

Become a Superhero! Seven Habits for a Successful Student for a Social/Emotional Classroom

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Introduction

Great leaders create more leaders, not followers.

Roy T. Bennett

As I have grown, I have learned to focus on myself and the things upon which I can have an effect. I have learned that if I keep myself busy on improving, I do not have time to find fault with others. This is a life lesson that I have tried to embrace. I am hoping to teach my students the value of improving themselves. I want them to become leaders and agents for change.

My school is to become a Leader in Me school. We won a grant through Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to help fund this endeavor. I am a third grade teacher in a school that consistently is awarded accolades for student achievement, such as being a Blue Ribbon School. Our children come from diverse backgrounds, and we learn much from one another. This unit is to help foster social and emotional learning through The Leader in Me and build a community of learners.

West Park Place Elementary School is a small suburban school in the Christina School District. We have under 400 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. We are located in proximity to the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware. West Park is a diverse school, hosting the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and Delaware Autistic Program. According to the annual report generated by the Christina School District, about a third of our students are English as a Second Language Learners: representing about 25 countries. About 45 to 40 percent of our population are free/reduced lunch students. Our demographics are 20% African American, 26% Asian, 46% Caucasian and 4% Hispanic. I am a self-contained teacher and teach all subjects: math, reading, writing, science and social studies. A typical school year provides me with 22 students, a third of which are usually active or recently dismissed ESL.

A strength of our students is attendance and a desire to learn. West Park is a mile from the University of Delaware, so we have many resources available. At times, we have college students doing placements, tutoring and student teaching. Based on the Christina School District annual report, the teachers at West Park are predominately Highly Effective and Highly Qualified, have many years of experience, and most of the

educators have obtained at least a Master's degree. We work in Professional Learning Communities to analyze data and provide appropriate instruction for students.

West Park's struggles are no different than any school. The most obvious concern is lack of funding. A third of our students and their families are ELS: with many parents not able to speak English. As a result, we may have low parental involvement. Many of our families are of low socio-economic status.

Rationale

My rationale for teaching this year-long unit is to immerse my students into the new Leader in Me curriculum. Leader in Me (LIM) is the foundation, but I intend to create lessons based on picture books to instill self-awareness, self-management skills, social-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making skills for each week. My hope is that these habits will improve work ethic, classroom behavior, personal responsibility and other key characteristics to help make students more successful academically, socially and emotionally.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) make this unit important because students need to be college and career ready. The state test (Smarter Balance) will require students to produce writing, and complete math and reading tests. I need to develop lessons that will address reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. These skills need to be supported by helping students to become responsible for themselves and be leaders in their learning and growing.

Originally designed for third grade, this year-long unit is appropriate for any elementary grade. The students will participate in three main branches of activities. First, we will learn the seven habits of The Leader in Me by Franklin Covey. Then we will use picture books and classroom activities to reinforce those habits. Finally, using all the information learned through this seminar, we will utilize drawing, art, and comics to communicate and show mastery of ideas.

The unit fits perfectly into my curriculum in all subject areas, addressing almost all the reading and writing standards and the speaking and listening standards. At the ESEA conference that I attended, I learned that in a 2011 meta-analysis of 213 studies involving more than 270,000 students, those students who participated in a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program have shown an eleven percent gain in academic achievement. Studies also have shown a decrease in dropout rates, school and classroom behavioral issues, drug use, teen pregnancy, mental health and criminal behavior. Research also suggests that students who feel safe and supported by adults at school are better able to learn. So my task is to tie in the SEL learning goals with Common Core goals, so I will focus on three main standards. I will select one standard from reading, writing and

speaking/listening. For the reading standard, I will use: *Reading Literature 3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson or morale and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.* For the writing standard, I will use: *Writing 3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.* Finally, for speaking and listening I will use: *Speaking and Listening 3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.*

Objectives

These objectives are threefold and address each of the listed standards. First, I want to introduce the seven habits of Leader in Me. Then I want to explore comics and graphic novels as a means to communicate, both in written words and pictures. I will teach specific characteristics of comic books and explore how they convey meaning: written and unwritten. I will also rely on picture books to teach self-awareness, self-management skills, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. After introducing the seven habits and discussing components of art and comics, I want the students to demonstrate their mastery of the habits of Leader in Me through creating their own comic book, explaining each trait with real world examples.

Background Information/Content

Psychological Needs

According to Aderian principles, people have two basic sets of needs. The first is a sense of belonging. People attain this from gaining attention from those who are most important in one's life. The second is having a sense of significance, having control over what happens within one's life. Through teaching within a SEL framework, these psychological needs will be met.

When one regularly "fills student's buckets," there is no reason for them to act out for attention. The teacher is able to prevent poor behavior from happening in the first place.¹ When children feel a strong sense of belonging and significance, their need to act out will wane. Through employing positive strategies and correctly using consequences, we not only prevent misbehavior but become partners with children to help them learn what to do in the future.² A child with high self-esteem and confidence is one who is emotionally stable; they have no need to belittle others or work to gain control over situations.³ Good teachers inspire children to improve themselves through building confidence. Confidence comes from knowledge, learning and experience.⁴ Children do not have the ability to make these changes alone; in the future they will, because someone

believes in them.⁵ So small victories produce a snowball effect. When children feel safe and secure, they are willing to take more chances. With more chances, comes greater learning and more success, which spurs children to love learning. When we as teachers provide safe environments for our children, mistakes can be seen as opportunities for growth. Children will share their ideas more freely and work cooperatively. As students become successful, they learn to take advantage of others' success and knowledge, and therefore, a community of learners develops.

