

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
TRAIN-THE-TRAINER GUIDE

45-MINUTE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL WORKSHOP

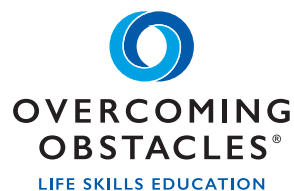


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INTRODUCTION

Community for Education Foundation (CEF) was founded in 1992 to ensure that all young people learn the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life. To achieve its mission, CEF developed the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program, which includes curriculum materials, teacher training, and ongoing support. Since its inception, Overcoming Obstacles has helped over 230,000 educators from around the world and in all 50 states positively impact the lives of more than 55 million students.

The *Train-the-Trainer Guide* is designed to help you facilitate an Overcoming Obstacles teacher-training workshop and includes a workshop outline, step-by-step instructions, and activity sheets. Through a teacher-training workshop, educators will gain hands-on experience with the curriculum while learning about its methodology, content, and activity-based lesson format. This comprehensive guide will help you plan and execute an engaging, informative, and objective-based workshop that will equip educators with the training they need to effectively teach the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Curriculum.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Min.	Activity	Description	Curriculum Page Numbers	Materials Needed
5	Welcome: What Is Overcoming Obstacles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are given the history and an overview of CEF. • The purpose and goals of the workshop and a brief synopsis of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum are presented. • Educators discuss how the program can be used to meet the needs of their school and students. 	<i>Program Overview</i> , pages i—v	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the Workshop Questionnaire • Sign-in sheet
15	“Building Cooperation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants compete in teams to build a paper tower and then discuss how they used skills such as communication, decision making, and goal setting to complete the activity. • This activity demonstrates the benefits of group work and the importance of cooperation to group success, while allowing participants to use problem solving skills to complete a task. 	<i>Getting Started</i> , pages 11—12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 sheets of newspaper per group • 3 feet of masking tape per group • Chart paper • Markers
15	“A Day in a Life”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing the activities and identifying the life skills that are part of a fictional student’s day. • This activity helps participants predict how practicing the life skills in the curriculum will enable students to overcome daily challenges inside and outside the classroom. 	<i>Getting Started</i> , pages 5—6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet • Copies of the high school Table of Contents
10	Q & A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are invited to ask questions they may have about the workshop or the curriculum. • Participants are reminded that the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum team is available via phone and email to answer questions and assist with implementation planning. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the Ongoing Support Contact Sheet • Copies of the Frequently Asked Questions

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS

Preparations

1. Allocate twenty-five minutes prior to the start of the training to prepare the space that will accommodate the expected number of attendees. This may involve rearranging the space to make it more suitable for team activities.
2. Prepare all of the materials, supplies, handouts, and equipment necessary for the training. Set the materials and handouts in a place where you can easily access them during the training. (To save time during the workshop, you may want to assemble all of the handouts into packets and distribute them to educators as they enter the room, or leave a packet on every seat.)
3. Please note that full lessons from the curriculum relating to each activity are included in the Appendix. We encourage you to make copies of the lessons for those participants who may not have a curriculum set.
4. Write the bold-faced figures from the “Fast Facts” from the following page where workshop participants will be able to see them.
5. You might set the tone by preparing a selection of appropriate music to play while educators enter the room and/or during hands-on group activities.
6. Greet workshop participants as they enter and thank them for attending. If you are not working with familiar colleagues, be sure to introduce yourself. The use of name tags is encouraged.

Welcome

1. Distribute copies of the Workshop Questionnaire, and pass around the sign-in sheet.
2. Welcome participants to the workshop. Ask participants to decipher the meaning of the numbers on the board. Comment that the numbers have no relevance yet but will give an overview of Overcoming Obstacles and today’s workshop.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

3. Write the bold-faced figures from the “Fast Facts” section of the following page where workshop participants will be able to see them.

