describe a person’s character? Give a few examples, such as gentle, patient, thoughtful, mean, loyal, kind, etc. These words describe character qualities.

Investigative question:
Ask the students what would be some character qualities of a person who would be a good role model, or example for others to follow. This should describe a person of good character. Write those words on the board. This meets the “ask” aspect of the inquiry-based model as indicated in the overview.
2. Show the picture of a firefighter and ask for words that might describe the person in the picture. Write those words on the board.

Today we are going to look at a few items that can show us character qualities of a firefighter. Although not all firefighters possess the same qualities, we can make some good guesses of character qualities that a firefighter might possess. Good character is something that we should all possess, regardless of the kind of work that we do.

3. Divide the class into groups of 4-6 students.

4. Give each group a document or photograph to analyze. Give each student the appropriate analysis worksheet for his or her primary source. Although the students will work in groups, have each student complete an analysis worksheet for his or her group’s document or photograph. Have the students work in groups to complete their worksheets. Encourage discussion and instruct the students to list on their worksheets character qualities discovered or inferred in their primary source. This meets the “investigate” and “discuss” aspect of the inquiry-based model as indicated in the overview. (The students may keep their worksheets on their desks to refer to them while taking the short quiz.)

5. Have the students return to their desks after they have completed their group work. Discuss with the students what they have discovered or inferred regarding the character of a firefighter. What character qualities of the firefighters can the students also exhibit in their lives? Write these on the board if they’re not yet written on it. Ask for each character quality how it might benefit the students or others? What changes can each student make to improve his or her character? This meets the “reflect” aspect of the inquiry-based model as indicated in the overview.

Evaluation:
The students will apply their new knowledge by completing a mini character quiz. This meets the “apply” aspect of the inquiry-based model as indicated in the overview:
Mini Character Quiz and Rubric

1. A child in your class falls in the hallway, dropping her books. A person of good character might:

2. You hear a noise outside your house. When you look out the front window you see that a car has wrecked and is smoking. Someone is getting out of the car. What might a person of good character do?

3. A group of children are in the store, and the storekeeper leaves the checkout counter to look for something in the back of the store. A child suggests stealing candy from the shelf because no one is there to catch them. A child of good character in the group might:

4. Name two character qualities that you think would be very important for every firefighter to have. Explain the reasons for your answers.

5. You have a friend whom you have known to lie to others. How do you think this might affect your friendship? Explain why.

Each answer will be scored according to the following rubric:
Total points possible: 50

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<tr>
<th>Excellent – 10 points</th>
<th>Fair – 5 points</th>
<th>Poor – 0 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Answer is given as a complete sentence (a complete thought with correct punctuation and capitalization). Answer given shows that student can demonstrate an understanding of good character.</td>
<td>Answer is not a complete sentence. Exhibits limited understanding of good character.</td>
<td>No answer given. Answer given indicates insufficient understanding of good character.</td>
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Summary of Results for my LOC Primary Source-based Inquiry Model Lesson Plan

Name: Paul Anthony Evans

Subject: Character building, taught to Sunday School students

Date: October 4, 2009


Grade: Seven students ranged from grade 5 to grade 10 as follows: 5, 7, 8, 8, 9, 9, and 10.

1. What worked best according to your plan?

*Using the analysis worksheets made it easier for students to discover things in their documents or photographs that they might have otherwise missed.*

2. Did any aspect of the lesson go worse than expected?

*Although the students worked in pairs, I would give each student a document so that they don’t have to share one. This might be especially helpful for photos, for which I would like to use magnifying glasses in the future.*

3. Was there any unexpected learning that occurred for your students?

*One student wrote that if her friend lies, then people might not thrust her either because of her association with her friend. She determined that on her own, and it demonstrates knowledge of the consequences of choosing friends carelessly.*

4. What could be improved?

*I would consider having an artifact for each student. Students with the same artifact may work together. I would also have the students use dictionaries and magnifying glasses, if available.*

5. Was there any professional development impact on you, as the teacher? Did this lesson alter your approach in teaching?

*It reinforced my belief in allowing the students to work with historical artifacts, even if the artifact is a copy. Also, historical artifacts can be used for other subjects besides history.*

6. Quantifiable results:

*Using the rubric that I developed, I was able to determine that five of the seven students scored a 50 out of 50 possible points. The remaining two scored 45 of 50. It appears that the point loss was due to carelessness in rushing to answer questions. The rubric was printed on each quiz so that each student know the expectations and could check his or her work to be sure that it met the criteria for a perfect score.*