A Growth Mind Set

Carol Dweck talks about two kinds of mind sets: fixed and growth. A fixed mind set supports that talent and intelligence are based on our genetic codes. Conversely, a growth mind set believes that abilities can be developed through dedication, hard work, focused practice and attention.⁶ Psychological studies of gifted children have debunked the myth that talent alone leads to success, or that only a fraction of us are capable of rising to the top.⁷ Innate intelligence or remarkable talent alone is not enough. Talent alone is worthless unless applied consistently and correctly. Passion and perseverance, as it turns out, matter more than talent and intelligence when it comes to being successful.⁸ A growth mind set allows one to make mistakes and learn from them, leading to fewer future mistakes. With a growth mind set, it is even possible to make GOOD mistakes.⁹ Viewing challenges in this manner allows one to see mistakes as temporary setbacks or situations, opening opportunities to solve problems. Such people are optimists.¹⁰ They do not see failures so much as opportunities to learn. Fixed mind set individuals do take failures personally, as if failures demonstrate their weaknesses and so they limit their success, becoming pessimists who believe negative events are out of their control. These people are prone to depression and resignation.¹¹

The psychologist Martin Seligman believes that optimism can be learned. We can teach students to have positive emotions, engagement and meaning-developing one's own unique strengths and skills toward an end bigger than oneself. Hard work becomes the key to personal happiness. The work is its own reward, creating the Happiness Paradox.¹²

Grit

Children do not always learn well when they first start out; someone is always better than another. Children who are outperformed may give up rather than fight to improve, so another key component to success is-GRIT, which is a natural equalizer because anyone, at any time, whatever one's background or resources, can lay claim to it.¹³ Time and time again, individuals who relentlessly and passionately summon their inner fortitude when life becomes rough can be true winners.¹⁴

According to the psychologist Bob Deusch, PhD, grit can be developed. It is a skill learned when a person is exposed to the right kind of training, practice and experiences. Failure is how we learn, develop and acquire grit. GRIT is Guts, Resilience, Initiative and Tenacity. Students need the guts to take on a challenge, resilience to bounce back after failures, initiative to be self-starters, and finally, tenacity to stay focused on goals.¹⁵

Grit is about sweat, not swagger, character, not charisma. Grit is the secret ingredient to success.¹⁶ The result of a hard fought battle, willingness to take risks, passion, a strong sense of determination, perseverance- it can all be learned. We must teach our students these skills. To paraphrase Aristotle, “Excellence is not an act but a habit”. We need to help build these habits within our students.

Grit is an important life skill. People with grit are less prone to change careers. They are focused on achieving single goals. Mark Murphy CEO of Leadership IQ conducted a study about grit. He found that 46% of new hires in the workforce fail within the first 18 months of employment. Only 11% of that group was due to lack of skill for the job. The remaining percentage had poor motivation, poor attitude, negativity, ineffective leadership skills, and inconsistent problem solving skills, all which become a drain to the collective energy.¹⁷

People with grit do not rely on positive feedback to keep them motivated. They strengthen the ability to delay gratification. It not only instills self-discipline, but makes us more creative, flexible and innovative.¹⁸ The brain is like a muscle; with exercise, it gets stronger.¹⁹

Discipline

Discipline, a Latin word for “instruction,” is a huge factor in teaching, parenting and life. When we ask parents about discipline, they may think it has to do with setting boundaries and teaching consequences, keeping children safe, teaching manners and respect and so on.²⁰ Teachers know that classroom discipline is essential to learning. Establishing rules, routines and procedures for the classroom from the start of the year is crucial to student success. Spending time in the beginning of the year modeling, teaching and implementing those routines and expectations saves time in the year. Correcting and redirecting are not required later.²¹

Children need to learn how to look at situations from a healthy perspective, fostering the mind for PROGRESS, not PERFECTION, which is not possible. Students need to learn to work toward their goals, and then will understand real learning. As an example, if I want to drive from Chicago to Sacramento, I have to expect that there may be problems along the way. I might get a flat tire. There may be traffic. Possibly a road block or detour along the way. Just because I face some of these challenges does not

mean I will not continue my trip. I will persevere and find alternate routes. The ultimate goal is to get to Sacramento, whatever it takes. Kids need to learn to “keep their eyes on the prize.” In the past, the future depended on making changes around us. Now students need to learn that the future depends on making changes within us.²²

Consequences

SEL is not just sunshine and unicorns. Children learn consequences for their actions, either: Natural or Logical. Natural consequences are easy to allow one’s child to face, such as telling a child to get a coat, when she refuses, she may suffer the natural consequences of being cold. Uncomfortable, but not deadly. Logical consequences are imposed such as making a child brush one’s teeth to avoid cavities. These consequences are for future good. We want our children to internalize these behaviors through choices. Actions have consequences. Without consequences, children develop entitlement attitudes and behaviors.²³

