

Teaching "Self Concept Skills" Through Mentoring

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Introduction

During the past five years of teaching in a family literacy program at Truman, I have had the opportunity to work with many families in the Truman community. My primary focus has been providing adults in the community with a program to help them further their education, and provide their young children with pre-school skills in order to help increase the level of literacy within the home. As part of this program I also collaborate with teachers and students at our school. During my first year at Truman, it was suggested that I offer middle school students the opportunity to visit my class. I first had only a few middle school students who came in to play with the young children. As time went on I began to realize the potential of the relationship.

The middle school students who visited my class began to acquire new skills that helped them think and behave in ways that were more positive rather than negative. Their motivation and self-esteem increased as they began to form a caring bond with the pre-schoolers. Slowly, over the next few years I began increasing the number of middle school students in my program; during the 2000-2001 school year I had twenty-five. I began to cultivate a positive environment of mutual caring using the middle-school students to help develop character in the young children. They became the "mentors" helping young children deal with changes and, unknowingly, helping themselves to cope with the vicissitudes of life. Mentoring is a work of heart. It helps a student develop a desire to build friendships, to inspire hope, to share successes, and to enrich a young child's life.

My goals as a family literacy teacher are to positively motivate children and adults academically, socially and emotionally. As teachers, we are meaningful role models with a profound effect on our students lives. Teaching for me is the process of sharing personal knowledge and providing consistent reassurance to help students, both young and old, cope with diverse and challenging situations in life. I am nurtured and filled with joy by the smiles, hugs and the words of thanks I get from kids and adults whose lives I have touched through this program.

The ideas for this curriculum are not presented as typical lesson plans. I would like to provide you with practical lessons that involve didactic instruction through mentoring. By initiating our students into experiencing this role as mentor to others, we can help empower our students to feel competent as a role and model for young children. Through building an ongoing relationship a middle-school student can develop life-affirming skills that include self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, active listening and cooperation. It is my profound wish that this curriculum unit might help students experience the same pride, joy and sense of fulfillment that I have experienced through mentoring.

The focus of this curriculum unit is peer mentoring and "self-concept learning." Focusing on self-esteem issues, motivation and individual achievement. The target group is middle school students. Their mentoring group is preschool children age three to five years old. This curriculum can also be adapted to work with students of various ages and ability levels.

Through the peer mentoring experience, middle school students will develop feelings of caring, self-worth and concern for

others as they engage young children through the use of various picture book stories. These stories provide opportunities for open discussion of several "self-concept skills" including self-awareness, dealing with change, achievement, self-esteem, handling teasing /bullying and setting goals.

Academic Setting

Truman Middle School is located in the West Gate area of southwest Albuquerque, New Mexico. Truman is a middle school that has a family literacy program, which I have run for the past five years. The goal of the Even Start Program is to help increase the literacy level in the community and increase the value of education in the home. The adult student population enrolled in the program are ninety-percent monolingual Spanish speakers who need to learn English. Many students are high school dropouts who need basic tutoring and/or to finish their GED (graduation equivalency diploma). All adult students who are in the program come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and have children the ages of newborn through high school. Truman has a pre-school classroom on campus with thirty children age three to five years old, and a child care center for children newborn to age three. These are the young children of the adults registered in the family literacy program. On site adult basic education, GED (in English and Spanish) and ESL are offered to the adults registered in the program. In addition, middle school students may choose to take my class as a child development elective course.

Literacy and the Community

As educators we should all be aware that children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational levels of their parents. Research has shown the more educated the parent, the more economically stable the home and the more they will value their child's education (*Family Literacy*). The APS figures on the educational attainment of residents 25 and older in the Truman community are as follows: 29% have not completed a high school diploma and 10% have schooling less than grade 9. Children who live in homes with adults who are unemployed and have not finished high school are five to six times more likely to be high school dropouts. (*The Literacy Beat*).

There is a correlation between educational success and economic status. Earnings rise substantially with years of school (Payne1998). In the Truman community 33% of families have an annual household income of \$10,000-\$24,000, with 14% earning less than \$9,999. One indicator in the socioeconomic status of our community is the percentage of students who receive free or reduced cost meals. At Truman the rate was 78.8% for the 1999-2000 school year. The percentage rates of children living in poverty are as follows: 21% under the age of five, 26% five to 11 years old, 23% 12 to 17 years old. A large number of children in our area are growing up in poverty. Many of these children have special needs, or have been identified as disaffected, showing lack of motivation, lack of confidence and low self-esteem.

Mentoring

What is a mentor? If you look up the word *mentor* in the dictionary, you will find that it means a "trusted guide," a "provider of wise counsel," a "confidant." In traditional settings a mentor is typically seen as an adult, it is usually adults who are responsible for listening to problems, the giving of help, and inspiring youth. (Thomas W. Dortch) In contrast I propose the idea of young people assuming the task of giving help to others.

