

This Week at Central Academy

December 7, 2009

This week's edition of TWAC focuses on how our students hold themselves and each other accountable. While it's always the responsibility of a teacher to see that students get classroom work completed, follow classroom rules and expectations, and treat each other with kindness, at Central we work with students to begin to grow their responsibility to self monitor and to help others. This is not tattling or calling each other out on behaviors. Rather, it comes from a deep sense of caring about each other and their classroom. Many of our structures in the school and in classrooms are designed to help students grow a sense of belonging to a community. Out of that sense of community, a sense of caring for each member of the community grows. I hope you will take a few minutes to look through the articles. They're a great representation of how this sense of care and responsibility grows from Early Primary all the way through to the Middle School years.

Dianne

Central Academy's Website

Find out what's going on at Central by frequently visiting our website. The website includes:

Important Dates Newsletters Classroom Web pages

Pictures of Students (**You can search by student's first name, teacher name, or by level!**)

www.middletowncityschools.com

(click on Central Academy)

IMPORTANT DATES

Dec. 8	TEAM Bd Mtg. – 6:30
Dec. 10	Skating Party – 6:30-8:30
Dec. 16	Early Release – 2:00
Dec. 17	LP Music Performance – 7:00 PM
Dec. 23	Day of Giving
Dec. 24	Winter Break Begins

EARLY PRIMARY CLASSROOMS

Throughout the day, in many ways, students hold each other accountable in both **Mrs. Jantausch's Early Primary** classroom and the rest of the school. We strive to make our school a safe learning environment, one where each student feels empowered to do his part and help others remember to do theirs. We are a collective group of learners, and I am not the only manager – the students help one another claim responsibility for our learning environment.

One recent and powerful example of this happened on the bus ride home. *Kiki*, a student in **Mrs. Muenchenburgey's Intermediate class**, noticed one of my Early Primary students acting unsafely on the bus. Not wanting anyone to be hurt, she asked my student to sit back down in the bus seat. Unfortunately, my young student did not choose to listen and began to be unkind to *Kiki*. At this point, our older Central student decided to call her teacher and ask to talk to me. She wanted to make sure I knew what was going

on, and wanted to be sure everyone on the bus was able to get home safely. I promised to discuss things with them in the morning.

When school began the next day, I called my student over and asked *Kiki* to join us for a discussion. During our talk, *Kiki* explained to my student that she wanted everyone to be safe and how it felt to have unkind words said about her. My student bravely took responsibility for the actions on the bus and apologized for hurting *Kiki's* feelings. With grace, maturity, and acting as a role model, *Kiki* not only accepted the apology, but also promised to look out for the younger student on the bus. She pledged to be someone that my student could come to for help. *Kiki* also agreed to come and let me know how my student was doing – not only on bad days, but on great ones too. She willingly took responsibility for helping a younger student learn how to monitor his own behavior – a skill we work hard to encourage here at Central.

On a side note, during our discussion, *Kiki* took the time to ask a group of students not to run in the halls. She said it respectfully, kindly, and matter-of-factly. Even though a teacher was sitting right there, she did not wait for me to remind the students. *Kiki* took the initiative to help others remember the procedures and expectations of the hallways. She is an excellent example of how our students learn through the years to help each other and hold each other accountable for their actions and choices. Early Primary students are at the beginning stages of this process, and our Intermediate and Middle School students work hard to be role models of this type of behavior. It is our hope that this important skill is one they will take with them when they finally leave Central and grow into the next stage of their lives.

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Every day the students in **Miss Miller's Early Primary Class** hold each other accountable for their actions. The students have been working together to take responsibility for their own actions and to talk to one another about what they do. One example is how *Hailey* stepped up and showed *Brittany* our classroom routines when she first joined our class. Now they both talk to one another about their actions and tell each other when one is doing something incorrectly or when the other is doing a great job.

Another example of how some students hold each other accountable is how they talk to one another. The students talk to one another not only about when someone hurts their feelings but also when someone has done a great job. One student praised *Gavin* one day about how he was doing a great job following directions and being a good listener on the carpet. *Alex* pointed out to some other students one day during math that there were too many students at one workshop area and he needed a partner for one of the other workshop areas. By talking about it, *Alex* was able to solve the problem, and everyone then went to where they were supposed to be. By holding each other accountable, the students have been working very hard to work together to make the classroom a better community.

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The students in **Ms. Roe and Miss Smith's class** have been working on helping one another make good choices using kind words. We have talked about how our choices affect one another. We have also discussed that the way we speak when reminding our peers, affects their response to our reminders. We don't want to tattle on our friends and get them into trouble! We want to encourage our classmates in their choices.