“Fast Facts”

- **3** hours is the typical workshop length, but today I have
 - **45** minutes, so let’s get started! Over the past
 - **26** years, Overcoming Obstacles has helped over 100,000 educators teach more than
 - **28** million students the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life. The Overcoming Obstacles life skills curriculum has
 - **500** activities that engage students and teach over
 - **20** important life skills.
 - **[How often Overcoming Obstacles will be taught]**, educators at your school will have
 - **[period length]** to build relationships with over
 - **[number of students in your school being taught Overcoming Obstacles]** students.
 - **212, 406, 7488** are the numbers you need to call the curriculum team you can trust to provide guidance and ongoing support.
4. After you finish your introduction, tell the participants that you will organize them into groups for a teamwork activity. Explain that a large part of the workshop will involve their participation in the same activities they will facilitate. This allows them to become familiar with the lesson materials, and provides them with a model for teaching the curriculum.
 5. Before having participants join their teams, share with them how you plan to organize the groups (e.g., by assigning each participant a number according to their seating arrangements). Then, begin facilitating the “Building Cooperation” activity.

Activity #1: “Building Cooperation”

1. Distribute the newspapers, masking tape, chart paper, and markers to each group.
2. Refer to pages 11-12 of the *Getting Started* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

3. Debrief the activity:
 - Ask for volunteers to recall the three skills mentioned in the Overcoming Obstacles mission statement. If participants do not recall it, please state it again: to ensure that all young people learn the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life.
 - Now, ask the participants to share examples of how they or their teammates used the skills of communication, decision making, and goal setting during the “Building Cooperation” activity.
 - After you have called on several participants, explain that communication, decision making, and goal setting are the core skills of the Overcoming Obstacles program. The modules pertaining to these skills appear early in the curriculum so that students have a strong foundation for further life skills development.
4. Inform participants that in the next activity they will learn about the other skills taught in the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum. Then, begin facilitating the “A Day in a Life” activity.

Activity #2: “A Day in a Life”

1. Distribute copies of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet and the high school curriculum’s table of contents.
2. Refer to pages 5-6 of the *Getting Started* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Explain that when students learn more about themselves and how to plan their futures, they will take a more active role in their education. Engaging students in activities that link their work in school to the world outside of the classroom helps students see that education is relevant to their lives. “A Day in a Life” illustrates the life skills that students use every day inside and outside of school.
4. Tell participants that the workshop is almost finished. Thank them for their time and let them know that they will now be able to ask questions regarding the workshop and/or curriculum.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

Q & A

1. Distribute copies of the “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet.
2. When facilitating the Q & A session, keep these considerations in mind:
 - Address all of the participants’ questions and comments, and provide them with the most informed responses possible.
 - Do not be afraid to allow participants an opportunity to express concerns in a constructive way.
 - If a participant asks a question you cannot answer, be straightforward and let him or her know that you will provide the correct answer as soon as possible.
 - If appropriate, provide participants with your contact information so that you may support them throughout their implementation of the Overcoming Obstacles program.
3. Explain that, in addition to the materials in the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum, more resources are available by visiting www.overcomingobstacles.org.
4. Remind participants that the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum team is available via phone and email to answer any questions and assist with implementation planning.
5. Encourage participants to take a minute to fill out the Workshop Questionnaire, which you will collect as they depart.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

A DAY IN A LIFE

Camilla Juarez is a high school senior. The following are the activities she has planned for today.

Where	Time	Activity	Related Overcoming Obstacles lessons
Home	6:15 A.M.	1. Wake up.	
	6:20 A.M.	2. Determine whether she or her brother (who leaves at the same time) gets into the shower first.	
	6:25 A.M.	3. Take a shower and get dressed.	
	6:45 A.M.	4. Eat breakfast.	
	6:55 A.M.	5. Get books and papers together for school.	
	7:00 A.M.	6. Leave for school.	
	7:00 P.M.	7. Complete homework.	
	8:00 P.M.	8. Decide how to spend or save her pay-check.	
	8:30 P.M.	9. Try to find a different job.	
School	7:45 A.M.	1. Meet with English teacher to ask him if she can retake a test she failed the first time.	
	9:00 A.M.	2. Take notes in her history class, where they don't have textbooks.	
	11:30 A.M.	3. Talk to her boyfriend at lunch about an argument they had yesterday.	
	1:00 P.M.	4. Complete a science project with her assigned group.	
Work	1:45 P.M.	1. Catch a bus to work.	
	2:00 P.M.	2. Check supplies inventory before her shift starts.	
	5:30 P.M.	3. Speak to her boss about a raise that was promised, but has not yet been received.	