Mentors come in all shapes and sizes. If you close your eyes and think about all the people who have influenced your life, you will probably come up with many, many different ideas of what a mentor is and can be. I feel that students can also be

mentors themselves, to be a trusted guide or confidant to a young child. One quote I ran across when reviewing the EQUIP program states: "The very act of helping others becomes the first decisive step in overcoming one's personal problems. In reaching out to help another, a person creates his own proof of worthiness: he is now of value to someone." (Potter, et al. 1999). In my own experience, students do realize that they are needed and that they have something of worth to contribute. They begin to feel good about themselves and truly believe in their roles as mentors.

Mentoring can be of mutual benefit to both groups involved. Both young children and middle school students have some unique needs that can be fulfilled through a mutual caring relationship with specific curriculum goals.

Let us first explore some benefits for pre-school children. Very young children with under-educated parents and disadvantaged backgrounds often begin school behind their peers. The mentoring process will benefit them by exposing them to a caring middle school student who will read stories with important lessons. According to the National Research Council in *Starting out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success 1999*, "Ongoing reading experiences with language and literacy can begin to form a basis for their later reading success." Exposure to text and reading improves oral language skills and phonological awareness. It also helps a child's awareness of print, letters and the structure of words. An ongoing reading program is a valuable tool, and soon young children realize what books are and how they work. They become enthusiastic about reading and begin to explore being readers and writers.

The rewards for middle school students are not always tangible. It may be difficult for you to assess how the relationship is developing and how much progress the students are making. That is why I suggest a journal. Part of the assignments that will be given throughout the unit include journaling about their feelings and exploring in writing the pro's and con's of their relationship with the young children. One of the benefits I have seen for my middle school students is gaining confidence in their abilities to talk to and listen to young children. Middle schoolers with poor reading skills will become enthusiastic when reading to children who can not read themselves. As the relationship deepens they begin to provide guidance, foster support and encourage the young children during their daily activities. As the children warm up to them they get hugs, and smiles and genuine emotion from the children. However, this is not true of all students - just last year I had two seventh grade girls come to me after a week and say that the program wasn't working for them. They said they, "couldn't hit it off and the little kids were too hard." They were not motivated to give it a chance and so they transferred out. This is something you need to be prepared for, and offer an alternative. The majority of the students however, do get a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment from the mentoring. One young man said he liked coming to my class everyday because the "little kids are fun."

Collaborating for Success

It is important that your students engage in an ongoing mentoring plan. Programs that are ongoing offer a greater chance for relationships to form, for empowerment of the students, and for sustainability of interest. Ideally a mentoring program should be on going for the entire year. The amount of contact hours per week is also important. If you only spend one hour per week for a month, it will be difficult to establish a relationship. At Truman I usually have three or four middle school students per period. They engage with the preschool students one hour a day four times a week. They take my class as a one semester elective.

I have also worked with other teachers at Truman, mostly special education teachers with smaller groups of students. They usually send groups of five or six students for an hour twice a week for a month at a time. This is not to mentor students, but

rather to improve on a middle school student's skill or ability. For example, I have had students work on performing a song, reading stories they wrote, teaching about a scientific project, acting in a play, etc... The preschool children were an *audience*, not *active participants*. This is not the kind of relationship that I am suggesting as part of this unit.

In the Albuquerque area there are many specialized pre-school settings such as Even Start, Head Start, Child Find and YDI. These programs all accept only children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, low parental literacy backgrounds and children with disabilities. These children are good candidates for a mentoring relationship with older students.

Students need to not just be verbally prepared for what they might see, smell or hear, they also need to understand the biology of young children and their needs. Sometimes they cry. They often have runny noses, or need to run to the restroom right in the middle of a story, or have "accidents." Other programs such as Child Find may have children who are physically or mentally disabled. Make sure you have visited the program and spoken to the teacher about possible problems that might occur.

I encourage you to assign your students a journal wherein they can record their thoughts, feelings and frustrations about the mentoring process. Encourage them to write after every visit to the preschool class, and allow time after the interaction for reflection. The curriculum I have set up is designed to teach "a self-concept" topic to the middle school students, then the following lesson will be teaching that skill, or self concept to the preschool students using a story book.

A Changing Society

School demographics and communities change over time. The middle school that I am teaching at is nothing like the middle school I attended. The patterns, of school population, especially in urban cities, has seen increasing numbers of non- white and non-English speaking children who are living in poverty. Such is the case in the Truman community.

