

## **Using Folk Tales, Parables and Socratic Seminars To Create a Thoughtful Community In the Classroom**

*Rose Fehr*

Students at risk fall through the cracks of the educational system. This is not a new or novel statement but one which has been the focus of a great many people trying to figure out why it happens and how we can prevent it. Its causes are many. Education is often cited as having which has failed these students. Truly someone has or, more likely, a large group of people have. But as educators we can only keep trying to hone our skills to reach these and all children. I have three goals in this unit. One is to help the students who are in my classes listen, read and comprehend what they read better. The second is to help them strengthen their own thought processes so that they can make better decisions regarding their path in life. Third is to help them express their thoughts and get along better with their peers. These three goals can be reached in the classroom by teaching reading through Socratic method and constructivist teaching methods and by using fables, parables and folk tales as the medium of instruction.

### **Academic Setting**

Truman Middle School sits on the outskirts of Albuquerque on the south west side. The largest neighborhood, called West Gate is a low income neighborhood. Albuquerque Public School's Research and Development Office reports that our student population is 79.8% Hispanic, 11.2% Anglo, 4.9% Black 3.5% Native American, and .6% "other."

APSRDA also indicates that generally our community has achieved a lower level of education than the communities of Albuquerque Public Schools. While 18% of the APS's community members report having no high school diploma, 29% of Truman's have none. While 26% of the APS community members have a college degree, only 7% of the Truman population does. This ties in to the lower range of income opportunities available to community member. Looking at the mean household income of middle school families, which runs from \$22,421 to \$62,935, Truman falls to the lower side with \$28,641. A third of our incomes fall between \$10,000 and \$24,000, and a little under half fall between \$25,000 - \$49,999.

These figures also support the fact that 18% of the community residents are living in poverty, 12% are unemployed and 9% are receiving public assistance; 32% of the children in the community 12 -17 years of age are living in poverty. The environmental influence of all this economic difficulty is seen in the students who come to our school. The percentage of students who receive free lunch and reduced cost lunch has increased from 1995-1996 figures of 71.7% to 1999 - 2000's figures of 78.8%. Poverty appears to be increasing along with the need for help. Many of our students rely on the school as their main food supply. They also rely on the school to provide them with a stable caring environment. The school has been through many transformations. It is organized into teaching and learning teams, some of which travel grade level with their students and some of which remain at grade level. We have three grade levels of Dual-language teaching teams which teach in Spanish and English, each teacher handling several content areas in their own language. These have been working well. The other teachers work in teams also to supply mutual support and to give the students the feeling of belonging to an extended family when they are in school.

### **Class Setting**

The students I teach are C - level special education students. This means that they

spend half or more of their days in a special education setting with approximately 15 students to one teacher and a modified curriculum. I will be part of a team which includes another bilingual teacher and an educational assistant who will be with us two thirds of the time. I will be the member of the team who teaches reading, language arts and social studies. My students will include sixth, seventh and eighth graders. The students I will be teaching will have reading levels that extend from 2nd grade up to grade level. Most of them will be labeled learning disabled, however, there may also be a sprinkling of students with other labels attached such as gifted and/or seriously emotionally disturbed. This will usually be in addition to learning disabled.

Taking my last year's class as a model, one fourth of my class will be living in a two parent household. Half will be living with one parent and one quarter will be living in some other arrangement, usually with a relative. Often parents or guardians have two jobs. Students this year told me they didn't see adults often due to the long hour they work or the strange working hours. These students often have lots of free time after school in which they just hang out around the neighborhood.

West Gate is outside of Albuquerque and there are few activities for the children. It is located out of the city proper, as a kind of appendage, with few business, no malls, movie theaters or anything else that would attract children. Most activities are organized around the family or just hanging out in the ditches or fields.

Due to lack of other more meaningful activity, gangs play a large role in student's lives especially when they approach adolescence. Crime and gang activity in West Gate are higher than in many other parts of the city. Many of the students get involved not only through friends but through family members who have been involved for years. As one of my students put it, "I can't use my family for an excuse to stay out of the gang. It's my brother and sister who helped rank me in. They know what's up." Sometimes it is generational also with aunts, uncles and parents being part of the gang, so this is not a simple problem for the students to solve if they want to stay out.

### Approaches and Justifications

Lisbeth Shorr points out, "Many successful schools are intentional communities." (258). I would like to scale down this model to something more attainable for myself and my students and create an intentional community in my classroom and on my team. By intentional I mean that I will attempt, through methods outlined below, to help mold their characters, values, and thinking abilities, share with the students and their families their achievements, and move towards academic goals.

