

## What does character mean to our students?

The following is two responses from students who were prompted with the following questions. First, what is character and is it important? Second, how has Harborside impacted your character development, if at all?

### The Difference is Character

My high school career started off a little bit different than many of my fellow Harborside Academy classmates. I started high school at a traditional public school. I worked hard, got good grades, but there were some bumps in the road. So, when the opportunity to go to Harborside was presented, I took it. It was six weeks into my junior year, a hard time to change schools, but I knew I needed something different. My first thought was, "Who would I sit by at lunch?" I did not know a single person at Harborside. To my surprise, the motto "Nobody sits alone at Harborside" is not just a motto; it really happens. It happened to me that very first day. Since then, I never have sat alone. The students accepted and included me right away. What was going on? Why was this school so different? Everyone here just seemed so nice. I would quickly learn what the huge difference between the traditional school that I attended and Harborside is. The difference is character. To the Harborside community, that character is known as the six Habits of Success, our character traits. They consist of tenacity, leadership, cooperation, humor, respect, and integrity. These traits are a main focus at Harborside, not only because they are needed in academic success, but because they are needed long after high school is over.

Character is learned in a variety of ways. It is taught to us through crew,

intensives, camp, and the daily activities at Harborside. Crew is a class we have for thirty minutes every day. We participate in several activities and lessons that teach us how to improve and expand our character. In addition, we also learn how to apply it to things such as relationships, post-secondary school, community service, fitness and wellness, and lifelong learning. It takes character to succeed in every one of these areas.

Another way Habits of Success is learned and practiced is through camp. Once a year, the entire class goes on a camping trip where we learn not only about our expedition, but about character as well. It takes being respectful to our teachers and integrity to even manage going on a multi-day school trip. Then it takes leadership and cooperation to accomplish the tasks we are assigned. Finally, it takes tenacity and humor to get through the tough times to accomplish our goals.

Other ways we practice Habits of Success is through community service and intensives. Some of us learn more about our own character while helping others. For others, it may be more difficult to develop Habits of Success. These students are then able to expand their character through intensives. This provides a chance to learn more about how to develop and utilize a particular Habit of Success. Just like in our academic subjects, sometimes we need a little extra help. This way every student is ensured a learning environment that allows for their full potential, not only academically, to be reached. Our community fosters an acceptance, a safe environment to learn, to change, and to grow. We support one another and it is our hope that each one of us can

succeed in being the best they can be.

Good character is needed in all aspects of a successful life, and therefore it is seen in all aspects of Harborside life. From picking up after yourself to service learning projects in foreign countries, good character is practiced. This creates a school full of well rounded, intelligent, and open-minded students, accepting of one another's differences and striving to improve. The good character that every Harborside student possesses creates an environment that allows for personal growth and academic success incomparable to other schools.

Our Habits of Success are not just a small piece of our Harborside experience, but a main focus. We look at our success not only in an academic sense, but in our character as well. Just as we work hard to learn and grow intellectually, we work equally as hard to grow, develop, and improve our character. We understand that just as we are all different in our academic standings, we are all also in different places with our character growth. This leaves us more prepared than any other for what comes after high school, whether that may be college, military, a career, or anything else. Harborside students graduate equipped to be successful in all settings. Right now, we are teenagers on a journey to figure out who we are and what we stand for. Harborside provides us with not only the academic knowledge to do so, but also the tools and opportunities to learn and expand our character as well. The strong focus on character as well as academics at Harborside prepares students for whatever may lay ahead.