The new adolescent world is far different than the one we grew up in. The world most of us grew up in could be described as "A more defined realm where teens grew up with clearer and safer boundaries." (Hersch). Students face many more pressures in their home and school environments. Drugs, violence, sex, and delinquency are becoming almost commonplace in schools these days. Teachers face a daunting task of reaching students in new and innovative ways. As communities, families, and students change, teaching must change, "keeping learning possibilities open, seeing connections and meanings beyond the routine and the commonplace." (Perrone). (Teachers in our Juvenile Delinquency class have unique curriculum units that envision and work from this perspective.)

In *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, Greg Cajete speaks of changing society and the changes in education. Many of his suggestions for tribal teaching and learning can be adapted to the teaching of all children. "One of the most important elements of indigenous teaching and learning revolves around 'learning how to learn.'" This, Cajete states is a key element in every approach to education. We need to get students involved in their own learning.

Teachers need to "teach individuals in individual ways especially when they express readiness or the willingness to learn.... We must focus on learning with the heart as well as learning with the mind." (Cajete 1994).

The proposed curriculum focuses on this suggestion of teaching children how to learn. The lessons will challenge the student

to learn about life changes, motivation, self-esteem, bullying and goal setting. By teaching them about themselves in regard to these issues we empower the student with knowledge. They then have the means to effectively mentor young children in these same areas mirroring behaviors and attitudes in a low risk environment allowing them to strengthen their inner control. When the student has successfully resolved some of their own issues, they then have great potential for understanding the problems of others. In this way they begin to care, empathize and learn with their heart as well as their mind.

Student Motivation

Many middle school students show a decline in motivation and performance as they move from elementary school into middle school and on into high school (Anderman and Midgley). This time of great change can be daunting to many during this transitional phase called middle school. To understand the impact of student motivation on the learning process, we first need to understand the sources of their motivation.

A student who is *intrinsically* motivated will undertake an activity "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes." An *extrinsically* motivated student performs "in order to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself." (Lepper).

Once children start school, they begin to form beliefs about their school-related successes and failures. Children usually attribute successes to effort, ability, luck, or the level of the task difficulty. Children seem to attribute their failures to lack of ability or lack of effort. These beliefs have important implications for how they approach and cope with different learning situations.

The attitude teachers have about teaching and learning and the nature of expectations they hold for students also have a powerful influence in the motivation and ability of a student (Rafini). Middle school teachers often teach many students over the course of a school day, and for relatively short periods of time. Given such brief contact, it is easy for teachers to underestimate the influence that one's own teaching practices can have on any one individual. "Children learn from their relationships with us and they develop expectations from these relationships." (Brazelton and Greenspan). A teacher's enthusiasm and high expectations of students can make a difference. Students expect to learn if their teachers expect them to learn; they can and will rise to the level of expectation.

Middle-schoolers have some unique physical, social and emotional changes that contribute to the decline of their motivation and performance. Most stem from the students' transition from elementary school to middle school. These are the most frequently noted:

- Academic demands tend to be tougher than in elementary school.
- Middle schools tend to be larger than elementary schools.
- Students are accountable to a different teachers for each subject.
- Puberty, hormonal changes and the awareness of the opposite sex.
- Friends. Often students leave behind one group of friends to mingle with another.
- Negative peer groups, negative behavior from peers.
- Environment. The familiar is gone, students move from being the oldest in the school to being the youngest.

- Learning new routines in a new school.
- Behavioral standards are different among teachers and in a new school.
- Negative social situations. Bullying, teasing and sometimes violence.
- Introduction to self-destructive behaviors. Smoking, drugs, eating disorders, sex.

Unfortunately, as children grow and adjust to these changes, their passion for learning frequently seems to disappear. Students seem to toil with learning instead of delighting in it and this negatively affects a student's future motivation to learn.

Learning is a natural instinct and that success in learning something new is tied to human feelings of self-worth. Create a learning environment that flows with this natural current of humanness. Enabling successful learning is an essential step in cultivating motivation and enhancing self-confidence in learning.
(Cajete)

As a teacher I want to create environments that foster successful learning experiences. This mentoring program can challenge the student's ability to learn, peak their interest and provide the "fun" factor in learning. It can be a place where students can freely interact with each other and be the "teachers," a classroom environment that empowers their sense of self, allowing them to engage with the young children and feel competent in their ability to work together with them, enabling successful learning and enhancing their self-confidence. In this type of classroom setting the student is in control of how they "teach" the young children. Student control improves motivation because their progress and review is independent of fellow classmates and the teacher, changing how they view their own motivation and learning by helping the children see theirs. Learning takes place through reflection (journal) and shared experiences with the preschoolers.

Through the lessons and the reading of children's books on "self-concepts", the students will be able "to see how one really is rather than an image manufactured through one's or other's egos."(Cajete). Students will discuss topics such as achievement, motivation, self-esteem, and learning for the sake of learning. Student will ultimately realize that they are responsible for their own motivation to learn, to achieve, and if they choose, to fail.