Consequences adeptly teach lessons when parents cannot.²⁴ Consequences will hone kid’s critical thinking skills as they learn to evaluate their options based on possible outcomes, their resourcefulness as they figure out new solutions when things go awry, their ability to accept responsibility as they learn that mistakes are not the end of the world, and even empathy as they experience firsthand what it is like to make mistakes.²⁵ Kids learn not to fear setbacks but to use them to make better choices. Children who are used to facing the consequences of their actions will think twice before falling prey to their peer’s poor behavior.²⁶ Problem solving can be seen as a challenge instead of failure as an end. Those who are not used to facing failure will not be used to recovering from it. Kids who fail know how to stick through to persevere.²⁷

Empathy

Empathy allows one to recognize and identify others’ emotions. In 1970, David Premach and Gay Woodruff developed the Theory of the Mind, which states that children begin to understand that not everybody thinks and feels the same as they do. The more empathetic and respectful we are to children, the better they learn to be respectful and empathetic.²⁸ Those who are empathetic display pro-social and altruistic behaviors.²⁹ Experts agree that bullying is least likely to occur when we create an environment where students respect each other and develop feelings of empathy.³⁰ Creating an empathetic classroom takes time, but much of the work is front loaded. Empathy is a skill, and once students become more familiar with expressing and analyzing their feelings using empathy can be quicker and more natural of a process to stop and discuss incidents. A teacher who works intensely to establish a respectful environment from the very first day of class will spend less time over the course of the year managing unruly, disruptive classrooms.³¹ The JAMA Pediatrics found that helping other decreased cholesterol levels, decreased

hypertension and increased overall feelings of well-being.³² Being empathetic is beneficial emotionally, physically and socially.

Leadership

Nobody is born a leader, and yet everybody is born with leadership potential.³³ Leadership is not reserved for a special few who are somehow born with superhuman power. Leadership is learned.³⁴ Kids naturally start out on a gradual trajectory from complete dependence to complete independence. We need to make sure that independence happen for our students.³⁵ High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectation. Also a person's character is shaped by experiences, by exposure to other people and to the situation one encounters in life and our responses to them.³⁶

The Leader in Me enhances self-confidence in students. It improves school climate, allowing children to take control over their learning. Student achievement will rise. Students will learn to set goals and achieve them. LIM teaches collaboration. Students who learn to work collaboratively are better positioned for success in the work place.³⁷

Building Community/ Social Emotional Classroom

Highly effective teachers use procedures and systems to maximize each minute of learning. Teachers turn these effective procedure into habits for their students, so they can perform them without the teacher. Children become independent and have control over their learning, building a strong community of learners. A good teacher will imagine that there are no adults available and make adjustments within the classroom, so that students can get their own supplies and have control over their learning environment. Providing more and more independence for students, they will become autonomous.

Two types of motivation exist: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic come from within. They motivate children to want to do more, to do better. Extrinsic come from the outside. They turn play into work, and work into drudgery.³⁸ Rewards are so prevalent in our society today: grade inflation, sense of entitlement, and the "everyone is special" culture. Children get trophies just for showing up. Since the 1960s, generations have been raised under the banner of the self-esteem movement. Fostering the idea of "give children praise and it will give them confidence." This does not work.³⁹ We continue to invent new ways to celebrate mediocrity. Our job of nurturing intrinsic motivation in our students is even more important and sometimes more difficult. Providing trophies for all or showering shallow praise detracts from the effort children put forth. Too often we praise success and miss the effort put in, despite overcoming frequent failure. Do they not deserve praise throughout?

Encouragement is a great tool to use whenever one feels the urge to give shallow praise; encouragement can replace physical rewards. No real learning takes place when children are disciplined using rewards.⁴⁰ Effective praise, specific and learning focused, has an effect on behavior for the long term. Children learn socially acceptable behavior and how to self-regulate by being allowed to express how they feel in a safe environment.⁴¹

Components of Comics

In our seminar, we have learned that historically, comics have held a negative connotation and people prefer terms like illustrator or commercial artist over cartoonist. The truth is that “comics” have appeared throughout history from the Pre-Columbian Manuscript, Bayeux Tapestry, Mexican Codex, Greek painters, Japanese scrolls, and many other visual records across history. Comics are actually fairly complex in their structure once examined.

According to Scott McCloud in his book Understanding the Invisible Art, comics are “sequential art intended to convey information or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer. Words, pictures and other icons are the vocabulary called comics. These icons demand our participation in order to work. The medium of comics can hold a number of ideas and images. The pictures are juxtaposed, or adjacent, in comics because the spaces does for comics what time does for movies. Cartooning is not just a way of drawing, it is a way of seeing”.

For instance, comics may lack detail. The more exact the face or detail in an illustration, the less the viewer relates to that picture. We make the world over in our image. Comics allow us to “fill in the blanks” for ourselves and give more meaning to the illustrations. McCloud writes “cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled.” With such a simple style, one becomes the cartoon and the message is easier to absorb.

The gutter, or the space between the boxes, are the heart of how comics function. According to McCloud, “the limbo of the gutter, human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into a single idea.” They help us perceive the passing of time. The frames or panels indicate time and space is being divided.

