

Character Development Ladder

Do you remember when you were a child and had to learn something brand new – maybe riding a bike? Although character development is hard work and happens over time, the development process is pretty much the same. For example, let's take the bike-riding example in the context of the Competence Ladder model. The model defines four stages of development – unconscious incompetence (riding a bike looks so easy until you try it and realize you can't do it), conscious incompetence (you try again and again and get it right sometimes – but still swerve or fall), conscious competence (you're able to do it well – feel pretty confident)), unconscious competence (you don't have to think about it at all). Here's how the Competence Ladder model can be applied to character development.

Skill Development Ideas

Values Development Ideas

Competence Level

Development Activities

Build awareness. Help them recognize it in action. Discuss impact of the skill.

Build awareness. Help them recognize it in action. Discuss impact of the Value in Action and Value Violation.

Development Activities

Provide opportunities to practice the skill or components of it.
Mistakes are fine.
Encourage improvement.
Notice when they succeed.

Provide opportunities to practice the value. Partner with them. Mistakes are fine. Encourage improvement. Notice effort and discuss impact of their efforts.

Development Activities

Notice, encourage and support their efforts. Provide stretch opportunities. Discuss people who do this well.

Notice, encourage and support their efforts. Provide stretch opportunities.

Development Activities

Find ways to leverage this skill for some greater good. Get them to help teach or mentor others.

Find ways to leverage this strong value for some greater good. Help them get in positions where they can model the value for younger kids.

Unconscious Competence

Have performed it well for so long that it is almost instinctive. Can perform without paying attention

Conscious Incompetence

Recognize it when they see it; have tried it with limited success. Lots of mistakes

Can perform it routinely – some level of expertise; can be distracted and still perform

Conscious Competence

Unconscious Incompetence

Unaware that there is such a value or skill or unaware how difficult it is to perform it