Middle school teachers need to portray effort as an investment rather than a risk. Instead of attributing failures to lack of ability, attribute them to insufficient effort, lack of information, or self-defeating strategies (such as withholding effort, cheating or procrastination). They should portray skill development as incremental and area-specific, with a focus on mastery (Brophy). Children are often willing to work harder if they feel a sense of mastery. Brazelton and Greenspan suggest we should "tailor approaches to individual children so that more and more children develop a sense of mastery."

Lesson I: Exploring Differences

(Lesson on the roots of bullying: middle school students only)

Goals	Standards Benchmarks	Time Frame	Materials Needed	Assignment Given	Concepts to be taught
*Understand the roots of bullying behavior. *Concept of Courage	* Language Arts: Compare contrast * Process Skills: Brainstorming Work cooperatively	*Introduction and activity one day. * Discussion should be ongoing throughout the year	* None	*Group and Individual work. *Journaling	*Fostering respect and potential friendships. *Prosocial climate

The perceptions of "difference" are at the root of teasing and bullying among children. Almost any perceived difference, such as gender, race, ethnicity, language, social class, size, or disability can become fuel for hurtful words or actions. The goal of this lesson is to start off the learning and mentoring process with a safe non- threatening classroom environment wherein the discussion of teasing and bullying are part of the everyday classroom life. We must begin with a clear understanding that no teasing, bullying or any antisocial behavior will be tolerated. Creating a climate of respect and learning takes effort on the part of the whole class and this is the first step. Through ongoing class discussion, students will realize that the classroom is a place where they can talk about what makes them feel welcome, comfortable and safe in school.

Student Outcomes: Language Arts: Compare and contrast. Process Skills: Brainstorming, model situations using oral and written methods, follow directions, work cooperatively and independently.

- *Students will identify the meaning of friendship.
- *Students will discuss differences in people.
- *Students will problem solve on how to break down barriers to friendship.

Terms Used:

Bullying: Negative behaviors such as name calling or teasing. The behavior can increase to spreading malicious rumors, threats, extortion and sexual harassment.

Courage: Strength in overcoming fear and in persisting against difficulties. Bravery, guts, nerve, valor.

Procedure: The lesson is designed to promote friendship across the lines of difference, and helping the student explore the stereotypes that get in the way of friendship.

1. Break up students into groups consisting of both boys and girls. Give them the following exercise to help them feel comfortable in this group. They must come up with something each of them has in common, such as a birthday month, a favorite ice cream flavor, candy bar, color of eyes, common initials in their names, etc... When the commonality is decided they should choose a name for their group using that commonality. It can be silly like the tongue curlers or serious like the math whizzes.

2. Assign each group the task of answering the following questions: What makes a friend? Why are friends important? Can girls and boys be friends? Can people of different races be friends? After some time has passed teachers can have them report their answers and facilitate discussion.
3. Now assign each group the task of identifying differences in people and how that difference could keep people from being friends. Have them write down all answers they come up with. After reporting to the class the teacher should help the class problem solve how to remove the barriers. Students can also explore how teasing, bullying, and social attitudes keep them from being friends.
4. Next examine the meaning of courage - not just the superhero image of courage but bravery. Students need to understand that courage takes many forms and that we are all capable of courage. It takes courage to be you and not follow the crowd; it takes courage to disagree with someone at the risk that he/she won't be our friend; it takes courage to go against the social norm and break down barriers to friendship. It also takes a tremendous amount of courage to stand up to someone who is teasing or bullying us or on the other hand, the courage to control our own emotions and not tease or bully some one else.
5. Have the class discuss how being bullied makes you feel. Ask if anyone has been teased or called names for being different. How did that make you feel? Continue the discussions about feelings. Make your classroom environment one where feelings can be talked about openly.
6. Homework assignment. Pick a person in the class with whom you are not friends. Now write in your journal why it would be difficult for you to be friends with this person. What type of courageous behavior would you have to display in order to break down the barrier to this potential friendship?

I realize that all six are a lot to run through in one lesson; you have the opportunity to do these one at a time or as a whole lesson.

Lesson II: What is a Friend?

(Mentoring lesson on teasing and friendship)

Goals	Standards Benchmarks	Time Frame	Materials Needed	Assignment Given	Concepts to be taught
*Friends do not bully or tease. *Friends accept you for you	*Language Arts	* Option of one to three mentoring sessions.	Children's Books: <i>Chrysanthemum</i> <i>Dandelion</i> <i>A Porcupine Named Fluffy</i>	*Interact w/Children *Read a Story aloud *Journaling	*Self esteem *Fostering Positive Relationships *Respect

It has been stated that antecedents of peer to peer sexual harassment may well be found in children's bullying and teasing

behavior (Stein). Learning to respect others and making friends are not easy tasks for young children who tend to be egocentric in their thinking. However, these two skills are essential in promoting children's sense of connectedness to others and to the world around them (Levin).