Comics also have a phenomenon called closure. McCloud defines closure as observing the parts but perceiving the whole. He says we experience closure often in life when we mentally complete that which is incomplete based on past experience. The closure may be a simple outline that we interpret into a picture. It may be a complex collaboration when closure serves to pass time or make motion in the comics. McCloud

states that “comics are a dance of the seen and unseen. No other art form gives so much to its audience, while asking so much from them as well.”

Motion lines are another comic trait. Drawings are two dimensional and static. Artists can simulate movement with lines or “zip ribbons” as they are sometimes called. Over the years, these lines have become highly stylized or diagrammatic.

Comics utilize word balloons and sound effects to convey anger, madness, tension, joy, loudness, and many other feelings can be created with color and line called synaesthetics. The background of a frame will assist us in “reading” the feelings or characters’ inner states. Word balloons are the most widely used tool, but letter style and shape of the balloon deliver meaning as well.

Ivan Burnetti, an Italian-American cartoonist who was strongly influenced by Charles M. Schultz, uses simple shapes to draw his pictures. His methods make illustrating much easier for those of us who have not been blessed with a talent to draw. The students will have an opportunity to see his work for influence and ideas.

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that being a leader should be practiced to take ownership over learning and growing. Students will learn that comics have specific components that make them different than other books. Finally, the students will understand that art can help one learn, understand and remember content and express ideas.

Essential Questions:

What are leadership qualities and how will they help me and help build a community of learners?

What makes up a comic or graphic novel?

What are some real life examples of the Seven Habits?

Classroom Activities

Introducing the Seven Habits by Steven Covey

Though not everyone is licensed to use Leader in Me, a search online will produce lessons about leadership, goal setting and positive habits. I will specifically be doing lessons on what is a leader. My first lesson will be for the students to answer that question in their own words and write their answers on paper and decorate the border with examples of leadership. We will discuss their ideas as a class and “sew” those squares into a WHAT IS A LEADER quilt to display.

The second lesson makes a chart about leaders. From students' ideas, we will make a chart with LEADERS at the top of the page. A line coming down from that heading will attach to a horizontal line with three branches labeled ARE, CAN and HAVE. Below that I will write another horizontal line with ACT, SAY and THINK. Below each section I will write the students' ideas about what leaders ARE, such as kind, respectful, responsible. What leaders can DO like take charge, get up in front, stand out. I will write what leaders HAVE such as honesty and compassion. How leaders ACT- inclusive, do the right thing. What leaders SAY, such as encouraging words. Finally, what leaders THINK: positively and about others. All the ideas provided by the class will be discussed and displayed.

Finally, students will discuss the difference between being bossy and being a leader. Five minute books on YouTube called *Bossy Flossy* by Paulette Bogan and *A Children's Book About Being Bossy* by Joy Berry are available. (These book use speech bubbles like a comic).

After that, I will teach about how habits, something we do automatically and without thinking, helps meet goals. Making a T-chart, I would ask the students to list some Good Habits and Bad Habits. I can follow this discussion up with some video books on YouTube about habits. *Eat Your Peas* by Kes Gray is a story about a mother trying to get her daughter to eat her peas. The mother promises her all kinds of things that are not healthy or good habits. They seek a Win-Win when the daughter agrees to eat her peas if mom will eat her sprouts. Other YouTube videos are available with just a quick search of "stories about habits."

We will continue to talk about habits through the use of picture books. Some books I have selected for my interactive read aloud to teach about habits are: *Berenstains' The Berenstain Bears and the Bad Habit* and *Berenstain Bears Teasing*, Hoban's *Bread and Jam for Francis*, Brown's *DW the Picky Eater*, and Rice's *Sam Who Never Forgets*.

The students will understand goal setting and accomplishing goals and make a mission statement. We will brainstorm ideas of why we are in school with responses like "to learn," "get smarter," "have fun," "make friends." Then I will ask how they think they will accomplish these goals. Using their ideas, we will create a short mission statement. This year, my classroom theme is "What's your superpower?" Our mission statement may be as simple as: We will be Superheroes! We will listen, share, help others, be nice and stand up to bullies. Whatever the class decides upon will be our mission. We will refer back to it often. If it needs to be revised later, we can change it if needed. In the weeks that follow, each individual child will make his or her own mission statement. Following these initial lessons, I will teach the Seven Habits from *Leader in Me*, which will be listed and outlined later.

Daily Meeting and Building a Community of Learners Activities

Building a community of learners is my goal. I want to invite more cooperation into my classroom and permit children to participate in games while learning. I hold class meetings each day, which like in a classroom, must have rules and routines. The class will establish three to five rules for my meetings such as: 1. Find a spot quickly and quietly for meeting 2. Raise a hand to speak 3. Listen to others politely and respectfully.

Daily Meetings should have four main parts: a greeting to make everyone feel welcomed and appreciated, a time to share, which is optional (a sharing sentence starter can be used to help those reluctant to speak), and a group activity, such as a game or activity or shared reading.