This week we had a few friends that modeled these kind reminders to their classmates. During our Counting Jar on Friday, *Carter* saw *Curtis* was having trouble keeping track of counting his objects because he was distracted by the noise around him. *Carter* reminded *Curtis* that he could move to a quieter place in the room to count his objects. What a great way to encourage another peer when he saw that he was frustrated. During Math Workshop this week, *Gabe* and *Shawvontae* were partners for Guess

My Rule with shells. *Shawvontae* was sorting his shells by the ones that fit the rule, but wasn't putting any shells on the paper for the ones that didn't fit the rule. *Gabe* very nicely reminded *Shawvontae* that he needed to put shells on both papers to play the game correctly. What a great example of two partners working together!

On Friday, the students enjoyed a popsicle party for all of their wonderful efforts in trying to use kind words when speaking to one another this week. Keep up the great work Early Primary!

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Mrs. Uhl & Ms. Stillwell's Early Primary Class is full of responsible learners! As the year has progressed, I have seen my Early Primary students go from being shy, young and unsure students to a group of driven students that are taking charge of their own learning. Just the other day, when the class was working on writing their snap word sentences, a student became frustrated with her work and was not sure how to complete the task. Since I was working with another small group during that time, *Madelyn* stepped right up without hesitation and offered to help the other girl. They sat together and she helped the girl. *Madelyn* not only put a smile on the students face for being able to complete the task, but she also displayed great leadership skills with her actions.

During our poetry response time, I allow groups of students to work together as long as they are being responsible and getting their work finished. It was amazing to see the students dig into their poems and working so cooperatively! *Tye* and *Ahvonni* were sitting together helping each other find all of the snap words in their poem. *LaTeria*, *Kyler* and *Ariel* were sitting at a different table working on finding rhyming words and hunks & chunks in their poem! It is fascinating to meet with each of the small groups and hear their rich conversations about poetry!

With every good community, there are occasionally some bumps in the road. However, it is how we work together to solve that problem that shows how strong our community really can be. Each student table is assigned a "Table Captain" for the week. This person is responsible for getting out the folders for the students at the table, getting out the writing bins during writing and getting out our math bins during our math time. The students love having this job for the week. While it was *Trey's* week to be student captain, he got upset and said he wanted to quit his job. Surprised that he wanted to quit, I spoke to him and he said he was upset that everyone at his table had been doing his jobs for him. So, I asked him how he thought we could solve the problem. He decided to have a mini-tribe meeting with the students at his table and tell them how he was feeling. *Trey* led the meeting and told them how he was feeling. As a group they apologized for taking over his jobs and decided to be more respectful of the person who was the Table Captain for the week. The students walked back to their seats happy for resolving the situation on their own! I look forward to seeing the Early Primary students continue to take charge of their own learning and actions.

LATE PRIMARY CLASSROOMS

When aiming for a democratic society, we must have full participation from the students. There are many ingredients that go into this recipe. One vital part is accountability. In **Mrs. Andrade and Miss Zumbahlen's Room**, students hold one another accountable for their actions.

We would love to give you more fabulous anecdotes as to how each group or individual relied upon one another or the group to complete their chosen theme-based projects. But, at our first trimester conferences, families spoke loud and clear regarding the wonderful impacts of our student-based learning

of space (family outings to observatories and continuing personal research projects at home). Creating lifelong learners is our goal you know!

Thus, we will share another part of our day: math workshop. Thankfully, one of the components of our math curriculum, Investigations, falls in line with our democratic philosophy of allowing students the opportunity to work together, make decisions for themselves, and to use their voice to extend their learning. *Austin* and *Jocelyne* recently held one another accountable by questioning a technique used for measurement. Some of their conversation revolved around the parameters of the assignment, but ended in allowing each other to create another viable option once fully explained and heard. Way to ensure accountability through efficiency and creativity!

Another example of accountability during math workshop involved *Allison* and *Chelsea Stephenson*. As they measured around the room, they kept hearing other groups talk about how they could best accomplish a blue and yellow strip activity. They stopped and asked me for clarification. We reviewed the sheet and what they had heard. You could see the light bulbs go off immediately as they made the connection to the actual procedure and the learning objective. The only thing they worried about from then forward was what time they could use from other parts of the math workshop to redo that part of their work. Of course, they eventually got the chance to finish the assignment correctly. Accountability for accuracy is very important in life. These two are model students of what it looks like to aim for excellence in your own education!

It does not matter if they are working alone, in partners, or in a group. Our students tend to keep track of each other and have no issue with problem-solving amongst themselves. Having high standards of personal accountability is created and maintained by our students. It is hard for my mind to stretch the kinds of contributions the world awaits from these young learners.