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APPENDIX

SIGN-IN SHEET



Date: _____

Name:

Grade/School:

Email:

WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE

45-MINUTE TEACHER-TRAINING WORKSHOP

HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

Thank you for attending the Overcoming Obstacles teacher-training workshop and taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your feedback is very important to us and will assist with the planning of future workshops. Please return your completed form to the workshop facilitator(s).

Please respond to the following statements regarding your workshop experience by checking the box that best applies (strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree).

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The workshop was well organized.				
2. The workshop was a good way for me to learn the contents of the curriculum.				
3. The objectives of this workshop were clearly explained.				
4. The content covered is relevant to the needs of my students.				
5. The workshop activities were engaging.				
6. The pace of this workshop was appropriate.				
7. The facilitator(s) answered my questions regarding the curriculum and recommended additional resources.				
8. The materials, supplies, visual aids, and handouts provided during the workshop were very useful.				
9. The workshop helped me understand how I can modify specific activities to meet my students' needs and fit with the dynamics of my classroom.				
10. The workshop met my expectations.				

Please use the space below to write additional comments and suggestions regarding this workshop. If more space is needed, please use the back of this page.

PLEASE EMAIL OR FAX YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO:

info@overcomingobstacles.org | 1.212.406.7480

RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS

Since its founding in 1992, Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Curriculum has been used by over 46,000 educators from around the world and in all fifty states to help more than 15 million students improve their academic achievement, graduate from high school, prepare for college and careers, and more. Below are just some of the highlights.

In October 2016, the Riley Institute at Furman University conducted a survey among educators teaching Overcoming Obstacles on how the curriculum affects student development. Over 1,500 educators reported the following results:

- 90% report that it helps students develop decision making skills
- 89% report that it helps students experience improved life opportunities
- 89% report that it helps students contribute positively to their communities
- 88% report that it helps students develop communication skills
- 88% report that it improves students' problem-solving skills
- 86% report that it helps students with setting goals
- 85% report that it engages students in their classroom
- 84% report that it helps students resolve conflicts
- 81% report that it helps students remain in school

The full report is available online at [The Riley Institute website](#).

During the 2010–2011 school year, Charleston County School District in South Carolina implemented Overcoming Obstacles in a district-wide high school advisory period. The district reported that Overcoming Obstacles helped students experience many improvements, including stronger leadership skills, increased self-confidence, and better time-management skills. Based on the success of its high school advisory program, Charleston County School District expanded its use of Overcoming Obstacles into its middle schools in 2011. In a 2012 interview with NBC, the superintendent of Charleston County School District named Overcoming Obstacles as one of the primary strategies for bringing positive change to two of the county's priority schools. Because of Charleston County School District's success with Overcoming Obstacles, schools from twelve additional districts in South Carolina began implementing Overcoming Obstacles in 2012.

In 2010, the New York City Department of Education introduced the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program to all of its 850 public middle schools and high schools. In a press release issued in 2011, the schools chancellor expressed his gratitude for the Overcoming Obstacles program, praising it for helping New York City's educators address bullying, create supportive learning environments, and prepare their students for college and careers. By 2017, more than seven hundred middle and high schools report implementing Overcoming Obstacles in their classrooms..

RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

In 2008, the Children's Aid Society of New York City reported that academic achievement improved markedly at the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics as a result of the Overcoming Obstacles program.

In 2007, the Transitional Road to Attending College (TRAC) program in Jersey City, New Jersey, used Overcoming Obstacles to improve their high school retention. TRAC focused on teaching the city's incoming freshmen the communication, decision making, goal setting, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills they would need to excel in high school. Data on the program's implementation of Overcoming Obstacles was based on students' responses to pre- and post-program tests and sorted by classroom. The following is a sampling of one classroom's results:

- 85% of students reported that they found it easier to keep commitments (an increase of 65% from the time of the pre-program test)
- 76% of students said that they were excited about their studies (an increase of 20% from the time of the pre-program test)
- 86% of students said that they had a clear picture of what they wanted to do in the future (an increase of 19% from the time of the pre-program test)

In 2003, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) listed Overcoming Obstacles as a recommended classroom-based social and emotional learning program in its US Department of Education-funded report, *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs*.

In 2003, Overcoming Obstacles was the recipient of the Superintendent's Conflict Resolution Award for helping Brooklyn and Staten Island high school students succeed academically.