I plan on using a children's book for my main group activity because I am able to use it for my interactive read aloud during reading time. This story may take a day or two to finish reading. Reading activities could be a poem, a quote or book and should be related to a current classroom issue: teamwork, mindfulness, bullying, tattling, anxiety, and the like. Some beginning of the year books that I have selected include: Choi's *The Name Jar*, Galvin's *Teal*, Reynold's *The Dot*, Dannenberg's *First Day Jitters*, Shannon's *Bad Case of the Stripes*, Andreae's *Giraffes Can't Dance*, Keller's *Do Unto Otters*, McCloud's *Have You Filled A Bucket Today?*, Javernic's *What If Everybody Did That?*, and Lucado's *You Are Special*. Following the reading, there will be a class discussion about how the story relates to the trait we are learning. The remaining day(s) of that week, we will do a quick activity associated with the story.

Participating in interesting, diverse, and fast paced class activities are fun for the students. An activity might be to provide each child with a large piece of paper cut into a puzzle piece. Each child writes his or her name in the puzzle's center and draws small picture of what they like or what tells about them. They can share their puzzle piece and discuss how some people drew similar images on their pieces, while others are unique demonstrating not only how we are alike in so many ways, but also how different make us special and interesting. Then we assemble them into a large puzzle and tape them to the wall to show that each individual is a part of our learning community.

Another classroom community activity could be to introduce an ICU box, a comment box that children fill out slips of paper when they see a classmate doing something nice for someone throughout the week. I read the slips out on Fridays. Additionally, one may also want to implement an "I Wish My Teacher Knew" box for the teacher's desk, a place that children can write notes to the teacher about private matters. This means of communication opens students up. On the forms for this container, I added a check box if the child wants to talk about this more privately or just wants me to know what is going on. That way, I know if I should follow up with the child. I also have a section by my

door when children enter in the morning where they may indicate what type of mood they are in or how their morning started off, which helps gauge the day's beginning. An exit ticket for the end of the day helps me keep my finger on the pulse of the classroom and gauge myself and my lessons. I can tell if the children are happy, stressed, bored, or having issues that require my help. These simple items any teacher can set up, and the yield for the children is great. They genuinely feel cared about and safe.

Other lessons might be listening to "Leader in Me" songs online. Children love music and can learn the traits through song. A quick search online for "Leader in Me songs" will provide a bevy of songs created by classrooms all over the world. We can play these songs in the morning, while students are packing up or during other transition times.

Lessons teaching about developing a Growth Mind Set will be key during Morning Meeting times. Students need to understand the value of positive thinking and maintaining a positive attitude.

Teachers need to help their students learn and internalize social skills, especially coping skills. Students need to know what is appropriate when someone is disturbing or distracting them. We can brainstorm appropriate responses: ask them to stop politely, walk away, tell the teacher, ignore it, wait and cool off, join a different group or activity, and so on. We might spend a day learning how to apologize. Another day might be spent on figuring out how big a problem is: 1. Glitch 2. Little Problem 3. Medium Problem 4. Big Problem 5. Emergency. Teaching children conflict management skills can be lessons throughout the school year on a variety of topics that children need to utilize daily.

We will spend a day making an anchor chart for how to be a friend. Friends think before they speak, smile and laugh, use kind words, share, stand by one's side, make good choices, look at one when one's are talking, listens, forgives, and likes similar activities. We may teach conversation starters to help when meeting someone new or being in a new place.

Another crucial skill, teaching how to work as a partner, can be taught step-by-step. First, we have to teach about selecting a good partner or accepting one that is assigned, is difficult for students, so this important lesson must be taught from the beginning. Then students need to learn to make a plan together, start right away by putting first things first. Children must learn to be careful to not be distracted. Additionally, they should be taught to share the work. One person should not do all the work. While working, talk should remain on the task at hand. Tell students that they should praise ideas that are good and helpful to getting a job completed. Finally, students need to be taught to work hard. Do their best work.

Playing fun games like “Mine Field” is a cooperative game where children have to work together to cross the room without hitting any mines (papers strewn across the floor). Pairs of students can play it blindfolded where one student has to verbally guide the blindfolded child across an obstacle course without hitting any mines. I play this at recess where I scatter different objects across the course. The seeing partner has to use words to guide their partner away from any object in the way, is a difficult skill for children because they have to put themselves in someone else’s shoes and see from a different point of view than their own. This game can also be played where the pairs have to get across the course only on “island” (laminated papers) that they have to pick up and move as they travel. Only allowing them a few of the patches makes them problem solve and work together to reach safety. If they fall off the islands, the sharks will get them! Again, typing in “games for working with a partner” will yield many fun activities one can try in class or at recess.

An activity might be to teach decision making skills. We might discuss coping skills like positive self -talk, deep breathing, going for a walk, talking to a friend, playing a sport, hanging out with friends, taking a time out, counting to ten, and so on. Some lessons may center on emotions. We can teach the eight basic emotions and their purpose: Anger, Anticipation, Joy, Trust, Fear, Surprise, Sadness and Disgust. We can spend time teaching children how to give a compliment. Teaching starters such as “I think you...,” “I like how you...,” “Thank you for ...,” “You are good at...,” or “it was nice of you to...” These skills help children navigate their world. Why do we allow them to muddle through with happenstance when we can teach these skills directly and help them become successful leaders? These are just some examples of small lessons that can be done, following a great book that the children will enjoy hearing.

