

**Integrity Curriculum**  
**Michelle Ciurea**  
**Beacon Hill Friends Meeting**  
**First Day School 2011-12**

**Lesson 5: Authenticity**

**Silent worship.** Begin with 5 minutes of silent worship. Use a candle or other object (like the jar of water with sludge slowly sedimenting down) to help kids center down.

**Quotes** – *keep these on display throughout the lesson without comment.*

- There is just one life for each of us: our own. ~Euripides, ancient Greek playwright, 500 B.C.
- Once conform, once do what others do because they do it, and a kind of lethargy steals over all the finer senses of the soul. ~Michel de Montaigne, French Renaissance writer, 1590
- "Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying." – Ralph Waldo Emerson, American poet, 1850
- Know thyself. – Socrates, ancient Greek philosopher, 432 B.C.
- The pen that writes your life story must be held in your own hand. ~Irene C. Kassorla, psychologist
- You were born an original. Don't die a copy. ~John Mason, modern American writer

Today we shift our focus from one aspect of Integrity – Truth-telling – to another: Authenticity. We'll talk more about it, but first, here's a story that links the two.

***The Emperor and the Seed***

*by unknown author*

*Once there was an emperor in the Far East who was growing old and knew it was coming time to choose his successor. Instead of choosing one of his assistants or one of his own children, he decided to do something different.*

*He called all the young people in the kingdom together one day. He said, "It has come time for me to step down and to choose the next emperor. I have decided to choose one of you." The children were shocked! But the emperor continued. "I am going to give each one of you a seed today. One seed. It is a very special seed. I want you to go home, plant the seed, water it and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from this one seed. I will then judge the plants that you bring to me, and the one I choose will be the next emperor of the kingdom!"*

*There was one boy named Ling who was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his mother the whole story. She helped him get a pot and some planting soil, and he planted the seed and watered it carefully. Every day he would water it and watch to see if it had grown.*

*After about three weeks, some of the other youths began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow. Ling kept going home and checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by. Still nothing.*

*By now others were talking about their plants but Ling didn't have a plant, and he felt like a failure. Six months went by, still nothing in Ling's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Ling didn't say anything to his friends, however. He just kept waiting for his seed to grow.*

*A year finally went by and all the youths of the kingdom brought their plants to the emperor for inspection. Ling told his mother that he wasn't going to take an empty pot. But she encouraged him to go, and to take his pot, and to be honest about what happened. Ling felt sick to his stomach, but he knew his mother was right. He took his empty pot to the palace.*

*When Ling arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by all the other youths. They were beautiful, in all shapes and sizes. Ling put his empty pot on the floor and many of the other kinds laughed at him. A few felt sorry for him and just said, "Hey nice try."*

*When the emperor arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted the young people. Ling just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the emperor. "Today, one of you will be appointed the next emperor!"*

*All of a sudden, the emperor spotted Ling at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered his guards to bring him to the front. Ling was terrified. "The emperor knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me killed!"*

*When Ling got to the front, the Emperor asked his name. "My name is Ling," he replied. All the kids were laughing and making fun of him. The emperor asked everyone to quiet down. He looked at Ling, and then announced to the crowd, "Behold your new emperor! His name is Ling!" Ling couldn't believe it. Ling couldn't even grow his seed. How could he be the new emperor?*

*Then the emperor said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone here a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds that would not grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed I gave you would not grow, you substituted another seed for it. Ling was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new emperor!"*

[Discuss] What is this story trying to tell us? What is the truth that Ling dared to face? *(it was a truth about the situation – that his seed didn't grow - but also about himself – that this is who he is, a person who had failed at a challenge).*

In this story, the challenge was different than it appeared. Ling thought the challenge was about growing a plant, but really it was about honesty. Likewise, sometimes you think you know what a situation asks of you, but maybe you're wrong. In that case, the best you can do is .... Well, to just act true to who you are and hope for the best.

We begin today to explore another aspect of Integrity: Authenticity.

What does it mean to be "authentic"? *(let children brainstorm definitions, then reveal the dictionary definition)*

Authenticity = the quality of being genuine, veritable.

(veritable – from the Latin "veritas", or true)

"Authentic leather" means not fake leather (vinyl). But what does it mean for a person to be "authentic"? *(to be real, to be true to who they really are inside, not to pose as something they're not)*

What might it mean to "live an authentic life"? *(discuss)*

What are some aspects of "living authentically"?

- Live according to your values
- Follow your heart
- Be yourself

We will explore all of these in the next few weeks. Next time we'll look in depth at what it means to live your values, and to do that we will start by having you write your own eulogies!

So for our next meeting, think about how you would like to be remembered, and we'll see where that takes us!