The approach to moral and character development I intend to use was presented by Nel Noddings in *The Challenge to Care In Schools*. She presents moral education as a process rather than a product. The first of four steps to a moral education includes modeling: "...We do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them.[1]

The second component is dialogue which is: "...a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation."

Dialogue can be part of the educational setting as a search for how subject matter applies to the life of the student and teacher, how a process is developed, how we feel or think about what is being learned, or even how we approach learning it. We can most easily care for someone or something when we understand them. We cannot demonstrate something we cannot feel due to lack of knowledge.

Practice is the third component. We need to find ways to help students find ways to

demonstrate caring in their lives. Being cared for, they can then care for animals in the classroom, care for little brothers and sisters, care about information they need to learn, care for classmates who are struggling to learn what they understand.

The last component is confirmation. This is where, we, as the adult, find whatever is good and positive about the others and translate that into a statement or approval. In *The Irreducible Needs of Children*, Brazelton and Greenspan also encourage the use of dialogue and care in the development of children as a necessary tool for intellectual and emotional development. They view this as a process, not something that can be plugged into children when they reach the correct age. They understand child and intellectual development as a result of interactions with adults and caretakers in the child's life that can be a help or hinderance depending on the match up of the individuals and the empathy they have for one another.

Character education programs, as presented to schools, presuppose that all the "bad" kids need is to be taught to be good the way the program director believes they should be, ignoring the social environment that influenced the values and any problem solving the child may have already done to cope with their environment. As Alfie Kohn indicates, social sciences research shows that most of the behavior of children is a result of the situations they find themselves in, not some predetermined game plan they set out with. Character education programs appear to believe that some kids decide to be bad, or if we just tell them to be good, they will be. Wouldn't it make life easy if it were true? It's own failure indicates it is not.

Safety, both personal and emotional, are important issues for students at school. At Truman one of the ways we try to ensure this is through "Standardized Dress," so that weapons are less likely to be concealed and all students look similar despite economic circumstances. In a classroom, safety depends primarily on how the students interact. Feeling safe means not being hurt, not feeling threatened, not having others ridicule you, etc. How a class preserves this safety is a difficult issue for a teacher. One method is to have students file in, sit down, not talk and get right to work in individual seats. This helps keep problems from happening in the classroom but does not enable students to learn to settle the small issues that arise in a normal school day. Many books and articles offer solutions such as playing games and other activities. The interaction does break down barriers, but I found this year that even when some barriers were broken down, the pro-social attitudes and communication skills were missing among the students. A student's looking at another student a certain way was perceived as hostile. Quietness was perceived as threat. Accidents were perceived as intentional. This whole matter of how people get along in a group was an issue. As found in their review of the research, Javad H. Kashani and his colleagues et. al. report about delinquent youths:

...these youth more frequently maintain hostile attributional biases than do their nonaggressive peers. Such biases involve inappropriately interpreting the behaviors of others as hostile in the absence of true hostile intent (Crick and Dodge)

This was observable in my classroom this year. Working through the negative emotional representations of others is only possible through ongoing dialogue with the other parties in a non threatening environment. Development of new ways of dealing with interaction can be worked on in a group dynamic when working on engaging material.

Current brain research indicates that students learn better when the emotions are engaged in the process. In fact, Antonio Damasio indicates that the emotions are integral in making good decisions. In order to engage the emotions, and thus the brain of the student, it is important to supply an environment that gives them reason to

become involved. At the age of adolescence (anyone who has been involved with this group will agree) social interaction is the most potent motivator. To an adolescent, time to talk with peers is one of the most popular rewards you can offer, so applying this tactic to education seems to make a great deal of sense. By applying this need for friendship and discourse to an instructional goal is the best of both worlds and may serve as a motivator to help get less desirable activities such as reading and writing done.

One area that is often under emphasized in teaching special education students is development of higher level thinking skills. It is thought that since the students often can't decode material efficiently, that they cannot engage critical thinking on a higher level, that they cannot understand strategies and use them regarding reading and writing. Research indicates (Vaughn) that such is not the case. Due to the complex nature of our world and the need for the ability to think critically in job and life situations becoming more and more necessary, special education students will find themselves at a disadvantage if they are not encouraged to develop these skill, skills that they can use effectively.