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In VanBurgey's room, (aka as Mrs. Amburgey's and Mrs. Van Ostrand's room, along with Miss Qua and Mrs. Zahora), students often hold each other accountable for their actions by calling for a family meeting. In our meetings students can openly discuss and voice their concerns and ideas, and collectively come up with solutions that everyone agrees to.

Recently, *David* was concerned about the class's loss of recess. Our class was struggling with working together as a team to get ready for lunch and recess. He came up to both Mrs. A. and Mrs. V. and said, "Can we have a meeting?" In our family meetings we all sit in a circle. This allows everyone to be seen and heard. *David* started out by saying that, "If it was just a few people who weren't ready then it shouldn't be the whole class missing recess."

Students then began to brainstorm solutions in order to be able to have all of their recess back. *Bethany* said, "Everybody needs to take care of themselves." *Andre* said, "If we make sure everyone finishes on time then we can go out to recess on time." We all agreed that working together would help everyone to be able to have all of their recess. This is democracy in action! Until next time! Go Central!

INTERMEDIATE CLASSROOMS

In Mrs. Larison's Intermediate classroom, there are a variety of ways that students hold each other accountable for their actions. One of those ways is using the quiet signal. The quiet signal is a way for students to silently remind their classmates that they need to stop talking and get quiet. A common time

for using the quiet signal is when the students are in line to go to a specials class. One way to model appropriate behavior in the hallway is to walk quietly. Unfortunately, not all students are always quiet. I often see students raising their forefingers to their lips to signal to those chatting classmates that they need to stop talking. The quiet signal is an effective way to nonverbally hold each other accountable for appropriate hallway behavior.

During Writer's Workshop, students have writing partners. Writing partners sit beside each other during writing time. They help and encourage each other with their writing. During one Writer's Workshop session, I overheard *Valkyrie* urging her partner to keep on writing. Her partner was having difficulty staying focused and *Valkyrie* did a great job of being a cheerleader. Every thirty seconds or so, she would lean to her partner and offer words of encouragement. In the process, she was also holding her partner accountable for getting the work accomplished.

Through the demonstration of appropriate and respectful behavior at all times, some students do a wonderful job of holding their classmates accountable for their actions. Their classmates witness this behavior on a regular basis and, for lack of better words, it kind of rubs off. *Tristan* easily comes to mind as a kind, compassionate, and dedicated student. Through the way that he responds to situations and interactions, he holds his classmates accountable for their own actions and responses. I often see them modify and adjust their behavior according to how *Tristan* is behaving.

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The students in **Muenchenburgey Land** often hold each other accountable, which helps make our community safe and productive for everyone. Sometimes they hold each other accountable for academic situations, while other times it may be social situations. Recently, *Lily* and *Nehemiah*, along with several other students, requested to speak privately with another classmate about some negative comments he was making. While discussing the situation, the students shared their concerns and feelings about his actions, while also letting him know how much they value him. Their heart-felt conversation was much more powerful than a conversation he may have had with one of his teachers about the situation.

Lizzy is another student who is very good about giving reminders of encouragement to people who have strayed from accomplishing the task at hand. She will let them know what they are supposed to be doing, as she feels responsible for her peers' achieving their goals. After our first trimester, everyone seems to be growing in their understanding of the need to be accountable for completing their own work, as well as helping others complete theirs!

Students holding each other accountable continues to be a powerful component of our classroom community and culture. It is so amazing how the students respond to one another in a positive, calm manner when discussing classroom expectations. It is wonderful observing the students trust one another enough to accept constructive remarks regarding their actions. We are so proud of our students for helping each other grow both academically and socially!

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Students are held accountable in several ways in **Ms. Thinnes' Intermediate Class**. The students during class meetings voice their opinion of what team should be task enforcers during our class meeting. If three teams vote for the same team then the members of the winning team are the Task Enforcers during our daily meeting. When a team shares their voice they also have to explain the reasons why the chosen team should be Task Enforcers. Often the student's responses are the following: their floor space is clean, their heads are down, and their desk space is cleared off completely. The student's job as a task enforcer is to assist in making sure all students are following our classroom norms on our Social Contract. The Task Enforcers this past week were members from Team Two (*Amirah, Bailey, and Reggie*) and Team 5

(*Alyssa, Bri, Alexis, and Yulia*). This helps keep all students accountable to the classroom rules on the Social Contract at the start of the school year.

