When you make the 8 Keys of Excellence part of your classroom atmosphere—and part of your students' lives—you give your students a set of principles that creates a sense of purpose and unity and at the same time you build an environment that is conducive to meaningful learning. Here are some suggestions to help you effectively integrate the 8 Keys into your classroom.

**PREPARATION**

- **Explore the 8 Keys of Excellence website**: Become familiar with the program and the support material contained in the Teachers section of the website. Download and print documents that will assist you as you prepare for the introduction of the 8 Keys of Excellence to your class.

- **Watch the 8 Keys Teacher Training video**: This will give you many useful ideas on how to implement the 8 Keys in your classroom.

- **Look through The 8 Keys of Excellence—Principles to Live By book**: Of particular interest would be the Introduction (pages 2–15) and the first pages of each Key that begin with the name and definition of the Key. The stories that follow may remind you of stories from your own life that you could share with your students.

- **Learn the 8 Keys definitions and body motions**: Before you embark on the introduction of the Keys to your students you'll want to be totally familiar with the Keys and motions.

- **Discover the 8 Keys in your life**: As you get to know the Keys you'll find "connections" with your life that will help you build personal "stories" to share with your students. Your stories are more memorable than stories about others and strengthen teacher/student relationships.

- **Complete 8 Keys of Excellence School Surveys**: These surveys will provide valuable baseline data for later review and comparison.

- **Put up 8 Keys poster**: Make sure it's in a prominent place and easy to read from anywhere in the classroom.
• **Build anticipation:** Build anticipation about the 8 Keys. Share your enthusiasm about how the Keys can impact your life, your students' lives, and your classroom community. As we know, initial contact with new material determines future motivation and learning. In other words, there is no second chance to make a first impression. Therefore, we'll want a positive introduction of the Keys, creating a desire to learn and implement them.

• **Introduce the 8 Keys of Excellence program to your students.** The Introductory Lesson under Monthly Curriculum includes an Overview of the suggested lesson content as well as a Sample Script. The 8 Keys Teacher Training video provides additional useful guidelines.

**EACH MONTH: SEPTEMBER to APRIL**

• **Present new Key Lesson early each month:** Sometime during the first few days of the month present the Key Lesson (use sample script provided or write your own). If you decide to create your own lesson we recommend the following lesson design steps:
  - Include material to **enroll** students in the learning process: sharing a personal story makes a strong impact on students
  - Give students an **experience** of the Key: games, activities, and demonstrations are effective ways to make the Keys "live" for students
  - Then **label** the experience with the name of the Key
  - Include an activity to **demonstrate** students' understanding of the Key: encouraging students to share stories of their own is meaningful and memorable; ask students to "think in ink" and write about personal Key experiences on their journal pages
  - **Review** to reinforce what was learned review Key definition, body motion, and affirmation. Optional: if applicable, present KeyCards to students.
  - At the end of the lesson **celebrate** learning a new Key! High-fives, affirmations, etc.

• **Reinforce the Key throughout the month:** Start each day with a "quote of the day" related to the Key of the month. (For quotation lists refer to "All About …" document for each Key.) (See other reinforcement suggestions in next section, Through the Year.) For a different perspective, invite a local sports personality, a community leader, a fireman, etc., to share a personal Key story with your class—or even in a school assembly.

• **Celebrate at the end of each month:** Here's an idea for monthly celebrations. At the beginning of the year divide your class into eight groups and assign each group to one of the Keys. At the end of each month the group assigned to the Key of the month presents a skit to illustrate the meaning of the Key and/or how the class "lives" the Key. The skit could be presented to your class or even to the whole school during an assembly.

**THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**

• **Model the Keys for your students:** If you want your students to live the Keys you need to
Teaching the 8 Keys in the Classroom

model them yourself. Become aware of your own behavior and do your best to uphold the Keys. Point out how you demonstrate the Keys during the day. If you slip, don’t cover up. Instead, turn the occasion into a teaching opportunity and ask your students, What Key did I just forget? Let them know that you’re working on living the Keys, just as they are.

• **Acknowledge growth:** As you progress through the Keys, focus on growth. Focus on movement "toward" rather than movement "away." You might know this as "catching kids being good." As we know, feedback is critical for growth. Mention it to your students and let them know your pleasure in their growth when you hear words and see actions that exhibit positive movement toward living the 8 Keys. Often we focus on behavior only when students misbehave—the Keys give us a great opportunity to recognize, acknowledge, and encourage positive behavior.

• **Use the Keys in positive interactions:** Remember that the 8 Keys are not the 8 rules. Since we’re developing character and building excellence, let's view the 8 Keys as positive principles, traits that require feedback in order to grow. Positive interactions about the Keys will go a long way toward facilitating our students' growth. Here are a few ideas:
  - Ask open-ended questions. Instead of labeling a student's behavior with statements like *you're not paying attention* or *stop talking during reading time*, try directing the student's attention to the Keys with questions like What Key is challenging you right now? or What Key do you need to focus on? This approach enables the student to recognize, label, and correct his or her own behavior—much more positive and powerful than you doing the labeling!
  - If a student speaks unkindly to another: Let's look at this through the Key of Speak with Good Purpose and think about speaking in ways that build others up. How could you say that differently next time? (versus, You're not Speaking with Good Purpose so you'll miss five minutes of recess!)
  - If a student is "slacking": Commitment is one of our 8 Keys of Excellence and reminds us to stick with it, no matter what. What could you do to show greater Commitment?