### Socratic Seminar

The method I will employ is the Socratic seminar . This method allows for a lot of oral processing and learning such social skills as how to take turns, how to criticize an idea not a person, how to think something through, how to listen well, as well as how to perform the types of skills they will need like reading, comprehension, public speaking, etc... Margaret Metzger reports her use of Socratic seminar enabled her students to read with more comprehension and become more involved in their learning. Her use of it was as a "meta cognitive skill forming medium" to have the students not only understand what they read but to look at the processes they used to do the understanding. Thus her students became more aware of their learning processes.

The method involves asking an open ended or "fat" question about an issue or a piece of instructional material and letting the students do the answering. Any teacher knows the look of disengagement that comes over the students when the lecture goes on too long. If they are doing the work and are engaged in the material, the look is banished. Bernard Jensen reports that students who engage in discussion about material after a short lesson use the information significantly more that students who are just lectured and turned loose on the world.

The format involves students seated in a circle. In large classes there are two circles in order for all individuals to have a chance to enter into the discussion. With a class of 15 I will try it both ways and see which one works better. The material the students will be discussing will come directly or indirectly from lessons covered the previous day

The teacher's job is to pose questions but not answers. A question is asked about some universal issue. The teacher can ask clarifying questions but should stay out of offering opinions. The teacher focuses the direction of the discussion by using questions that cause students to examine their thinking. Comments and questions that start with "Could you clarify..." or "What if.." or "How about if..." are directive but open ended so that the students can examine their thoughts. This direction of the thought process is important to help the students shape their thinking and is lacking in the interactions between adults and children in many settings in modern society. As *A Tribe Apart* and *Monster* point out, children left to solve life's problems, and solve them they will, will find their own means (satisfying to themselves) of dealing with the big issues like their place in society and what is moral and what is not. Children will grow up whether they get guidance or not; however, without guidance their thinking may not be useful to

themselves or to others.

By remaining non directive, the teacher can assume the role of a guiding but safe person for them to bounce their ideas off of who will accept them as they are and help them come to their own conclusions. This desire to have an adult to empathetically help them develop the means to cope with their own feelings of selfishness, anger and disappointment is what Brazelton, and Greenspan believe to be an important part of their maturing process.

The other important teacher responsibility is to maintain class norms so that all students feel safe. This should be done by modeling how questions should be asked, and clarifying how people should answer each other. If a reply is phrased as a put down, a teacher may rephrase to show how it is done. If norm violations continue, the student could be given an other assignment and sent out. Teachers can take notes on replies to questions, what issues are brought up, who appeared to do most of the talking etc. Grades can be given, if needed, on participation.

This method of dialogue seems to reflect the best way for caring to occur in a classroom and for intellectual development to be encouraged at the same time. This type of communication is especially difficult for the students who have difficulty with impulse control and are communication impaired. This would be a good exercise in learning control, along with all the other skills.

### Folk Tales

Folk tales and parables seem to be natural material to use with the students. All cultures have folk tales that they use to disseminate the ideas of their society. Many give lessons, sometimes conflicting, about how the world works. These stories have persisted through many hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of years.

The use of stories, especially highly emotional stories or stories with some kind of trick in them, is an established educational tactic used world wide. Stories supply a frame work that helps implant ideas and concepts into the mind of the student, giving them a way to recall the ideas taught by linking them to something pleasurable and familiar. The more interesting or emotionally reactive the story, the more it will create an impression in the student's mind. For learning disabled students, abstract knowledge that does not have a basis in concrete living experience is difficult. Storing, retrieval and processing are the areas these students have the most problem with. By using aspects of life already familiar to them, half the battle is won. They already have the organization to attach it to, and paths to retrieve it from, which have been used already. Again brain research indicates that the brain reinforces pathways that are used over and over, and prunes those not used.

As indicated by Caine and Caine, the ideas and concepts that are important to the student are those which will keep them engaged in the learning process. By stressing the learning process, why something is being taught, and the method by which it is taught, students can understand the meaning of the educational process occurring in their classroom. By using universal themes of life, the curriculum ties into the interest base of all students who are struggling with these issues on a daily basis.

The strength of these stories and the eagerness my own students show me when I read or tell them stories, indicates to me that this is a way to get their attention and have them focus on my lesson. This and the use of concrete images, like animals in different situations (something they were used to in elementary school), makes them comfortable with the material. I then use it to move their thinking beyond the concrete to more

universal realms. This is the age that they start to internalize values and generalize (Brazelton), and if these students are not able to make this movement from the childish to a more mature mode of thought, they will be stuck in an immature problem solving mode.