In 2001, the New York City Department of Education reported the following benefits from its implementation of the Overcoming Obstacles program: increased student punctuality, emergence of student leaders, student camaraderie, longer student attention spans, greater work completion, and recognition of self-defeating behaviors.

In 2000, the New York City Department of Education chose Overcoming Obstacles as a leading substance abuse prevention program and recognized it as a leading school-to-career program.

In 1998, John Muir Middle School in Los Angeles implemented Overcoming Obstacles in its seventh grade English class. Because of the program, 57% of students improved their grades, 42% improved their class attendance, and 57% had less reported tardiness than the previous semester.

RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

In 1997, Overcoming Obstacles worked with a population of students with severe academic and social deficiencies in the Atlanta Public Schools system. At least 10% were one or more grades below what is normal for their age. Approximately 30-40% read well below the standard for their age, and at least 10% were illiterate. The course focused on job preparedness, resume writing, and financial planning. After completing the course, 95% of the students were employed with good ratings from their employers and/or were entering programs of higher education. One hundred percent were promoted to the next grade. Because of this work, the Georgia State Department of Labor recognized Overcoming Obstacles as the leading program for breaking the cycle of welfare dependency.

In 1997, Markham Middle School in Los Angeles infused Overcoming Obstacles with an eighth grade English class. After participating in the program, 68% of the students improved their grades and class attendance, 60% improved their tardiness, and 60% improved their level of cooperation.

In 1997, Elizabeth High School in New Jersey implemented Overcoming Obstacles as a stand-alone class for repeat ninth graders. Low attendance was a significant factor in the poor school performance of these students: over 40% exhibited a history of acute absenteeism. At the conclusion of the class, 80% of the students were promoted to the 10th grade and more than half improved their attendance by over 50%.

In 1995, Overcoming Obstacles received a grant from Los Angeles's Community Development Department to improve the lives of the city's youth through life skills education. Study of the program's effectiveness included parent interviews and examinations of 266 students' school attendance records, discipline records, grades, police records, and pre- and post-program surveys. Monitoring by the city consistently showed Overcoming Obstacles students moving from high-risk stages classified as "in crisis" and "at risk" to more self-sufficient stages such as "stable," "safe," and "thriving." Overcoming Obstacles students at Manual Arts High School improved their grade point averages by 37%, reduced their use of violence by 75%, reduced their tardiness by 89%, and improved their school and family relationships. Of the programs administered through the grant, Overcoming Obstacles was ranked the highest.

LESSON SAMPLES

LESSON

2

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

A G E N D A

- Starter
- What You Put In Is What You Get Out
- Building Cooperation
- Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that their active participation is critical to their getting the most from the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will identify the challenges and benefits of working with other students in a group.

Students will recognize the need to cooperate with and respect other class members as they master life skills together.

Students will identify a set of rights that promote cooperation and respect in the Overcoming Obstacles classroom.

Materials Needed

- 15 sheets of newspaper for each group (Part II)
- About three feet of masking tape for each group (Part II)
- One copy of the “Bill of Rights” activity sheet (#3) for each student (Part III)
- Chart paper and a marker (Part III)

Starter (2 minutes)

Ask students if they have ever seen a preview for a movie that seemed interesting. Ask whether they went to see the movie when it opened. If so, find out if the movie was better than they thought it would be. Was it worse? Did it meet their expectations?

Tell students that this lesson is about setting expectations, and that they will discuss as a class what to expect from the lessons, from the teacher, and from one another.

Part I What You Put In Is What You Get Out (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify what they expect from the Overcoming Obstacles course and why their active participation is required to meet those expectations.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS CLASS.

Remind students that the previous lesson provided an overview of what they'll be learning in the Overcoming Obstacles course. Ask students to write down their expectations. Offer examples such as the following:

- I'll learn to make better decisions.
- I'll learn how to use my time more efficiently.

2. STUDENTS DISCUSS HOW THEY WILL ACQUIRE LIFE SKILLS.

Remind students of the discussion in the previous lesson about the best way to learn a song for a concert. Ask students to recall their conclusions about the best way to develop new skills. (*Students should mention that it's best to learn by doing and practicing.*)

Ask students to review their expectations and to consider how well they'll meet those expectations if they don't practice the skills. Ask students how well they will succeed if they only sit in their seats and listen to you talk and watch others develop these life skills. Encourage discussion.

