

Teaching Responsibility

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To teach children to be responsible citizens of their segment of society is an important goal of education, whether it be at home, school, or church. It begins at home — very early. It means setting up standards and goals for children to meet. It means teaching children self-reliance and independence. It means teaching them to solve their own problems when the easy way out is to do it for them. To solve their problems for them is like carrying a child around all the time so he won't fall. The end result, of course, is that he doesn't learn to walk.

It means that when I tell my child to mow the lawn, I expect him to clean up the edges with the hand clipper without having to be told specifically. That's part of the job. It means that when I give my pupils an assignment, I expect them to be able to do the work independently without having to repeat the instructions or to tell them separately each step to take. I'm there to help, but I would like them to use the resources they have been taught to use — check the examples given, re-read the rules, turn back to a previous lesson, use the glossary. The easy way out for you or me is to solve the problem for the child by telling him the answer. The best way, and most difficult of course, is to require an attempt at an independent solution. I am accountable for what I teach the children, but the opposite side of the coin is that the child is responsible for what he has been taught. If I teach him to say, "He and I are going to play together after school," then it is his responsibility not to say again, "Him and me are gonna play together after school."

Another important aspect of responsibility is keeping one's word. If anyone commits himself to a job, he's going to stick to it until it's done. It may not be the fun he thought it would be. Perhaps it's taking more time than he expected. Maybe he "got sick of it". Perhaps his attitude is, "If I don't do it, somebody

else will." A parent's and teacher's task is to see to it that the child is held to his commitment. Important lessons are to be learned in keeping one's word.

One more important area is "communal" responsibility. So often when there is a piece of waste paper or other article where it doesn't belong and I ask someone to pick it up, the answer comes, "That's not mine," or "I didn't put it there." The point is we use the room in common, we use the restrooms, the halls, the playground, and the gym in common. That makes each of us responsible for its upkeep whether it's "ours" or not.

A positive attitude toward responsibility makes life more pleasant for all.



" 'All right,' you say again, 'suppose we do have schools; what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and the other liberal arts?' ... But I wonder why we never ask, 'What is the use of silks, wine, spices, and other strange foreign wares when we ourselves have in Germany wine, grain, wool, flax, wood, and stone not only in quantity sufficient for our needs, but also of the best and choicest quality for our glory and ornament?' Languages and the arts, which can do us no harm, but are actually greater ornament, profit, glory and benefit, both for the understanding of Holy Scripture and the conduct of temporal government — these we despise."



"Indeed, if the languages were not for practical benefit, we ought still feel an interest in them as a wonderful gift of God, with which He has now blessed Germany almost beyond all other lands.... The languages are the scabbard in which the Word of God is sheathed; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; the cask in which this wine is kept; the chamber in which this food is stored."

"To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany"

-Martin Luther