Folk tales from different cultures will also help the students to understand that even if the people look different, live in a different climate, and call their homes and food by different names, there is a common thread that travels throughout the human social construct: how to get along with others. By moving into the minds and lives of those telling the story, perhaps some of the barriers between different looking and acting people can be brought down.

### Parables

The parable is a different sort of story and I will introduce it to students after going over folk tales repeatedly. The reason for that is that parables are often open ended, not having one easy answer to any question. My students have been through years of feeling that their ideas are wrong (since they had to go through much education in general education classes wherein they did not succeed and others did before they were put in special ed. classes). This process, for many of the students, is hurtful. They don't understand how others are succeeding when they don't, and become fearful of volunteering information. Ambiguous material frustrates them and they often close down. Hopefully, by using folk tales to open them up to the process and then involving them into more and more open-ended discussion in class with their peers, parables will not come as such a difficult chore for them but rather as an additional boost to thinking and reasoning.

### Goals

The goals of this unit include having students:

1. conduct a thoughtful conversation with other students
2. reason about major issues like moral issues in the abstract.
3. apply some reading and writing strategies such as prediction, and sequencing.
4. use the stories and discussions to understand how to act effectively and deal with others.

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## Albuquerque Public School Standards

### STRAND IV: EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE: SPEAKING

**CONTENT STANDARD:** The student speaks effectively for different audiences and purposes (e.g., to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze) using appropriate speaking strategies and conventions.

**BENCHMARK:** The student develops and demonstrates proficiency and competence in speaking strategies and in appropriate speaking conventions to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze for a variety of purposes and audiences.

### PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

#### Speaking Strategies

1. Demonstrates proficiency with speaking strategies:

enhances delivery, using strategies such as eye contact, gestures, body language, volume, and pace, uses oral clues

(e.g., "what if," "very likely," "I'm unsure of") to indicate levels of certainty (II A.3), and clarifies, illustrates, and expands upon topics during discussions (II A.2).

### Speaking Conventions

2. Demonstrates proficiency with speaking and language conventions (e.g., grammar, standard English, diction): uses simple, compound, and complex sentences in classroom presentations and discussions (II B.1), demonstrates an awareness of language conventions and usage during oral presentations (II B.7), and identifies and corrects errors in everyday speech (II B.8).

### Speaking Applications

3. assumes a variety of roles (e.g., active listener, discussion leader, facilitator, reporter/synthesizer) in group discussions and whole class seminars (I D.1, II A.1) paraphrases detailed instructions or information, demonstrates continued progress in developing and delivering speeches that describe, inform, and/or persuade.

5. Produces informational products and/or presentations that communicate information effectively to a specific audience

## STRAND V: RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE: LISTENING AND VIEWING - Grade 6

**CONTENT STANDARD:** The student demonstrates, analyzes, evaluates, and reflects upon the skills and processes used to communicate by listening to and viewing a variety of auditory and visual works.

**BENCHMARK:** The student comprehends, analyzes, and interprets formal and informal auditory and visual works, including multimedia presentations

## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

### Listening/Viewing Strategies

1. Organizes information that is heard or viewed: paraphrases the information, differentiates between main idea and details (I A.2) makes connections to related topics/information, and asks questions when unsure of information.

2. Develops and applies appropriate criteria to evaluate the quality of communication (I C.3): draws conclusions based on evidence, reasons, or relevant information, and considers the implications, consequences, or impact of those conclusions.

3. Explores expressive materials that are read, heard, or

viewed (I A.3).

#### Listening/Viewing Applications

4. Follows multistep oral and written directions for a procedure (I D.4).
6. Interacts appropriately in group settings by asking relevant questions, listening responsively and respectfully, and understanding the speaker's verbal and nonverbal messages (I A.5).
7. Reflects on learning experiences by describing personal learning growth and change in perspective (I A.6).

#### STRAND III: EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE: WRITING

**CONTENT STANDARD:** The student writes effectively for different audiences and purposes (e.g., to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze) using appropriate writing strategies and conventions.

**BENCHMARK:** The student develops and uses writing strategies and conventions across content areas to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze for a variety of purposes and audiences.

#### PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

##### Writing Strategies

1. Uses the writing process to create a final product: composes two or more paragraphs with topic sentences, supporting details, appropriate, logical sequence, and sufficient elaboration (II B.4), proofreads own writing for spelling and edits for writing conventions and format (II B.6), reflects on and revises writing by (II C.3): clarifying ideas, adding descriptive words and phrases, sequencing events and ideas, combining short, related sentences, and strengthening word choice.
2. Uses the elements of effective writing (i.e., idea, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions) (II C.1).

