

Values Jar

Overview:

Youngsters learn to be more conscious of their day-to-day behavior when the teacher or youth leader formally recognizes those who demonstrate good character. The youngsters track their collective progress as marbles (or other small items) are placed in a jar each time one of them is spotted “practicing a pillar.”

Materials:

- Clear glass jar
- Marbles, gumballs, beads, jelly beans, or buttons in the Six Pillar colors: blue, yellow, green, orange, red, and purple.

Procedure:

1. Announce that you will be on the lookout for behavior that demonstrates one or more of the Six Pillars. If you spot an act of honesty that isn't planned just for this activity, a blue marble (or other item) will be put in the jar. If caring is noticed, a red one; yellow for respectful acts; green for responsibility; orange for fairness; and purple for good citizenship. When the jar is full, the group will get a reward. Write down and display the color-coding system.
2. It is important that this activity not be a race. Go for quality over quantity. Look for out-of-the-ordinary displays of good character and make sure they're genuine. Of course, each time an act of good character is recognized, you should be sure to praise the child. Keep the jar in view of the children and comment periodically on which colors are prominent in the jar and which are not well represented.
3. Get a small jar so it will fill quickly – maybe within a week or two – even if there are only one or two additions a day. Make the payoff as significant as possible (e.g., a special snack like pizza for everyone or a good field trip).

Adapted from the *YMCA Character Development Starter Kit* (YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL).

McREL standards

Life Skills

Standard 4. Demonstrates empathy and caring for others and a desire to be helpful (e.g., comforts a friend who is crying).

Level IV, Benchmark 1. Demonstrates appropriate behaviors for relating well with others (e.g., empathy, caring, respect, helping, friendliness, politeness).