On the last day of the week, I find a meaningful saying to discuss with the class. I usually start with Gandhi’s “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” A new one will hang up in the room each week. I usually try to find quotes relevant to what is happening at school or in the world. Sometimes I just choose ones that are special or meaningful to me, such as “why blend in when you were born to stand out” by Dr. Seuss. Or “happiness is not the absence of problems. It’s the ability to deal with them” by Steve Maraboli. Or “A ship is always safe at the harbor- but that is not what it is built for” – John Shedd. Estee Lauder said, “I never dreamed about success. I worked for it.” Looking online will provide so many inspirational thoughts that not only teach lesson, but also expose students to the people who stated them.

Finally, I end my meeting with a message about working as a team and cooperation. Allowing students to run these meetings is a great way to foster leadership and responsibility. Morning meetings are an additional way to address speaking and listening standards.

Social and Emotional Learning Through Stories

In my Morning Meeting, I read a story that pertains to one of the seven habits and applies to what that may be happening within the class. I use picture books to reinforce the new habit that I have taught and circle around through the traits several times over the course of the year. Social Emotional Learning can also include books about positive traits that one wants to instill in students. Some suggested books are (Books About Perseverance): Jordan's *Salt in His Shoes*, Spires' *The Most Magnificent Thing*, Steig's *Brave Irene*, Judge's *Flight School*, Jeffers' *How To Catch A Star*, Konnecke's *You Can Do It, Bert*, Magoon's *I've Painted Everything*, Paley's *Luigi and the Barefoot Races*, (Books About a Growth Mindset): Hickley's *Nadia The Girl Who Couldn't Sit Still*, Beaty's *Rosie Revere, Engineer*, Cook's *Thanks for the Feedback, I Think*, Keats' *Whistle for Willie*, Pett and Rubinstein's *The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes*, and Deak's *Your Fantastic Elastic Brain*.

The first Leader In Me trait, **Be Proactive**, teaches that one is in charge of oneself, teaching a "can do" attitude. Students learn they may choose their actions, attitudes, and moods without blaming others. For this trait, I read the following stories: Hoffman's *Amazing Grace*, Piper's *The Little Engine That Could*, Carle's *The Very Lonely Firefly*, and Frauss' *The Carrot Seed*.

If adventurous this trait can be taught with a phenomena. Take a bottle of soda and shake it up, or do the classic Mentos in a two liter bottle of soda. Obviously, the soda is going to explode. Explain to students that sometimes our expectations do not go as we expect them to happen, and we are shaken up. As a result, sometimes we explode, just like the soda. This is being REACTIVE. Ask for examples of when the students have exploded and list them. Explain to the students that explosions happen when unexpected events occur sometimes causing explosions in bad ways, but also in good ways. Ask for some examples of good explosions and list them. Then repeat the shaking up of the bottle with a water bottle. Explain that PROACTIVE means that one has a choice about how you react to things. You can act like the water bottle- it is shaken up, but it did not explode, it goes with the flow. Then I ask them to answer this question: Is it hard to stay calm (like the water bottle) even when expectations do not as planned? Why or why not? I give them time to write down their responses. If the teacher does not want to use soda and water, substitute with a balloon or a rubber band. Stressing that we get "stretched to our limits" before we explode or break, but when we are proactive the balloon and rubber band are "flexible."

Then I will teach the lesson about how "we carry our weather around with us." We discuss the concept of Circle of Influence or Control. Students discuss that they can control their thoughts, words, choices, actions, reactions, and future. Anyone else is out

of the circle of control. They can draw their own circle of control pages to focus on what they have the ability to change and not to dwell on what they cannot. I will have the kids work in groups to show what it is like on “rainy days,” “sunny days,” and “stormy days,” and so on. We will share out our presentations of emotions.

After teaching what PROACTIVE means, I will ask each student to rank themselves on a continuum of “how well they are at being Proactive” on the board. We will revisit this question in a few weeks after we have read some of the stories and continued our discussions and learning to serve as a measure for improvement for the students as the year goes on.

The second trait, **Begin with the End in Mind**, teaches children to plan ahead and set goals. Students learn to think about their choices and how will it affect their future before they act. For this trait, I will read: Carle’s *The Very Busy Spider*, Keats’ *Whistle for Willie*, Cronin’s *Click, Clack Moo Cows That Type*, Kimmel-Smith’s *Bobby Baseball*, Clements’ *The School Story*, Williams’ *Galimoto*, and Carle’s *Pancakes, Pancakes*.

When we plan ahead and set goals, we do what has meaning and will make a difference. We teach that each child is an important part of the classroom and that each should work towards being a good citizen. So I will ask the children to answer this question: “What is the “end” for you? What do you hope to be doing in ten years from now?” I ask them to make a list of what they want to do in life because many children do not think about the future. They are the “right here, right now” generation. With cell phones and all our technology, everything must be immediate: fast food, instant messaging, Snap Chat, microwaves, and all the rest. How can we expect them to get to their future unless they plan, or even think, for the future?

I will ask the children to think about who they are, to draw a picture of what represents them. It can be a plant, animal, object or whatever they want to draw. Then they have to explain why they chose that item to represent them. I may draw a tree to represent myself, explaining that a tree gives to others. A tree provides many resources such as a safe place to rest, shade for comfort, oxygen to breathe, food in the form of fruit, wood for warmth of a fire. A tree has deep roots. A tree can stand by itself or become part of a huge forest. Trees are a symbol of life and longevity. We will share our drawings and discuss them.