Middle school students need to realize that they are going to be working with these young children throughout the year, and during this time they will play a critical role in the positive socialization of children. They need to be the role models; remind them that they are the "mentors." Talking with young children about not teasing or making friends is only part of their responsibility as a mentor, however. To have real impact they have to show the children that they live by the values they are trying to teach. This doesn't mean that the students need to be perfect angels in front of the kids, just thoughtful and honest. Assure your students that over time the ability to do this will become easier.

In this lesson students will be reading various books the main ideas we will be working on are teasing, positive friendships, and being yourself.

Student Outcomes: This lesson integrates with the DCCSS in Language arts: reading and communication Skills. Critical thinking: Self-esteem, Respect,

- *Students will refine communication skills with young children.
- *Students will read aloud with emotion.
- *Students will facilitate questions from children.

Materials Needed: Children's books:

- *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect... until her first day of school, when the other children tease her. What will it take to make her blossom again?
- *Dandelion* by Don Freeman. It is the story of a foolish lion that is invited to a party and turns himself into such a dapper dandy that his friend doesn't recognize him. In the end he realizes it is best to just be himself.
- *A Porcupine Named Fluffy* by Helen Lester. 1986. This is a story of an unconventional friendship between a porcupine named Fluffy and a rhinoceros named Hippo. United by this uncommon bond of funny names they both have the strength to laugh at themselves, and become best friends.

Procedure: This can be a whole group activity with middle-school students reading to a group of young children. This can also be a one-to-one activity with one older student paired up with one younger student. There are three different stories. You can choose to focus on one or combine all three. This theme of acceptance and friendship should be ongoing throughout the mentoring process.

1. They can say, "I have a story for you." Show the students the stories and have them choose one. Some children have longer attention spans and can listen to all three stories. The student may have difficulty talking to young children. The most important thing I tell the students is: "When talking to younger children, it's important to *smile and be bubbly*." A happy positive tone of voice must be used.
- Note: This kind of over simplified talk may be difficult for some older students. I have had many students tell me that they won't read, they would rather build a tower out of blocks or play in the sand-box

- I usually try to pair up students who have younger brothers, sisters or cousins with students who do not.
1. Read the story. Pause periodically to make sure the child understands what is happening to the characters in the story; make sure that the student answers questions the child might have. At the end of each story the student should continue the conversation around the three themes: teasing, positive friendships, and being yourself.
 - The main idea in *Chrysanthemum* is teasing because of her name. Discuss feelings...How would that make you feel? Have you ever been teased? Do real friends tease you or say mean things?
 - The main idea for *A Porcupine Named Fluffy* is that friends accept you for you, and that you can be friends with lots of different kinds of people. Stress that boys can be friends with girls and it's okay to be friends with kids that are different.
 - The main idea in *Dandelion* is that you need to be yourself and not give in to pressures to dress or look a certain way. Friendship is also important in this story. Real friends accept you for you. Lastly is the theme of unconventional friendships. Dandelion's best friend is Jennifer Giraffe. Once again, stress that you can be friends with lots of different people.
 1. Before the student leaves they should tell the child that they will be back next week with another story and lesson for them.
 2. Let students journal about their experiences with the children. What were their successes, failures, surprises...etc?
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Lesson III: *Changes at Any Age*

(Lesson on dealing with change: mid-school students only)

Goals	Standards Benchmarks	Time Frame	Materials Needed	Assignment Given	Concepts to Be taught
*Awareness that life is a series of changes.	*Language Arts: Interviewing. Compare & Contrast Evaluating	2 days *Day 1 for introduction *Day 2 for sharing responses.	*Chart paper, markers for discussion. *Notebooks for Interviewing	* Interview people. * Report findings *Role play *Journaling	*Positive Attitude *Coping with change.

There are many changes that middle-school students face, this lesson is intended to help students realize that life is a constant series of adjustments to major and minor life events (changes) that occur at all ages. This lesson provides an overview of the many adjustments in life. It does not ask the students to solve any problem. It is intended for the student to understand that

every age is faced with different changes and difficulties. Understanding this will give the students a sense that they are not alone in their problems caused by changes in their life. It will show the students that their adjustments are no more or less difficult than the adjustments being made by other people. I did this lesson last year with middle school students and children in pre-school. I think the level of answers given will differ with age and grade.

Student Outcomes: This lesson connects with the Districts Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence in Language arts: interviewing skills, compare and contrast, evaluating. Critical thinking: evaluating roles in a lifetime, responsibilities, stresses, changes, attitude development and role-playing.