• **Work the Keys into the curriculum:** Your students will remember the Keys better if they are brought up repeatedly in various contexts and constantly woven into the curriculum. Once you begin using the Keys, you’ll find it easy and natural to work them into your lesson plans.
  - It is fairly easy to integrate the Keys into the humanities and current events. With any piece of literature you can ask What Key is the main character using? What Key did he forget? What Key is represented in the moral or theme?
In history lessons, do the same. Ask how historical figures upheld the Keys. Were they committed to their cause? Did they use Flexibility to achieve their goals? Was there a Key they ignored that would have been beneficial, perhaps even changing their outcomes?

Writing assignments and journals are easily tied to the Keys. Simply ask your students to write about the Key you are focusing on, including a definition of the Key, what it means to them and an example of how they use it in their own lives.

Science, math, and music also offer opportunities to reinforce the Keys. Examine the lives of scientists, mathematicians, and musicians and the Keys they used to make their breakthrough discoveries or develop unique musical styles.

Look for creative ways to focus on the Keys: The following ideas (from teachers who have successfully used the Keys in their classrooms for many years) will help you keep the Keys "alive" in your classroom. Include Keys covered in previous months as well as those still to come—it's vital to keep all of the Keys alive throughout the year!

- Toward the end of the day, have students do a “paired share” with another student, chatting about how they lived a specified Key during the day and/or a time when they forgot to live the Key. This can be done for the Key of the month or any other Key you want to focus on as a reminder.

- Put students in groups and have them make a collage of the Key of the month, or of a previous month. Take a group photo that they can include to identify the group who created the collage and make it fun for the students at the same time.

- Have students place the Key of the month in headings of papers they write. For example:
  
  Student Name
  This Is It!
  Science
  Date

- Incorporate a daily/weekly quick-write where students record how they used the Key of the month that day or week.

- Keep a permanent chart on the wall with students’ names listed down the side of the chart and the Keys going across the top. As the day goes on and students do something that illustrates one of the Keys, Speaking with Good Purpose, for example, then the teacher or a student can go to the chart and put a check mark or a plus sign showing that the Key was present in the classroom that day.

- Have your students be observers and data collectors by watching older or younger students at play and charting Key behaviors with a plus or minus sign. Turn this into an averaging lesson.

- Have students interview parents/guardians about what they think a particular Key means and get examples of how they have lived the Key.
Have students browse through newspaper articles and use colored markers to write the Key or Keys that are significant along with a plus or minus sign to indicate a positive or negative application of the Key.

Have students make a list of their favorite characters (movie, cartoon, sitcom or whatever works for their age group) and discuss what Keys stand out for that character and which ones they need to work on.

Following an assembly or a speaker, discuss with your students what was communicated and link the points to the relevant Keys.

Have groups of older students write and illustrate children’s books on the Keys and then read their books to groups of younger students. After the reading they can put all the young students’ names in a hat and draw a student’s name to win the book—signed by the authors, of course! This is fun learning activity for both the older and younger groups of students!

At the beginning of each week remind students of the meaning of the Key of the month by reading one of the stories from *The 8 Keys of Excellence—Principles to Live By*. Each chapter of the book focuses on one of the 8 Keys—a short definition of the Key is followed by meaningful true stories that illustrate the essence of the Key. Following your reading ask students to share their reactions to the story.

**Have mini-celebrations throughout the year:** Two of the tenets of the Quantum Teaching program are Acknowledge Every Effort and If It's Worth Learning, It's Worth Celebrating!

**Acknowledge Every Effort:** Learning involves taking risks, stepping out of what is comfortable. As students take these steps, they are acknowledged for their competence and for their confidence. Everyone likes to be acknowledged. Receiving acknowledgment fills us with pride, self-confidence and happiness. Research supports the concept of student efficacy improving through teacher acknowledgment. Acknowledge individuals when you notice them successfully applying one of the Keys—and acknowledge the whole class for a great 8 Keys learning session!

**If It's Worth Learning, It's Worth Celebrating:** Celebration is the breakfast of champion learners. Celebration provides feedback regarding progress and increases positive emotional associations with the learning. Celebration builds the desire for success—so celebrate often!

Celebrating and acknowledging learning is enriching and motivating for students—it encourages them to take more ownership and initiate their own learning. It also promotes positive behavior. Your individual and class celebrations can take many forms, including everything from high-fives to personal notes and awards:
TEACHING THE 8 KEYS IN THE CLASSROOM

- High-fives: Use often to acknowledge and celebrate a job well done as a class or with partners.
- Applause: A tried-and-true technique, it never fails to inspire. Try variations like "round of" applause (clap in a circle).
- Finger snaps: When you want a quiet acknowledgment, use continuous finger snaps instead of applause.
- Notes: These could include personal notes from the teacher to a student or notes between students acknowledging "living" one or more of the 8 Keys. You could provide 8 Keys cards to facilitate this recognition.
- Awards: Have the class vote each week (or each month) to select the winner of the Key award.

- Share what's working in your classroom: Remember to share stories, lessons and activities that are working for you with other teachers—in your school and on our blog. Exchanging ideas with others is enriching and motivating, and everyone benefits.

END OF YEAR: MAY

- 8 Keys Review Lesson: Wrap up the year in style with an 8 Keys Review Lesson.
- Celebrate! Have a big celebration at the end of the school year: The end-of-year 8 Keys of Excellence celebration could include parents, sponsors, faculty, etc. Depending on the age group, it's fun to let the students participate in the planning and preparation. Try to include a piece during which students talk about what the 8 Keys have meant to them and share stories of how they have become part of their lives. Look under May in Monthly Curriculum for end-of-year celebration ideas.