##### Writing Applications

5. Uses appropriate types of writing (i.e., descriptive, narrative, expressive, expository, persuasive, and analytical) for the intended purpose and audience (II C.6): creates and delivers presentations about familiar experiences or interests that are organized around a coherent statement (II B.9), and relates plots, settings, and characters to own experiences and ideas, considers main character's point of view, participates in creative interpretations, and makes inferences and draws conclusions about characters and events.

#### **Implementation**

## Supplies

journals (used in classroom in many activities along with this one)  
pipe cleaners (for "Dog and Donkey")  
paper, colored pencils and drawing materials  
La Llorona (found in *The Corn Woman*)  
The Dog and the Donkey (found in *Tales of the Dervishes*)  
The Eagle (appendix)  
"Natural Habits" (*Thirty-Three Multicultural Tales to Tell*)  
"Senor Rattlesnake Learns to Fly " (*Thirty-Three Multicultural Tales to Tell*)  
*The Mightiest Heart* by Lynn Cullen

## General Lesson Plan Format

These plans seem to lend themselves to a formula after the first two lessons. The first two lessons introduce the students to what the format looks like, and the first seminar is likely to be short due to their limited ability to stay on task and the newness of the seminar technique. As student interest grows, the seminars can grow in length. I intend to leave them wanting more rather than hoping the end of class will come quickly.

Day one I will introduce the story or parable. This is a time to brainstorm, introduce prior knowledge, introduce or practice a reading strategy such as prediction or story mapping. Journaling is also a way to internalize the material.

Day two would be the seminar. Have extra materials on hand in case the discussion doesn't work. Also have something for the students that may need to be sent out. Make sure that rules which are broken are dealt with quickly and firmly but kindly. Ask questions to lead, do not tell the "right" answer. See appendix for a list of operating procedures for the teacher from *Live Wire Media* found at [www.livewiremedia.com/socmethod.html](http://www.livewiremedia.com/socmethod.html). Remember, what they come up with is more powerful than what you tell them.

Day 3 (or homework): do some kind of reflective activity that will again bring their discussion and the story to mind. Make large posters to put the projects on and post. Use the stories and their messages to reinforce lessons throughout the year. You are producing a community with its own folk sagas, and helping them think through problems.

day 1	day 2	day 3 or homework
Choose story with lesson you want to focus on. Ask background questions. Choose whether to have them read it, or you read it. Integrate a reading or questioning strategy you are using or want to teach.  Create journal question.	Seminar  Create one beginning openended question and several others to direct the discussion. Use phrases like "Do you think..." or "What if..." and "What is your evidence ..." to direct the seminar.	Create a follow up assignment that will give them time to reflect on the story.

(I include a bibliography of stories and books with emphasized concepts in bold. This list is by no means exhaustive nor are the stories limited to only one interpretation. They are a lot of fun, however, so read, share and enjoy.)

## Lesson Plans

Day 1: Explain to class that we will be exploring folk tales from different parts of the world as part of our literacy and cultural learning. Ask background questions such as:  
Does anyone know any folk tales?  
What are folk tales?  
Why do you think people make up folk tale ?

Explain that many of our fairy tales were originally folk tales. Students may bring up "La Llorona," and if they do (or if they don't) be prepared to read it. Read "La Llorona." Ask them why they think children still like the story and why it was first written.

Journal topic: What is your favorite folk tale? What do you like about it?

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Day 2: Place chairs in a circle before students come in. Assign seats. Take a seat in the circle. Explain that this is a discussion circle where the class will hold discussions about what they have read or heard. This method of teaching is called Socratic seminar and is based on a very old method of teaching done by a very wise man named Socrates. He is so wise that even though he lived hundreds of years ago, people still read about him to discover his wisdom. He was a good questioner. What he did was help people think through important issues for themselves. This is what we will try to do when we are in this circle.

Before we start rules must be set and agreed to. Introduce each, one by one and see if the group is in agreement by asking each student individually if they think it is a good rule and if they have any problem with it. If there is someone who has a problem with a rule, discuss it. See if some other phrasing will work for all. The rules will consist of but are not limited to:

1. Listen while others speak, do not interrupt.
2. Talk about ideas not personalities.
3. Make your statements positive, not put downs.
4. Take turns and let others have a chance to talk.