Conclude by emphasizing that Overcoming Obstacles is a course about life. Explain that you will help every student relate the skills and activities to his or her own life, but it's ultimately up to each student to practice the skills in order to master them.

Part II Building Cooperation (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students demonstrate the benefits of group work and the importance of cooperation to group success.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS.

Ask, “Why is it important for you to be able to work as part of a group?” Point out to students that as young people now and later as adults, they will often be required to work in groups or teams. Explain to students that group activities will be a frequently occurring format in the Overcoming Obstacles course, and that the course will teach them skills that will enable them to function well as part of a team. Tell students that you expect them to work cooperatively.

2. STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN A COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITY.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Have students arrange their desks to create an open work space for each group. Distribute 15 sheets of newspaper and three feet of masking tape to each group.

Give the groups the following directions:

- Please don’t start until I tell you to do so.
- Using only the materials I gave out, you will have 10 minutes to build the highest freestanding tower you can.
- The tower cannot be taped to the desks or to the floor. It must stand on its own.

Answer any questions students may have, then instruct them to begin. Circulate the room, observing group interactions and noting conversations and comments. Watch for evidence of both cooperation and dissension.

3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE EXPERIENCE.

When 10 minutes have passed, check students’ results and involve all groups in a discussion of the experience. Ask the groups to describe how they built their tower, and why they think they were or weren’t successful. Share your observations, and encourage students to elaborate on what took place. Ask for examples of how all team members contributed. Allow students to discuss, in respectful terms, any tensions that developed.

Give each group two to three minutes to summarize what they learned from the experience. Offer questions such as the following for guidance:

- What is easy about working with others?
- What is difficult?
- Why is cooperation necessary?
- What will your group do differently the next time you work together?

Ask the groups to share their summaries. Have them describe what it is like to work as a team and how to improve cooperation in the future. Record their responses on the board.

Part III Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students work together to establish guidelines and expectations for the class.

1. STUDENTS RECALL THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE CLASS.

Point out that so far, students have stated their expectations for the course, and you have stated your expectation of how students will work together cooperatively in groups. Explain that students also have a right to expect certain treatment and behavior from fellow students in this class.

2. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE PURPOSE OF RULES.

Ask students to name some school rules and to suggest reasons why these rules are in place. Affirm that rules are designed not just to stop negative behavior, but to protect the rights of those who behave appropriately.

3. STUDENTS CREATE A CLASSROOM BILL OF RIGHTS.

Have students identify the document that guarantees individual rights in the United States. (*Students should mention the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution.*)

Distribute copies of the “Bill of Rights” activity sheet (#3). Have students review the document and describe its characteristics. Record student responses on the board. Guide students to focus on the document’s language, format, and structure, as well as on its content. (*Students might respond: the date and place are written at the top of the document, the first sentence tells why Americans need the document, the language is formal.*)

Divide students into pairs. Have them create a bill of rights for this class that’s patterned after this important document. Remind them that their bill of rights should protect the right of every class member to be treated with respect, to voice different opinions, to expect confidentiality when sharing personal experiences, and to be considered a valued member of the group. Guide the class in coming to an agreement on 10 basic rights. Record them on chart paper.

When the list is complete, have students come forward to sign the document. Post the bill of rights on a bulletin board for the duration of the course. Remind students that this document will be referred to frequently in this class. It provides a statement of mutual understandings about respectful behavior that will be expected from all members of the class.

Conclusion (3 minutes)

Ask students to explain the relationship between participating in class and learning. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Each student is responsible for giving the most to and getting the most from the content taught in this course.
- Students will work together in groups in this course, so they must know how to cooperate with others.
- The bill of rights will remind students of how they expect to be treated and how others expect to be treated by them.

Questions for Assessment

1. List three advantages and three disadvantages of working with others in a group.
2. List five examples of times when people must work together in a group or as a team.
3. What skills are necessary for people to work well together?

LESSON **1**
WHAT IS
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES?