The next lesson will be to pretend we are ten years in the future. The newspaper has decided to write a story and they are going to interview some friends and family to write the article. What would one hope those people would say? We will share and discuss these responses and talk about why they desire those responses.

All these experiences will bring us to making mission statements. First, we are going to create one for the classroom. What would we like other classes to say about us? We will brainstorm ideas, combine the answers we like and ultimately create a mission statement with about five parts to be signed and displayed in our classroom. If at any time during the school year students suggest that we need to make revisions or additions to our mission statement, we will make amendments.

After the class mission, children will be required to write personal mission statements. Step one will be to make a web with names in the middle with words that describe them. Then, ask them to think about what kind of person they want to be and list four or so character traits or qualities of that kind of person (hard worker, talented, smart...). Now the students will use those two lists to write a paragraph about the person that they want to become. An example may be: My mission is to learn a lot, work hard, take care of myself and my family, get better at _____, and be kind. The children may share their mission statements if they choose to share because of the personal component to these statements. Again, upon completing our mission statements, I ask each student to rate themselves on a continuum about where they rank for "Beginning With the End in Mind". Mission statements can be revisited several times throughout the year to be reassessed.

The third, **Put First Things First**, instructs students learn to do what they have to do first before doing what they want. Work first, then play. This trait focuses on minimizing distractions and spending time on what is important. For this trait, we will read books like London's *Froggy Gets Dressed*, Galdone's *The Little Red Hen*, Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Albert's *Alejandro's Gift*, Havill's *Jamaica's Find*, and Aesop's *Ant and the Grasshopper*.

This trait teaches children to set priorities, make a schedule and follow a plan. The first lesson, I will ask the students to set two or three goals for themselves for school and for home. However, goal setting means planning around the most important, or big events in your life. These are called BIG ROCKS. After that, we can get to the less important events that take time, or SMALL ROCKS. So we will brainstorm a list of small activities that are time wasters, the hobbies that are fun and relaxing, but when you do them too often, they get in the way of important responsibilities (video games, TV, computer time...). I will ask families to write out their schedules with their children from start to finish as a homework assignment. Then we can see if they are wasting time, or putting first things first. After each child looks over their existing schedule, I will have them select one goal for home and one goal for school. They will write their goal in the center of a web diagram. In the off shoot circles of the web, they will write down actions they can do that will help them achieve their goals. We will share and discuss. The children should do their best to achieve these goals, and we will revisit them in about a

week. I will ask the students to rank themselves on a continuum for putting first things first.

The next trait, **Think Win-Win**, teaches that everybody wins through problem solving, and thinking about what other's want, as well as, compromising and developing ideas where everyone gets a little of what they want by making everyone happy and having some ownership. For Win-Win, I read Lionni's *Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse*, Pfister's *The Rainbow Fish*, Hutchins' *The Doorbell Rang*, Carle's *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle*, and Udry's *Let's Be Enemies*.

For Think Win-Win, the students will look at a picture of someone standing atop a pile of other people. I ask, "Is this a good picture for Think Win-Win?" The students write their answers down with an explanation. If they disagree, I ask them to draw a better picture, or a short comic of two to three cells, to represent Win-Win. Win-Win wants everyone to be a success. We do not have to put other down to get what we want. When there is conflict, we can problem solve for a solution. We need to teach our students that there are things that prevent Think Win-Win such as stepping on others, like in the picture, thinking one cannot accomplish tasks, thinking one is better than someone else, or letting someone else win without working for it. Being too nice is not Think Win-Win, people need to work for success. Students need confidence to not worry about what others think. Students also need to be happy when others succeed. Then I ask, where do you fall on the continuum of Think Win-Win?

Seek First to Understand and Then to Be Understood means to listen before speaking. This teaches children to listen to others, without interrupting, to understand other's points of view, even if they are different from their own. We will focus on these books: Cannon's *Stella Luna*, Scieszka's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, Wise-Brown's *The Runaway Bunny*, Eastman's *Are You My Mother?*, and Guaribo's *Is Your Mama a Llama?*.

For this trait the students will learn to listen to others, not allowing their minds to wander or pretending to listen. It also does not include listening to only parts that one find interesting or until one is able to bring the conversation back to talking about oneself. The student should think about which listening roadblocks they use most often? When we listen to others it makes everyone feel good, so this is a great way to make friends. We create an anchor chart of ways we can show others that we are listening. Then think about list of people you know that listen well. I introduce the concept of active listening, or stating back in your own words what was heard from the speaker.

I teach that people say a lot with their body language as well. We will play a game of charades, acting out emotions. This will help children identify certain ways of expressing

emotions. After talking about understanding, I will ask the children to rate themselves on the continuum.

Synergize shows students that working together is best, and valuing the strengths of others. Synergize teaches children in working together as a team, more can get accomplished, resulting in even better solutions. Books about this topic may be covered with Hall's *Ox Cart Man*, Lionni's *Swimmy*, Williams' *A Chair for My Mother*, Bridwell's *Clifford's Spring Clean Up*, and Zimelman's *Statue of Liberty*.