*Students will interview people.

*Students will develop a list that compare and contrast.

*Students will critically evaluate different roles in a lifetime.

*Students will recognize that every age faces it's own set of adjustments to change.

Materials Needed: Chart paper and markers for discussion and grouping of responses. Each student should have a notebook or paper to write down responses from people whom they interview.

Procedure:

Day 1

1. This could be a cooperative learning exercise. Divide the class into groups. Depending on the size of your class, one or more groups will be working on the following four categories:
 - Children - Newborn to age 12
 - Teenagers – age 13 to 20
 - Adults – age 21 to 60
 - Older adults age 61 and up
1. Each group of students will be assigned a category. Ask students to interview a person in their category. They can interview pre-school children, teachers, parents, grandparents, neighbors, etc... When comprising a list of the developmental benchmarks of the first group, newborn to age 12, they may need to talk to parents of young children or even research in books the developmental benchmarks of the first two years of life.
 - Note: If you do not wish for students to do interviews, they can brainstorm on changes that take place during the age categories. The answers will require generalizations about activities for the different age groups.
1. Ask children to write down the responses to share in class. I usually give them the weekend to gather information. Responses will vary, some typical responses are as follows:

Group 1: A young child learns to walk, to sleep all the way through the night, to feed itself, be toilet trained, learn to make friends, to start school, to hold a pencil and write, etc...

Group 2: Teenagers most often must adjust to dating, peer pressure, new school environments,

making new friends, getting good grades, passing a hard class, cleaning their own room, learning to drive, earning their own money, going to college, etc...

Group 3: Adults most often deal with finding a job, adjusting to marriage, having children, providing for a family, developing a career, buying a house or car, etc. ..

Group 4: Finally older adults usually have to adjust to retirement, living on a fixed income, health issues, death of friends or spouse, raising grandchildren, etc...

These are just some examples of answers most often generated by students.

Day 2

1. Ask groups to report their findings to class as you write the responses on chart paper. Allow class to add or to question the responses.
2. Once all discussion has ended and a chart with all responses for each group is completed, have your students critically examine the charts. They are then asked to evaluate what allows some people to make adjustments easily whereas other people might struggle to do so.
- Note: Your answers will vary they; will range from self-esteem issues to having a supportive family, luck and religion.

During the discussion note that all answers are correct. Be sure, however that having a good, positive attitude toward life is an essential part of the discussion.

1. Ask students how a positive outlook on life can help them adjust to changes more easily. Role-play a situation in each age group. Have two people per each "problem" that arises due to a life change. One could role-play having a good positive attitude towards finding a solution; the other could role-play a negative attitude and the consequences of that attitude on their adjustment.
2. Ask students to discuss after each scenario which person is happier in dealing with the adjustment. Did the positive attitude help the person deal with the change more effectively?
3. Journal their ideas, feelings and attitudes toward their own adjustments to the changes in their lives.

Lesson IV: *Blooming*

(Mentoring lesson on change and achievement)

Goals	Standards Benchmarks	Time Frame	Materials Needed	Assignment Given	Concepts to be taught

*Achievement can be measured through small accomplishments	* Language Arts: Interviewing Reading Communication skills	* One Day	Children's Book: * <i>Leo the late Bloomer</i>	*Interact w/Children *Read a Story aloud *Journaling	*Reinforce: Achievement Self-esteem Mentoring Empathy
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This lesson should be done after the students have completed discussions about change and adjusting to changes at different ages. "Blooming" is particularly relevant for mid school students physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. This is also true of young children beginning school for the first time. In working with young children, middle-school students will notice a wide range of abilities among them. Some kids can spell their name and others can't hold a pencil appropriately. Some know their colors and some don't.

In this lesson students will learn that achievement can be measured through small accomplishments. Students will feel competent about skills they have already achieved and empathize with young children who have not yet learned these skills.

Student Outcomes: This lesson integrates with the District Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence in Language arts: interviewing skills, reading, and communication skills. Critical thinking: self-esteem and achievement issues.

- *Students will refine interviewing techniques with young children.
- *Students will read aloud with emotion.
- *Students will facilitate questions from young children.

Materials needed: Children's book *Leo the Late Bloomer* by Robert Kraus. The story is about a little tiger named Leo who couldn't do anything right. He couldn't read or write. He couldn't draw and he was a sloppy eater. Every day and every night Leo's father watched him for signs of blooming. Engaging dialogue and colorful pictures makes this book great for young children and easy to read for older students as well.

Procedure: This can be a whole group activity with middle-school students reading to a group of young children. This can also be a one-to-one activity with one older student paired up with one younger student.