Ask for any other rules that seem to be needed.

Let them know that you as the teacher also have some rules to follow.

1. Do not tell the students what the correct answer is, there is none.
2. Ask questions that don't have only one right answer.
3. If anyone is being disruptive of the group, have them leave.
4. Do not hog the conversation with your own ideas.

Ask if there are any others they can think of. Tell them that if you break your rules, they should let you know. Perhaps there is a consequence you can all agree on.

For whatever time is left have them engage in a discussion of either some timely topic taken from the news or perhaps one like "What is talking good for?"

The rest of the classes can be done in two day grouping, with homework or three days throughout the semester. They needn't be done as one strung together unit, in fact they probably shouldn't. I am assuming a 30 -45 minute time period for these classes depending on schedule and how the students respond.

Lesson 1 (2-3 days)

*The Mightiest Heart* By Lynn Cullen

Day 1: Show the students where Wales is on the map. Ask what a prince's responsibility to his people are. Talk a little about what a prince's duty is to his people, that he is responsible for their lives moving smoothly. Tell them one thing he must do is must have children, to keep the country at peace.

Ask how many have dogs? As if they want to share about their dogs or dogs they have known.

Read the book. (Put the names of the characters on the board and their titles)

Discuss: Why did Llwelyn have to get married? How did Gelert feel about his prince? How do you think Llwelyn felt after he accused Gelert and Gelert left? What type of lessons do you think Llwelyn will teach Daffy about taking care of and loving his dog?

Journal: Have them write about a pet they have had or someone else has had. Tell a story about it.

Day 2: Have group sit in circle for the seminar. Have rules posted.

Ask them, Who did Llwelyn owe more to, his dog or his kingdom? What makes a friend a good friend? Which is more important, a group of friends or one good friend?

Day 3 or homework: give students the choice of creating a poster, a bumper sticker for the story or an obituary for Gelert. These will be posted on a special *Mightiest Heart* poster on the wall.

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Lesson 2 (2-3 days)

"Natural Habits"

Brainstorm - This story was set in Africa. What do you know about Africa? What kind of animals live there? We talked about friendship when we read *Mightiest Heart*. Do any of your friends make you upset? Go around the room one by one to solicit answers. Here is a story about two friends. The title is "Natural Habits." What do you think the story might be about?

Read story. Get to the part where they have just made a bet to stop doing the scratching and looking around, and ask each student to predict what will happen next and write it on a small slip of paper. Go around room and look at their predictions and ask them why they chose that particular conclusion. Finish story.

Journal: Ask if they have a friend who has habits that bother them and to describe the habits. Is this annoyance worth giving up the friendship?

Day 2: Seminar. Post rules. Ask them, If you found out that someone who was a good friend of yours had AIDS, would you stop being their friend? As the discussion goes on, change the disease to something else like lice, then to a disgusting habit like picking their nose, then to a bad choice like stealing from stores, then from their own parents if there is time.

Day 3: Write or draw a wanted poster for a friend, or an advertisement to go in a magazine. Put it on "Natural Habits" poster posted in the room .

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Lesson 3 (2-3 days)

"Senor Rattlesnake Learns to Fly"

Day 1: Brainstorm what the students know about rattle snakes. Mention the story was from Mexico. Give mini lesson sequencing in stories, how events happen that follow an order that help make the story understandable. Tell students that you and they will develop a story map of the story after you read it.

Read the story. Ask students why the snake opened his mouth. If they answer that the hawk made him, return to the question of whether the snake had to open his mouth or whether the snake had a choice. Then start a simple story map by drawing rectangles connected by arrows indicating the story's sequence on the overhead having a student supply what happened first, another one what happened second, and so on until the story is ended. If they are having problems, ask the student to listen carefully, reread the story slowly, stopping at an event then ask the student what happened. Give lots of compliments.

Day 2: Seminar. Ask them if when they are at Mc Donald's, if they have any choice in what they order. Move the situation to how they speak to their parent when the parent asks them to do something. Then change the situation to some friend who asks them to go to the mall with them. Then move the situation to someone who insults them.

Journal: Name a situation where you made a decision that got you into trouble. See if you can think of something else you could have done.

Day 3: Give students a choice of projects: write a medical report on the rattle snake's injures as if you were a doctor; draw a poster warning snakes not to opening their mouth while in flight; write a short advertisement for a movie about a snake that could not keep it's mouth shut. Put up on poster in room for "Señor Snake Learns to Fly".

