

Respect Retreat®



Conversation Starters

Use the messages below to help reinforce the themes of the retreat and build the character of your students. The paired questions can help guide small-group or class discussion.

Respect Yourself

- ① *“It is not necessary that you be wealthy or famous or a genius in order to fulfill your own destiny. All that is asked is that you use whatever gifts you have to the best of your ability.”*

— Og Mandino

So many of us get trapped by the idea that we have to be a celebrity — rich, famous, “successful” — to be influential. However, knowing that you can make a difference by simply being you is empowering. To recognize your potential, try thinking about what the world needs and how you can help that need with your gifts.

Discussion questions: What impact do you want to have on the world? What skills do you have that will help you reach that goal?

- ② *“Character building begins in our infancy and continues until death.”*

— Eleanor Roosevelt

Becoming a person of good character doesn’t happen in one moment; it continues throughout your life. Like anything that requires practice, you become better or worse depending on your effort each day.

Discussion questions: How can you build your character today? Are you becoming a person that you respect?



Respect Yourself

- ③ *“To enjoy the things we ought, and to hate the things we ought, has the greatest bearing on excellence of character.”*

— Aristotle

So much of what we put out into the world relates to what we take in. Take a moment to think about what you spend your time watching, listening to or otherwise engaging with and reflect on how those things affect you.

Discussion questions: Are these things you spend your time doing helping build your character? What habits could you form or quit that would help you live with greater respect for yourself and for others?

- ④ *“If you create an act, you create a habit. If you create a habit, you create character. If you create character, you create a destiny.”*

— André Maurois

Tomorrow, we will be more of who we are today. Our actions and resulting character shape our futures. This correlation provides us with both an incredible opportunity and a huge responsibility to take ownership of our lives.

Discussion questions: What do you want for your future? What actions can you take today to set you on the path that leads where you want to go?

- ⑤ *“If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself.”*

— Dwight L. Moody

We tend to expend a lot of effort trying to maintain or improve our reputations. Instead of focusing on your reputation, try working on your character, which is at its root. This kind of heart-change is evident and enduring.

Discussion questions: What would your reputation be if you prioritized growing your character over what others thought about you?

Respect Others

1

Part 1

- ① *“Talents are best nurtured in solitude; character is best formed in the stormy billows of the world.”*

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

None of us wants to experience pain or difficulty. However, when we examine the times in our lives that have been trying, we hopefully can see that we’ve grown stronger and more capable of handling future challenges. Perhaps we can also start to recognize that others go through similar struggles and that we can be an encouragement to them.

Discussion questions: What difficult situation has helped form your character? How can you use your experience to help others?

- ② *“If you think about what you ought to do for other people, your character will take care of itself.”*

— Woodrow Wilson

People who focus on how they help others often possess great character. Think of someone in your life who always puts others first and the ways they show their caring.

Discussion questions: Who is that person and what do they do to care for those around them? How could you also model that character-filled attitude and positive treatment of others?

- ③ *“One can acquire everything in solitude except character.”*

— Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)

Improving your character involves surrounding yourself with good role models and friends. Think about the people you are around most and which relationships you invest in most.

Discussion questions: Do you admire the people you spend the most time with? Are they helping you grow personally and strengthen your character?

Respect Others

2

Part 2

- ④ *“Teaching is a hard job when students make an effort to learn. When they make no effort, it is an impossible one.”*

— William Glasser

Teachers dedicate their lives to make a difference in yours, however the impact goes both ways. Take a moment to think about your last interaction with your teachers and your thoughts before going to class.

Discussion questions: Are you making an effort in class and honoring your teachers’ dedication? What is one thing that you could do to better respect your teachers?

- ⑤ *“The less you open your heart to others, the more your heart suffers.”*

— Deepak Chopra

Schools need compassionate people. Embracing others is the only way to deepen friendships and build a positive community. It can be scary, but it’s worthwhile.

Discussion question: How can you show others compassion?

- ⑥ *“The best index to a person’s character is: one, how he treats people who can’t do him any good, and two, how he treats people who can’t fight back.”*

— Abigail Van Buren

Reflect on the culture of your school. Think about students’ attitudes toward the popular students and the least popular students.

Discussion questions: How do these attitudes differ? Do you act differently toward your friends and toward those with whom you don’t have much in common? How about students who are often teased — how do you treat them?

Respect Others

3

Part 3

- ⑦ *“Every person in the world is better than someone else and not as good as someone else.”*

— William Saroyan

Humility is the realization that you have more in common with people than you have differences. If we embraced this truth, friend groups would be more inclusive, school would be more welcoming and we would be more accepting and understanding of each other.

Discussion questions: When have you felt glory? Humility? Share a time when you discovered a commonality with someone you thought was very different from you.

- ⑧ *“I have a dream that my children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”*

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Not only does this quote apply to our national community, but also to our school communities. Think about how people are judged — and how you judge people — at your school. Think about who is popular and why. Now imagine what your school would be like if students were judged solely on their character.

Discussion questions: Who do you think would be admired? Who would you want to be friends with? What problems would disappear?

Stand Up

1

Part 1

- ① *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

— Margaret Mead

What if a few people in your school committed to treating others with respect and to standing up when other students do not? Would it really take that many people to improve the culture of your school?

Discussion question: How can a group that you identify with (sports team, friends, student group, etc.) change your school for the better?

- ② *“We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”*

— Franklin Delano Roosevelt

When we neglect to stand up for one another, it is often because we are afraid of the unknown consequences of our actions. We worry about what others will think of us or even fear that if we say something, we will become a target of mistreatment. Unfortunately, our reluctance to act only perpetuates the cycle of disrespect.

Discussion questions: What do you and other students fear at your school? What positive actions would you take if you were fearless?

- ③ *“We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided.”*

— J.K. Rowling

School can only be a welcoming and respectful place when all are welcomed and respected. Think about the ways your school is successful in building positive community.

Discussion questions: How can you extend that community to all students in your school? How can you be more welcoming to others? Whom do you need to stand up for?

Stand Up

Part 2

2

- ④ *“All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.”*

— Edmond Burke

Sometimes silence and inaction can be just as detrimental as negative words or unkind actions. The good news is that sometimes all it takes to stop someone from being hurt is to stand up for them — to affirm that they matter.

Discussion question: In what situations can you say something to make a positive difference in someone’s life?

- ⑤ *“You are either part of the solution or part of the problem.”*

— Eldridge Cleaver

It is easy to blame others for the problems we see at school. However, attributing blame often just serves as a way to excuse ourselves from taking action. In other words, it enables us to simply be bystanders.

Discussion questions: What problems do you want to see fixed at your school? How can you be a part of the solution?