

## Responsibility...A Big Word!

“If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.”

-Abigail Van Buren

“*Responsibility is a big word.*” At least that is what an eight-year-old student of mine said when asked what responsibility meant. The response from this youngster made me stop and think, and ultimately, I agreed – it is a big word!!!

The definition of responsibility is: accepting personal responsibility; acting without continual guidance or superior authority. That’s a mouthful! For me, it means being accountable! As the owner of a performing arts business for over 20 years, being responsible has clearly been a key factor in the success of my organization. By taking charge and putting my destiny in my own hands, the success or lack of it, is fully my responsibility. Each and every day, as a business owner, I have hundreds of students, parents, grandparents, and employees that I am responsible for. With pride, I work diligently to assure each and every one of them that I follow through on my commitment to them, thus creating a positive learning environment.

“*Let’s see...which hat do I have on today?*” Each and every one of us wears a minimum of four to five hats per day. Each morning, I wear my “business owner” hat, which includes wearing the “custodian” hat when bathrooms need cleaned, the “accountant” hat when bills need to be paid, the “costume designer” hat when it’s time for costuming, and the “music editor” hat, when working on preparing music for the classroom. In the evenings, the “fun” hats come out: “the dance teacher” hat, “the nurse hat” (for when someone doesn’t feel well), the “traffic control” hat, when students need to be steered in the right direction, and the “counselor” hat, when students need those one-on-one moments with them. All of these hats, and many more, amount to one thing: **responsibility!**

*Kids are and have always been my life!* As one who has devoted much of my life to the teaching of children, I have discovered that the more responsibility you give them, the better they are as a kid! We all hunger for purpose, and giving people responsibility gives them purpose. *In all 25 plus years of teaching, I have never ever had a child disappoint me when asked to be responsible for a task at hand.* I recently asked an array of students ages 8 to 18 what responsibility meant for them; this is what they had to say:

“Taking Care of yourself; paying attention.”

“Cleaning up messes.”

“Living up to your expectations.”

“Always doing what is right.”

“Doing what is asked and not giving up.”

“Hard work and dedication.”

As a life-long resident and leader in our wonderful community, I feel a real sense of responsibility towards our next generation. I believe I am the person I am today as a result of growing up in a community that instills such great value in each of its citizens. As a member of Lee’s Summit CARES – Community of Character, I feel a sense of responsibility that is much greater than myself. The greatest joy I receive day to day is being responsible to the children, families, the community, and through the performing arts I believe am truly “touching hearts through the arts.”

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