Students are held accountable in other ways in **Ms. Thinner's Intermediate Class**. Students have started a new math routine in our Investigations Math curriculum called Quick Images. Students are shown a visual drawing for 5 seconds with their pencils down. Then in their Math Journal students are asked to draw what they see of the image. Then students put pencils down a second time and the image is presented one more time. Students then can make any revisions they need to make to their picture or write their strategy down in two sentences. Students then are permitted to share how they saw the image and share their strategy for solving the number of dots present in the image. Students verbally share and then are made accountable by drawing and writing their strategy on the white board. Other students in the audience are then permitted to ask questions and make connections with the student's work on the board. *Paris* was asked several questions and many students have made connections to her strategy. Most students have at least one connection to the strategy that is discussed with the class, and the students are constantly holding each other accountable.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Middle School students hold each other accountable when working together on a project and when dealing with conflict and friendship issues. Teaching pro-social skills to enhance empathy, emotional intelligence, relationship building, and conflict resolution are a part of the curriculum at Central that builds accountability among the students. In **Cathie Hodson's Humanities Class**, students have been presenting their research on a self-selected topic dealing with the Renaissance. Many students worked in a small group. Students developed the guidelines and the rubric. Students signed up for the day they would present.

Ali, Bailey, and Ayreonna researched how music evolved during the renaissance period and the changes that occurred. They researched their topic and were able to present what they had found in their presentation. The girls devised a plan, and each agreed on what it was they were going to accomplish. Their final project was playing a variety of pieces that were composed between 1397-1626. They were able to explain the different forms and styles of music. These students were proud of their accomplishments in music and were willing to pass what they learned to their classmates through their presentation. They were accountable to each other, and it showed in their presentations.

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At Central students hold each other accountable for completing work. As a result, the students are more responsible for completing work and the quality of their work reflects this accountability. In **Kristi Joseph's** science class, *MiKala* consistently holds her classmates accountable for their work and frequently assists her classmates with their labs. In *Kristi's* math class, *Corey* and *Andrew* are not only accountable for their work, but they offer support to classmates needing help. These students are proud of their accomplishments and are willing to pass that learning along to their classmates

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With the end of the trimester looming over us, in **Mrs. Smith's** class, the students have been working very hard to complete projects and to remain calm. Several students have been ill and were having to play catch up due to illness. Everyone has been sensitive to each other and been very kind to help and support each other. I have been really proud of the way that my morning group has stepped up to assist each

other. Carson has been great at helping his table to catch up and meet their deadlines for their word work. He and James helped Andrew collect definitions and to develop his game. They were both encouraging and uplifting. I know that Andrew really felt the friendship from the boys. Bailey has been my “go-to” girl for helping with the science labs as has Izzi. I know that Ali and Asia has been very supportive of each other and continue to work well together. I can say that overall, my morning group always shows compassion to each other and seeks ways to help out. I am really excited about the upcoming trimester.

Other Places and Voices Around Central

Mr. Perdue has safety patrol members that do an excellent job of holding other students accountable for their actions. *Bailey* and *Zion* remind students to walk as they come into the building each morning and as they walk down the hallways. Other patrol members have also stepped up to remind other students of appropriate bus behavior and school behavior.

Mrs. Carroll and **Mr. Gaston** took their middle school advisory to Miami University last month. All of the students were very respectful as they entered buildings and reminded their friends to be quiet as classes were taking place. **Mrs. Carroll** remembers when the students walked through Pearson Hall, they were amazed by the ceramic tile mural on the wall. As students began to talk she heard *Ethan* and several others remind each other to be quiet. Shortly afterwards, the Miami graduate student who arranged most of the advisory’s day, commented on how wonderfully behaved the students were during the entire visit. The students really did an excellent job of holding each other accountable as they represented our middle school and Central Academy during our advisory trip. We are very proud of the entire group and we had a brilliant day learning about university life in Oxford.

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Parents do you need ideas for Holiday gifts? How about a book? They make great stocking stuffers. Best of all how about the gift of yourself – that special time you spend sharing a book with your child. The number one predictor of reading achievement is parents reading with their children.

Have you heard “I’m bored” just a few day after Christmas? Listed below are some educational web sites for kids:

Gamequarium <http://gamequarium.com/> A portal to 2000+ free online learning games and activities for Preschool-Grade 6 students. Readquarium, a section of Gamequarium, will help your child learn to read.

PrimaryGames.com <http://www.primarygames.com/> Site for teachers, parents, and kids featuring educational games, coloring pages, interactive e-books, holiday activities, musical postcards, crafts, and more!

Seriously fun reading <http://sillybooks.net/> Free animated audio books, songs, cartoons, puzzles and games to increase child literacy.

K-3 Teacher Resources. <http://www.k-3teacherresources.com/> Support Your Child’s Learning at Home –Download and make flashcards, Little Books, and Alphabet Activities...

Happy Holidays,
Vicki Brown
Literacy Specialist