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#### Lesson 4 (2-3 days)

##### "The Golden Eagle"

Discuss the word parable. Explain that it is a type of story that often has several ways in which it can be interpreted. It is used to teach. Ask if they have been to church and have heard parables. As if they can think of one to share, and share its meaning. Mention that many religions teach using these short lessons that say something without directly telling them the message. This is so that people have to think.

Have half the student brainstorm what they know about eagles and half brainstorm what they know about chickens. Draw two intersecting circles on the board (a Venn Diagram). Label one eagle and one chicken and the intersection, both. Have them share information. Discuss what information they have in common, (this goes into the circle's intersections) and what characteristics they don't have in common (that goes into the circles labeled eagle and chicken). Ask them how they would tell an eagle and a chicken apart.

Have students read the parable in pairs. Give them five minutes and have them take turns reading sentences.

Ask them if they have any idea about what this parable means. If they answer and you can have them continue, great. Otherwise, model your thinking out loud as to how you would think about the parable if you were trying to figure out its message. It would go something like this. "I know that this story is trying to tell me something since the teacher told me it should but it seems like just a story about some chicken and an stupid eagle. I wonder how it would feel to be an eagle. Flying would be a lot of fun. This poor little eagle never gets to fly. I wonder if the lesson has something to do with not

having any fun. Sounds like a teacher. Maybe living with chickens had something to do with this eagle not having fun. It seems to me that if the eagle knew it was an eagle it probably would be happier than if it was scratching around with a bunch of stupid chickens. Why didn't it know it was an eagle? Maybe it couldn't see itself and only saw chickens. Maybe it had no way to know. But chickens are made for scratching. The eagle was made for flying. It must have been very unhappy as a chicken. Maybe the story has something to do with understanding who you are. Maybe he didn't have a choice but to think of himself as a chicken." Ask students if they think your reasoning is good or bad. Ask them to justify what they think

Journal: Does where you live and how you live determine who you are? Why or why not?

Day 2: Seminar. Question. How do you know what a person is like before you know them? Can a person change how others think about them? How? What if they change their dress, the way they talk, the music they like, where they live?

Day 3: Have students write a story about what the eagle missed seeing, or create a poster of what the eagle missed seeing, or a travel plan about where the eagle could have gone if he knew he was an eagle. Post on "The Eagle" poster.

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Lesson 5 (2-3 days)

"The Dog and the Donkey"

Ask students if they have ever gotten involved in a problem with friends when two other people were arguing and they got in the middle? Has this ever happened to a friend? How did it feel? What happened? Has it ever happened to anyone else like their families, or people on TV or in any other situation? Discuss why police hate to be called to a family argument, how they are sometimes hurt by the arguing family members.

Read the parable. Ask why did the dog bark to drown out his words and the donkey kick the man? Do you know people who like to argue? How are arguing and fighting different? How are they the same?

Journal: Think of a time when you saw two people argue. Why do you think they were arguing? Did it turn into a fight? What made it turn into a fight?

Day 2: Seminar Question: If you have two friends who are fighting, what should you do? What if you tried to help them settle the fight? What if they aren't your friends, should you get involved?

Day 3: Offer students pipe cleaners and tell them that they can make them into figures to represent the characters in the Donkey and the Dog. Or they can make a public service announcement, written, about how to handle arguments between friends.

Day 4: Ask campus policeman to come to class and discuss the problems with trying to keep family members from fighting when they are called to a family problem. Have them tell what they do and why. Have students ask questions.

Assessment

Journals can be assessed for the complexity of their answers and their improvement as far as getting ideas on paper clearly.

The seminars can be assessed by assigning a simple code to interactions such as a ++ for a positive and fruitful interaction, and a very insightful statement can get multiple ++s, + for an interaction that does not lead the conversation further along (but they are trying), no mark for no interaction, and X if the student is sent out of class, I for interruption, - for a negative comment and A for absent. The plusses can be assigned a value of +1 each, the negatives -1, and X a -1 and no comment; a absence would be O. The first one or two seminars will supply a baseline of interaction. Add up the scores for each seminar for each student. Remembering that we are looking for improvement of skill that may be nonexistent at the beginning, improvement in scores will be seen as an A when these grades are put into report card format. This will be scored and kept for each seminar and progress can be assessed by evaluation of the marks. This will assess both the involvement of the students, the evolution of their thoughtfulness, and the safety they feel in sharing their opinions in the class.

