Clarion Review

Education

Character Champions: Conquering the Extremes

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CreateSpace
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★★★☆☆

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is gaining significant importance as an indicator of a child's future success in life. Like a child's intellect, his or her emotional intelligence can be enhanced through appropriate educational programs. This book provides one approach, presenting a "Character Champions Code" and supporting activities with the aim of fostering habits of thoughts and action that will lead to stronger emotional health.

This collaborative effort is the first book for the three authors who have a combined eighty years of experience in the fields of education and educational psychology. The first third of the book is a colorfully illustrated story in rhyme, which lays out the principles of the Character Champions program. Four animals, each with a symbolic color, represent the four core values of the program: courage, knowledge, kindness, and responsibility. These animals, along with their leader, Rainbow Metahawk, must find a way to fight the Extremes—monsters who threaten to destroy their home, Character Island. They find that by avoiding the extreme behaviors that are associated with their talents and working together in synergy, they can be successful.

The message is a valuable one that anyone could adapt to everyday life. The message itself, however, sometimes gets lost in the effort to preserve the rhyming structure of the story. For example, when the Extremes attack one of the animals, they arouse the "extreme" nature of that creature. Responsible Gold Ant becomes bossy; kind and helpful Blue Dolphin becomes helpless; and so on. The authors write, "Blue Extremes smother Blue Dolphins, who whine / With negative blue feelings, so they start to decline. / Panicked and crying, moody and

depressed, / Left emotionally weak, victims without rest." The connection between the notion of "extreme" and the character trait becomes lost due to the forced rhyme scheme. The included discussion questions for each chapter can help ensure that the message of this metaphorical story is understood. Also, a character chart explains the characteristics of the mascots in clear and direct prose, and a Reader's Theater script presents the story in an abbreviated but clearer rhyming format.

The rest of the book contains other supplementary materials. Building on the principles of the Character Champions is the S.O.A.R. problem solving/decision-making model. "S.O.A.R." stands for "Stop, Observe, Act, Review," steps that children are encouraged to take when confronted with a dispute or problem. Charts and graphics reinforce the positive qualities of the character mascots and identify negative "extreme" behaviors. Fun lesson plans will help kids gain ownership of the principles of the program. The handouts and lesson plans are available for download at www.characterchampions.org.

Although difficult to navigate without an index, this book is a rich resource for parents and educators looking to develop a child's social and problem-solving skills. Adults and children alike can profit from evaluating their temperament in relation to the mascots of Character Island, and in doing so, become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in relating with others.

Carolyn Bailey