

# Responsibility

This week we look at responsibility through more specific lenses: in our families, in our schools, in our communities, and in our environment. We also evaluate how it impacts others when we fail to perform our responsibilities.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

## Main Lesson

**Whole Class Lesson**  
30 minutes



### Rights vs. Responsibilities

This lesson helps students understand the differences between rights and responsibilities. The lesson also explains how many rights are put to their best and most intended use when we act on them in responsible ways. Often we cannot exercise our rights without responsibility. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

**For Small Groups**  
15 minutes



### Family Responsibilities

In small groups, talk about the different roles and responsibilities students have in their families. Have them discuss who does what and why? How would students challenge stereotypical family roles and responsibilities (i.e., mom always cooks, cleans, and takes care of the kids; dad always works outside or in the garage)?

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### Web of Responsibility

List the various groups at school (students and staff groups: custodial, teaching, administration, food service, athletic departments; clubs) in a cluster diagram form with a “bubble” around each group. Then brainstorm what everyone’s responsibilities are, jotting them down in each respective bubble. Draw a line between the groups whose responsibilities impact another group. Most notably if these groups don’t perform their responsibilities, how would it impact students? For example, if the kitchen staff did not prepare meals? Encourage partners to talk about how interconnected we all are and if we do not do our jobs, it will impact more than just ourselves!

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### What is My Responsibility in My Community?

What do you think the following quote means?

“The way to change the world is through individual responsibility and taking local action in your own community.” —Jeff Bridges

Journal your response and then journal about local action you could take in your own community that might have a larger impact. Do you feel this is your responsibility?

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### **Responsibility for the Environment**

Discuss how technology can enable us to be more environmentally responsible. Evaluate the school's use of technology to reduce paper or other waste. What could the school do better?

Some ideas for your discussion:

- Technology allows us to go “paperless” for things like bills, school forms, homework, etc.
- Digital books
- Digital calendars vs. paper calendars

# Rights vs. Responsibilities

This lesson helps students understand the differences between rights and responsibilities. The lesson also explains how many rights are put to their best and most intended use when we act on them in responsible ways. Often we cannot exercise our rights without responsibility.

## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- ☐ Template for drawing the scales of justice

## Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Identify responsibilities in a variety of settings and groups, including the environment.
- Evaluate the impact irresponsibility has on others.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Sometimes it helps to think about our responsibilities through a variety of lenses: rights vs. responsibilities, personal and professional boundaries, and sources of responsibility. Each one gives us a new perspective about what is a responsibility and what is not. For example, you have a right to a safe, positive work environment. As such, you are responsible for contributing to that safe, positive environment. What is your school's staff culture like? What are teacher relationships like? What is the tenor of the staff break room? Are teachers and administrators on the same page? What responsibilities do you have as part of that community to ensure a safe, positive working environment? What about your personal and professional boundaries at work? If you have students who have personal struggles and, consequently, bring their aggression, sadness, or frustrations to your room, what is your responsibility? Your responsibility is to teach those kids and ensure a classroom environment conducive to learning for all students. It is not your responsibility to "fix" their home situation or personally assess and address their mental or emotional health issues. Set a personal and professional boundary by not taking their issues personally and seek other school professionals or public services to help your students in the way they need to be helped. What about knowing where your responsibilities come from? Do you know why you do what you do? Have you created responsibilities for yourself or were they given to you by someone else? Knowing the source of your responsibilities can help you prioritize them and be more efficient. Take some time today to evaluate your rights and responsibilities, to set some boundaries you need to set, and to understand why you do what you do.



## Share

5-7 minutes

We learned last week that we, as 6th graders, have a number of responsibilities. Let's take some time to share some of the different responsibilities we've had and have upheld in the last week. Alternatively, if you have a good story about a responsibility that you forgot or ignored and the consequences of that, you could share that, too. (Invite student responses.)



## Inspire

3-5 minutes

Today we are going to shift into thinking about our rights vs. our responsibilities, both here at school and in our community. How many of you think these are different things? A right to do something vs. a responsibility to do something? (Invite student responses.) A right is something that is guaranteed or protected by a rule or law; a responsibility is something we are expected or required to do in order to uphold those rules or laws.

Can something be both a right and a responsibility? (Invite student responses; if they think, "no," invite them to think about the act of voting as something that is a right afforded by the law and a responsibility, as it is something citizens are expected to do in order to keep the democratic process working.)



## Empower

15 minutes

On the board, draw or project an image of a balanced scale. You are going to fill in students answers on the scale. On the left will be "rights" and on the right, "responsibilities".

What we are going to do today is think about the rights we have as students in this school and as people in our community and list those on the left. Then we are going to think of a corresponding responsibility and put it on the right side of the scale. Rights only work if we have a responsibility to follow through on them.

### **I will start with this example:**

We have the **right** to learn at school. (Write this on the left-hand side of the scale.)

We, therefore, have a **responsibility** to arrive on time, come prepared, and actively participate. (Write "be on time, be prepared, participate" on the right.)

What are some other rights we (all of us) have at school or in our community? (Let a student state a right and discuss it if it's more of a responsibility. When the right has been written on the scale, ask someone for a corresponding responsibility.)

For ideas on rights vs. responsibilities, see:

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/278801033166621963/>

<https://educators.brainpop.com/lesson-plan/rights-and-responsibilities-background-information-for-teachers-and-parents/>



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

*Have students review the scales to see if there is anything they didn't realize about rights vs. responsibilities. Ask students to discuss or journal about the following questions:*

- What happens to our rights if we don't uphold our responsibilities?
- Can you have rights without responsibilities?
- What are some rights that are also responsibilities?