1. First the older child should ask the younger child what he or she knows how to do. If the child responds, "I don't know," as they often do, then the student should ask specific questions like, "Do you know your name?" "Do you know how old you are?" "Can you tie your shoes?" Once the middle school student discusses this a few minutes they can use this as an introduction to the book.
2. They can say, "I have a story for you about a tiger Do you like tigers? I really like tigers and this tiger is just starting school...just like you." Remember the golden rule: "When talking to younger children, it's important to smile and be bubbly." A happy positive tone of voice must be used.
 - Remember that not all students will feel comfortable, some students still won't read. Continue to encourage them and give them the option of playing until they are comfortable.

- I usually try to pair up students so that they learn "mentoring" behaviors from each other, instead of me always telling them what to do.
1. Read the story. Pause periodically to make sure the child understands what is happening to Leo; make sure that the student answers questions the child might have.
 2. At the end of the story Leo blooms. The student can reassure the child that they will be able to learn how to read, or spell their name, or learn to do something that they mentioned they couldn't do. Also reinforce the idea of friendships, use Leo's friends as an example.
 3. Before the student leaves they should tell the child that they will be back next week with another story and lesson for them.
 4. Let students journal about their experiences with the children. What were their successes, failures, surprises, etc....?

Suggested Readings:

One option is to extend this theme over a few days. Another of my favorite books that shows the commonalties in all children of all races from around the world is:

- *To be a Kid* by Maya Ajmera and John D. Ivanko Peace Corps volunteers and award winning photographers contributed the photographs in this story. It gives us a spirited look at childhood in forty countries around the world.

Lesson V: *I Can Achieve*

(Lesson on achievement: Middle school students only)

Goals	Standards Benchmarks	Time Frame	Materials Needed	Assignment Given	Concepts to Be taught
*Belief in yourself *We all achieve success in our own way	*Language arts: interviewing, communication skills, evaluation and analyses.	2 days *Day 1 for introduction *Day 2 for sharing responses	*Discussion *Articles about people	* Interview people. * Report findings *Journaling	*Success is individual. * Positive attitude. *Self-esteem

As we saw in the Leo story, we can measure achievement through great or small accomplishments. Students should recognize that we all achieve success in our own way, and that our self-esteem is nourished by our ability to overcome difficulties and meet our own needs. In this lesson students will learn that achievement is not limited by age or physical abilities and that a willingness to try, hard work, and the magic of belief is what can help you achieve.

Student Outcomes: This lesson connects with the district's language arts curriculum in interviewing, communication skills, evaluation and analyses. Self-esteem and achievement issues.

- *Students will develop questions that address an issue.
- *Students will refine interviewing techniques.
- *Student will recognize that success is measured within our selves.
- *Students will recognize that achievement is possible at any age.

Materials Needed: Magazine or newspaper articles that focus on individual achievement of people. It can be assigned for students to look for and bring in articles.

Terms Used:

Self-esteem belief or pride in oneself

Achievement to effect a desired result especially by skill, work or courage.

Procedure:

Day 1

1. Ask students to discuss the relationship between self-esteem and achievement, and how belief figures into that relationship.
2. Ask students to identify at what age self esteem and sense of achievement is needed. (Note: students should realize that it is needed at any age. Self-esteem grows and is always important.)
3. Present to students some examples of unique achievements. For example the story of Roger Bannister:

For over a hundred years people had tried to run the mile in less than 4 minutes. In articles written by doctors, all the scientific reasons were offered as to why it was physically impossible. In 1957, however, a young Englishman named Roger Bannister ran the mile in three minutes, 59-1/2 seconds and made headlines throughout the world. The most amazing part of this story is what happened the following year...47 people ran the mile in less than four minutes. How could this happen after thousands of athletes had tried and failed? This is the power of belief. For the first time people believed they could do it. The mental barriers came down, and even today many high school athletes run the mile in less than four minutes.

4. Ask students if they know anyone who has accomplished something important to them. Remind them that the significance might be to them alone, but it is still important.
5. Assignment: Interview a person about the sense of achievement in their lives (this can be their parents, a friend, relative, neighbor or teacher) Develop with students questions to ask in order to get the person to talk about an achievement. It doesn't need to be anything extraordinary; all achievements are valid no matter how small.

Day 2

1. Discuss the interview in class. Chart the results, and evaluate what constituted an achievement in the lives of those they interviewed.
2. Talk about how the achievement was accomplished. Make sure that the message of "a little help, hard work, a positive attitude and a belief in yourself" is prevalent among the responses.
3. Journaling - have students make a list of their greatest achievements to date, why it was important to them, and how it made them feel. Have them focus on their attitude and hard work needed to complete their objective.
(Works by Mac Anderson and B. Freedman were used in the development of this lesson.)