Another goal was establishing the sense of community in the classroom. This can be measured by a quick survey (see appendix). Give survey before beginning the seminars, and again near the end.

Also the completion of the projects on the ending day can be assessed. This will give some idea of the seriousness and the internalization of the messages that are received by the students.

Use of the tales by teacher and student for reflection on behavior and thinking when engaged in other classroom activities can be documented by the teacher, and the number of times these are used will be an indication of the retention of the stories and whether they have filled their goal of creating a positive class mythos.

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"Rabbit's Last Race" **Pride.**

"Senor Rattlesnake Learns to Fly" **Not letting other people get to you.**

"Damon and Pythias" **Friendship and honor.**

"The Lion's Whisker" **Patience.**

"Coyote Steals Spring" **Cooperation.**

"Natural Habits" **Friendship.**

"Grandfather's Sled" **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

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"The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse" **A simple life is better than one full of fear.**

"Lion and the Mouse" **Little friends may prove to be great friends.**

"The Mice in Council" **It's easy to propose impossible solutions.**

"The Marriage of the Sun" **It's possible to have too much of a good thing.**

"The Hare and the Tortoise" **Slow and steady wins the race.**

"The Fox and the Grapes" **It's easy to hate what you cannot get.**

"The Ass in the Lion's Skin" **Do not pretend to be something you are not.**

"The Fox and the Crow" **Do not trust flatterers.**

Hayes, Joe. *A Heart Full of Turquoise*. Santa Fe New Mexico: Mariposa Publishing. 1990. **Be Careful With Promises" Be careful what you promise. Make sure you can deliver.**

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"The Muddy Road" **Let go of troubling thoughts.**

"A Parable" **Live in the moment.**

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"Tyl Eulenspiegel and the Marvelous Painting" **Pride.**

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"The Dragon Lover" **One who talks about something all the time, may do so out of fear.**

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"The Boasting Contest" **Greed and boasting.**  
"The Changeling" **Love.**

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## Appendix 1

THE GOLDEN EAGLE adapted from *The Song of the Bird* by Anthony de Mello

A man found an eagle's egg, picked it up carefully and put it in the nest of a backyard. He didn't know it was a chicken's nest. The baby eaglet hatched with the baby chicks and grew up with them.

All of his life the eagle did what the chickens did, thinking he was a chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled. And he would flap his wings and fly a few feet into the air.

Years passed and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the sky. It glided on air currents as if it ruled the skies above hardly beating its powerful wings.

The old eagle looked up in awe. "Who is that?" he asked.

"That's the eagle, the king of the birds," said his neighbor. He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth. We are chickens."

So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was.

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## Appendix 2

### The Socratic Method: A Lesson Plan

1. Define the lesson that you want the students to learn. Decide beforehand what idea you want them to come away with.
2. Think up a hypothetical situation to use as a point of departure.
3. Devise a line of questions designed to pull the students toward your conclusion.
4. Make the students take a position by asking, "What would you do if...?"
5. Plan for a dialogue to move in several different directions.
6. Complicate the situation by throwing in a monkey wrench: "What if this happened, what would you do then?"
7. At each step, up the ante: "Now what would you do?"
8. Expect to be surprised. Be prepared to think on your feet.
9. If all attempts to extract the right conclusion fail, play your trump cards: "What if the hero of a movie did that? How would you feel about the character?"  
(Pose an objective, hypothetical situation.)

"Remember, you're the hero of your own movie." (Compare the position with the students self-image.)

"Would that be the right thing to do?" (A consensus should develop. Kids usually know what's right.)

### Facilitating the Socratic Method

1. Give something of yourself, share something personal. Don't just take.
2. Let the students know you don't have all the answers. You have fears and insecurities, too.
3. Be nonjudgmental.
4. Listen.
5. Be honest with the students.
6. Take the students seriously and show respect for their thoughts and opinions.

(Found at [www.livewiremedia.com/socmethod.html](http://www.livewiremedia.com/socmethod.html))

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### Appendix 3

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### SURVEY

1. Do you think other students listen to what you have to say?	yes	sometimes	no
2. Do you get teased by other students?	yes	sometimes	no
3. Do you feel safe in the classroom?	yes	sometimes	no
4. Do you think the teacher likes you?	yes	sometimes	no
5. Does the teacher listen to you?	yes	sometimes	no
6. Do you like talking about things like friendship with a group?	yes	sometimes	no
7. Would you describe our class as:	good	OK	scary
If you can think of something to make our class better, write it on the back. Thanks.			