Valuing other people's strengths and being able to learn from others, teaches how to get along with others, even people who are different from us. We stress "two heads are better than one". (The teacher may read a short chapter book prior called *Amazing Days of Abby Hayes: Two Heads Are Better Than One* or some other story to introduce this topic.) We become better, more interesting people when we let other people into our life and our work. I ask the kids, "Do you agree or disagree with the idea that: "Two heads are better than one?" I have them write their responses. We will chart and discuss their answers. Following that lesson, I have the students make a list of times when they work with other people at home, school, church, sports..., again we chart and discuss why we need to work with others. The teacher may read many stories that fit here: *Sneetches*, *You are Special*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Woolbur*, *Elmer*, *Stall tall Molly Lou Melon* and many others.

The students will start to identify that people have various strengths, so the next lesson I do is to ask each child to think about their own strengths. They draw pictures and label what they are good at doing. We share these, pointing out everyone's differences and uniqueness. The children think about why that is a good. How do our differences help us when we are working? How would being the same make things more difficult? Would it just be easier if everyone looked the same, acted the same and so on? Following this class discussion, I pair the children up to work with someone very different from themselves. They fill in a Venn Diagram comparing themselves to their partner, writing how they are alike in the middle of the Venn. We will share and discuss the Venns.

Then I find a quote that lends itself to learner from others. Bridget Burns said, "if you think you know everything, there's nothing else to learn, until you learn... you don't know everything." Or one may use "Experience is a master teacher, even when it's not our own" by Gina Greenlee. I ask the children if they understand what these phrases are telling us. Then I ask the children to think about who they might like to work with in the classroom. I ask them to fill out a form listing the names and the reasons why they might like to work with them. I can use these for grouping and paired work later in the school year.

The last step is to teach about how to work in pairs. This was written about already, so I will summarize by saying the children should: define the problem, share their way, my way, brainstorm together and develop the best solution. I facilitate the class filling out a four spaced anchor chart. In the middle will be the word SYNERGIZE. In each corner will be Looks Like, Sounds Like, Our Picture and We Promise. The students fill out their papers with their own ideas. Once complete, we share and develop our expectations for Synergizing. Finally, the last part of teaching Synergize is to locate their position on the continuum for how they feel they Synergize.

Finally, **Sharpen the Saw** is based upon Stephen Covey's quote, "We must never become too busy sawing to take time to sharpen the saw." What the concept embodies is preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have- you. It means having a balanced program for self-renewal in the four areas of your life: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. It shows the children that you need to have balance in your life, teaching children to take care of their body by eating right and sleeping properly, it shows the importance of having a balance between school and extracurricular activities. Sharpening the Saw allows children to learn how to become a better person. This trait may be reinforced with books such as Yolán's *Owl Moon*, Keats' *The Snowy Day*, Willems' *Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late*, Henry Johnson's *Hikes to Fitchburg*, and Prelutsky's *Me I Am!*

Teaching this trait starts by showing the children a picture of a man trying to saw through a tree. I tell them that this man has been trying to cut through this tree for three hours. What might be his problem? I solicit answers and record them. Hopefully, someone will suggest that he saw is dull and needs sharpening. We will discuss this meaning and then apply these ideas to taking care of your mind, body and spirit.

We talk about eating properly, getting enough rest, spending time with family and friends, and other habits of learning and growing. I have each student fill out a four spaced sheet. In each space they fill out what they do for their body (exercise, eat right, sleep), their brain (read, learn, study), their soul (pray, listen to music, art), and their heart (laugh, play). Then we talk about what we do to improve our brain and what we do that does not improve our brain. We brainstorm a list of "Ways to Feed Our Brain". We will do the same for Our Soul, Our Body and Our Heart. Finally, I will ask the students to rank themselves on the continuum of Sharpening the Saw.

Reading Graphic Novels/Making the Comic Books

I use the end of the day to read graphic novels to my students throughout the school year. Many of the students are already fans of graphic novels, such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Owly Series*, and *Captain Underpants* and many others, so familiarizing students with this genre should be easy.

I begin teaching the characteristics of comics that were stated earlier. I recommend Scott McCloud's book (a graphic novel by the way), *Understanding the Invisible Art of Comics* to help teachers learn about comics for this phase of the unit. The children need to be taught about the gutter, motion lines, closure, speech balloons, sound effects and such. Having the students draw in a journal for a few minutes a day helps develop their willingness to draw and improve drawing skills. Having said that, most children do not need any encouragement to draw, most love to express themselves through art.

Once the seven traits have been taught and reviewed through picture books and Morning Meetings, they children will create their own graphic novel producing a book which explains the habits from *Leader in Me*. They must restate in their own words what the trait means and demonstrate a real world situation. We will work on these novels one trait at a time until they are completed.

The novels are a part of our daily Writer's Workshop. The students use the tools and skills we learned through our writing class, along with what they have learned about the characteristics of comic books to edit, peer edit and revise their writing. The illustrations are also discussed to make sure a clear message is being presented in their graphic novel. Once the children have completed their novels, we share them. Then they can be on display in the library for others to read to reinforce our Seven Habits for Successful Students. Parents will be invited to attend a publisher's celebration when students present their comics books.

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