Lesson VI: I Believe

(Mentoring lesson on believing in yourself and achievement)

Goals	Standards Benchmarks	Time Frame	Materials Needed	Assignment Given	Concepts to be taught
*Strengthen the Peer-mentoring relationship. *Bonding	*Language Arts: Interviewing Reading Communication skills	*One Day	Children's Books: * <i>Cornelius</i> & * <i>Amazing Grace</i>	*Interact w/Children *Read a Story aloud *Journaling	*Self-esteem *Motivation *Achievement

For this mentoring session with young children we will be focusing on motivation, setting goals, belief in one's self and achievement. (In the previous lesson we learned that children of all ages have a wide range of abilities and that we can measure achievement through small accomplishments).

In the story of *Cornelius*, we see an example of desire to learn, belief in one's abilities, and indifference by his friends. His desire to learn meant nothing to others only to himself; his belief and positive attitude helped him achieve his goal. This activity will encourage children to be themselves, to seek, think and learn.

In the story *Amazing Grace*, we see a young girl who has a goal. Once again her friends do not believe in her abilities. But hard work, a positive attitude and the support of her family helps her accomplish her goal. The picture books are easy to read and could appeal to children of all ages.

Student Outcomes: This lesson integrates with the DCCSS in Language arts: reading and communication Skills. Critical thinking: Self-esteem, motivation and achievement issues.

- *Students will refine communication skills with young children.
- *Students will read aloud with emotion.
- *Students will facilitate questions from children.

Materials Needed: Children's books:

- *Cornelius* by Leo Lionni. This is the story of Cornelius a crocodile who could walk upright, he wanted to learn things that other crocodiles could not do. With the help of a monkey, he learns that with a little help and a lot of hard work he could accomplish his goal.
- *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman, illustrations by Caroline Binch. This book is the story of Grace who wants more than anything to be Peter Pan in the school play. Her classmates tell her she can't because she is black and a girl. With the loving support of her mother and grandmother she knows she can be anything she wants to be.

Procedure: This can be a whole group activity with middle-school students reading to a group of young children. This can also be a one-to-one activity with one older student paired up with one younger student.

1. Interact with child sometime during the mentoring session; student should ask child if they want to hear a story.
2. Read the story, pausing periodically to make sure the child understands what is happening to Grace and Cornelius. Make sure that the student answers questions the child might have.
3. Remember to make points about the main ideas that come from the story. Ask children about friendship, Were Graces friends really friends? What about the other Crocodiles in the story of Cornelius, were they supportive of his quest for knowledge? What of the uncommon friendship between Cornelius and the monkey? Remember that real friends believe in you even if you are different.
4. Journal about the session. The other options could be to respond to the books read, or on the following questions: Have they ever felt like Grace or Cornelius? When and what happened? Write about friendship in the two stories. How were they the same and how were the friends different? Respond to the ideas of motivation and achievement. What Goals do you have and how can you achieve them?

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Children's Book List

A Porcupine Named Fluffy by Helen Lester, illustrations by Lynn Munsinger. 1986. ISBN 0-395-52018-5.

This is a story of an unconventional friendship between a porcupine named Fluffy and a rhinoceros named Hippo. United by this uncommon bond of funny names they both have the strength to laugh at themselves and become best friends.

Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman, illustrations by Caroline Binch. 1991. ISBN 0-8037-1040-2.

This book is the story of Grace who wants more than anything to be Peter Pan in the school play. Her classmates tell her she can't because she is black and a girl. With the loving support of her mother and grandmother she knows she can be anything she wants to be.

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes. 1991. ISBN 0-688-14732-1.

Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect... until her first day of school, when the other children tease her. What will it take to make her blossom again?

Cornelius by Leo Lionni. 1983. ISBN 0-679-86040-1.

This is the story of Cornelius a crocodile who could walk upright; he wanted to learn things that other crocodiles could not do. With the help of a monkey, he learns that with a little help and a lot of hard work he can accomplish his goal.

Dandelion by Don Freeman. 1969. ISBN 0-14-050218-1.

It is the story of a foolish lion who is invited to a party and turns himself into such a dapper dandy that his friend doesn't recognize him. In the end he realizes it is best to just be himself.

Leo the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus. 1971. ISBN 0-06-443348-X.

The story is about a little tiger named Leo who couldn't do anything right. He couldn't read or write. He couldn't draw, and he was a sloppy eater. Every day and every night Leo's father watched him for signs of blooming. Engaging dialogue and colorful pictures makes this book great for young children and easy to read for older students as well.

To be a Kid by Maya Ajmera and John D. Ivanko (1999). ISBN 0-88106-842-X.

Peace Corps volunteers and award winning photographers contributed the photographs in this story. It gives us a spirited look at childhood in forty countries around the world.