

## The Five Principles of Citizenship

While the definition of “citizenship” is certainly evolving, especially given the number of online and offline communities we all belong to today, the central principles of “good citizenship” are evergreen. Learning these principles (definitions adapted from [Education World](#)) gives young people a framework for digital citizenship. This comes in handy as they discover that while most offline communities have rules, rights, and responsibilities that have evolved over time, the same does not always hold true for online communities which are newer. Thus, these five principles help guide them towards good citizenship, both online and off.

Key Standards—Common Core ELA, 5th: RL.5, RL.5.2, W.5, W.5.2, W.5.2.a, SL.5, SL.5.1, SL.5.1.a, SL.5.1.b, SL.5.1.c. 6th: RL.6, RL.6.2, RL.6, RL.6.5, SL.6, SL.6.1, SL.6.1.a, SL.6.1.b, SL.6.1.c, L.6, L.6.6. ISTE: 3d, 4d. CASEL: 3d, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5d, 5e, 5f.

## Learning Objectives

Youth will...

- Understand what it means to be a member, or citizen, of a community.
- Consider all the communities they are members of.
- Think of ways community members demonstrate five principles of citizenship.



## Introducing The Lesson

Ask your children: *Have you ever ridden a bike? Traveled in a car?* If they’ve ridden a bike, ask what they did when they arrived at a stop sign or traffic signal. Ask: *Did you stop, slow down, keep going? How did you know what to do?* If they traveled in a car, ask: *Who was driving? What did the driver do at a stop sign or light? What gave your driver the right to drive?* Then ask: *Have you ever stood in a line? If so, ask if they joined the line at the back or did they go directly to the front? Why or why not?* Guide them towards the understanding that citizens are guided by rules, rights, and responsibilities that are generally understood and agreed to by all community members.

## The Lesson

1. Tell your children that we all belong to, or are “citizens” of many different groups or “communities” that are guided by rules or principles. Explain these terms:

**CITIZEN:** A member of a community.

**COMMUNITY:** A group of people sharing a space or having characteristics in common.



## The Lesson, continued

2. Explain that the smallest community they belong to is probably their family. Ask your children to think of some of the other communities they belong to, such as their class, their school, a sports team, choral group, church, etc. Have them take a moment to make a list of all the communities they are “citizens” of.

3. After they’ve listed the communities they belong to, explain that being a “good citizen” is guided by five important principles or themes. Take a few minutes to describe and discuss each one:

- **Honesty** is being truthful and fair. A good citizen must be honest with others, and with themselves.
- **Compassion** is the emotion of caring for people and for other living things. Compassion gives a citizen an emotional bond with their world.
- **Respect** is showing regard or consideration for others. Sometimes respect is even directed toward inanimate things or ideas. A good citizen should have respect for laws.
- **Responsibility** is about being answerable and accountable. For example, one of the main responsibilities of a student is to learn. They must educate themselves so that they can achieve their full potential.



Actual Student Work

- **Courage** is doing the right thing even when it’s unpopular, difficult, or dangerous. Many people throughout history—such as Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and Mahatma Gandhi—have demonstrated great courage.

4. **Activity:** Once you have discussed these principles, have your children choose **one** offline community from the list they made, such as: *their class, a sports team, a club, their church, their immediate family, their extended family, their state, their county, their country, etc.* Challenge them to think of at least **one** example of how that community might demonstrate *each* of the five principles. If your children need help getting started, share the following example.

5. In the example that follows, students considered how members of a **baseball team** might demonstrate the five principles. Here is what they came up with:

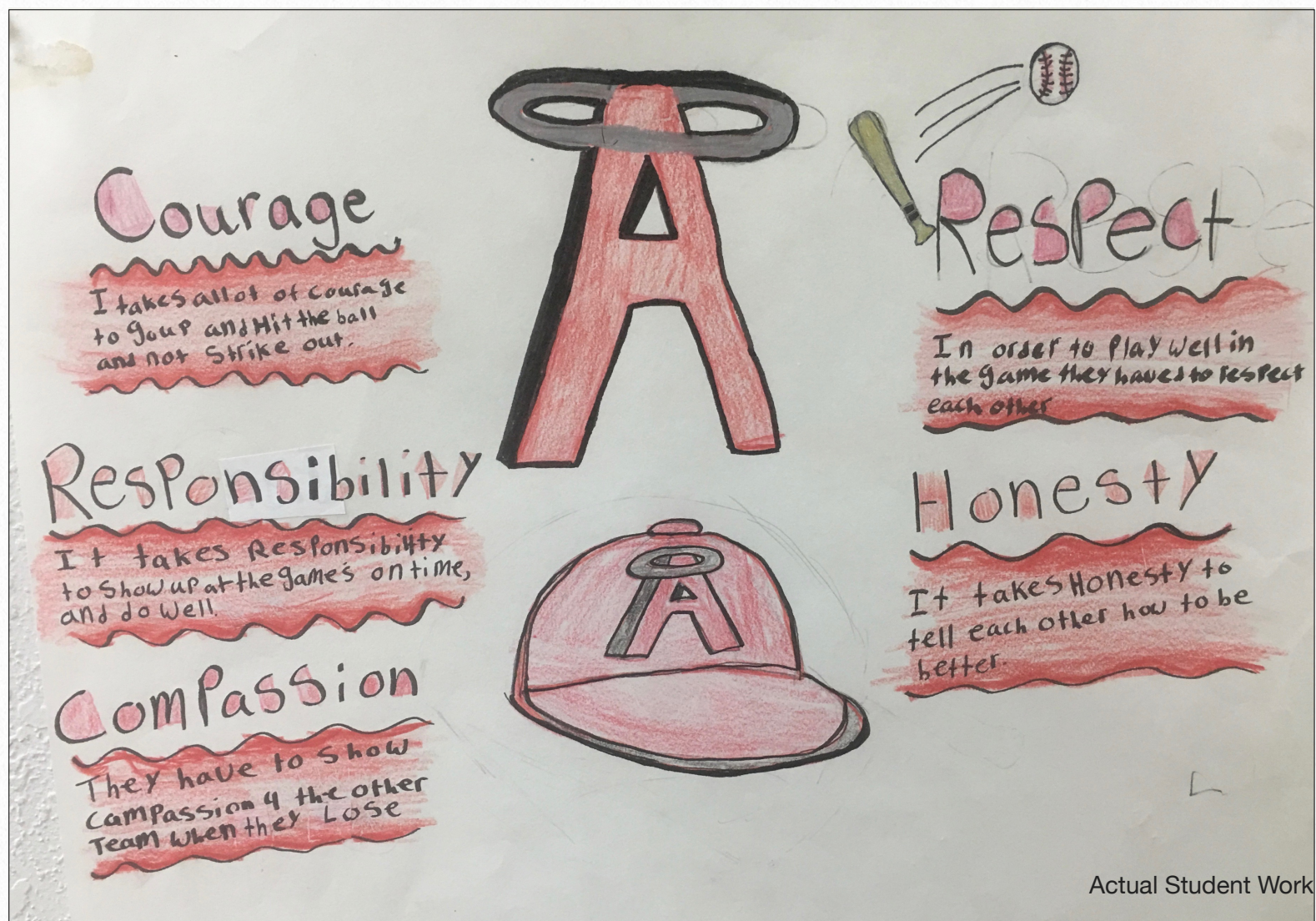


## The Lesson, continued

How members of a baseball team might demonstrate the five principles:

- **Honesty:** It takes honesty to tell each other how to play better.
- **Compassion:** It's important to show compassion to the other team if they lose.
- **Respect:** Shaking hands with opponents after a game shows respect.
- **Responsibility:** It takes responsibility to show up to games on time and do well.
- **Courage:** It takes a lot of courage to go up and hit the ball.

6. Next, have your children create small posters illustrating the examples they came up (example below).



## Goal

Your children will begin to understand that “good citizenship,” both online and off, is guided by simple principles.



**CITIZEN:**

A member of a community.

**COMMUNITY:**

A group of people sharing a space  
or having characteristics in common.

- **HONESTY** is being truthful and fair. A good citizen must be honest with others, and with themselves.
- **COMPASSION** is the emotion of caring for people and for other living things. Compassion gives a citizen an emotional bond with their world.
- **RESPECT** is showing regard or consideration for others. Sometimes respect is even directed toward inanimate things or ideas. A good citizen should have respect for laws.
- **RESPONSIBILITY** is about being answerable and accountable. For example, one of the main responsibilities of a student is to learn. They must educate themselves so that they can achieve their full potential.
- **COURAGE** is doing the right thing even when its unpopular, difficult, or dangerous. Many people throughout history—such as Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and Mahatma Gandhi—have demonstrated great courage.