A G E N D A

- Starter
- Identifying Obstacles
- A Day in a Life
- A Day in My Life
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify the specific skills they will learn and practice through the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will recognize how they will apply these skills to their everyday lives.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet (#1) for each student (Parts I–III)
- One copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet (#2) for each student (Parts II and III)
- Slips of paper with job titles students might hold in the future (Part III)
- A hat (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Invite students to make a list of activities they enjoy doing that require practice to do well (e.g., playing a sport or musical instrument, ballet, tap dancing). Read the following scenario out loud:

At band practice, your teacher only talks about the song you're learning, but does so without explaining what he is doing. You're expected to learn by listening and watching. You never play an instrument until the day of the first concert.

Ask students to comment on the effectiveness of this method of learning. Ask students how well they think they'd do when asked to perform without practicing first. (*Students might respond: although you might learn some fundamentals, you can't learn just by watching; you need to practice to improve your technique; you need to know where your skills are weak so you know what to work on.*)

Point out that for many of the most important skills we need in life, we don't always get sufficient practice before we're expected to demonstrate them. Often, they are skills we learn by watching others, which students have determined is not the best way to learn. Invite the class to suggest what some of these life skills might be. If students are unsure, explain that this lesson will help them identify these skills and how they apply to students' lives now and in the future.

Explain to students that the Overcoming Obstacles course will give them an opportunity to learn and to practice skills they need to succeed in school, at home, in their communities, and on the job.

Part I Identifying Obstacles (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students analyze the program title "Overcoming Obstacles" by identifying common obstacles in daily life.

1. STUDENTS DEFINE "OBSTACLE" AND EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH OBSTACLES.

Write "obstacle" on the board. Ask students to define the word. Relate the word to concrete experiences. Ask students to visualize a time when they were driving, hiking, or riding a bike and came upon something that was an obstacle to continuing on their way. Ask, "What did you do about the obstacle?" Invite students to share their experiences and solutions, such as moving the object, going around it, or finding an alternative route to reach their destination.

Explain to students that while they are likely to encounter such physical obstacles, they are just as likely to experience many "life obstacles," some of which can be very damaging. Brainstorm with students examples of these life obstacles, such as emotional roadblocks that they encounter in their

relationships with friends and family members. For example, have students identify an obstacle that may occur between friends that must be overcome for the friendship to continue. Record their responses on the board.

2. STUDENTS REVIEW THE TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THE OVERCOMING OBSTACLES CURRICULUM AND DEFINE “LIFE SKILLS.”

Distribute copies of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet (#1) to students, and have them review it. Explain to students that the table of contents lists skills that they will be developing and practicing in this class. Encourage students to comment on what is covered in the curriculum and why these topics are called life skills. Have students define the phrase “life skills.”

3. STUDENTS ANTICIPATE THE BENEFITS OF THE OVERCOMING OBSTACLES COURSE.

Ask students to consider why this course is called Overcoming Obstacles. Refer students to the list of obstacles they’ve identified on the board. Invite volunteers to suggest ways that the particular skills they’ll be learning can help them find ways around life’s obstacles, just as they’d find a way around a fallen tree or a concrete barrier in their path.

Part II A Day in a Life (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing the activities and life skills that are part of a fictional student’s day.

1. STUDENTS REVIEW A FICTIONAL STUDENT’S DAY.

Have students work in pairs. Give each student a copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet (#2). Review the sheet with students to be sure they understand that it is the schedule for a fictional student, Camilla Juarez. Tell students that they will also need the “Table of Contents” activity sheet (#1).

Explain that most of our daily activities are a series of actions and decisions. Waking up in the morning, for example, requires deciding what hour to get up in order to get to school or a job on time and remembering to set the alarm the night before.

2. STUDENTS ANALYZE WHICH LIFE SKILLS ARE USED BY A FICTIONAL CHARACTER.

Ask students to analyze Camilla’s day. Next to each activity, they should list skills from the “Table of Contents” activity sheet that are relevant to that activity. If students are unsure about the specific content of some lessons, have them make their best guess. Suggest that they focus on the skills that may result in more positive outcomes for Camilla.

Ask students to share the specific skills they listed for each of Camilla’s activities. Encourage discussion about the kinds of obstacles Camilla is facing on this

particular day. Have them predict how practicing the skills that Overcoming Obstacles offers could help Camilla overcome her challenges and obstacles.

Part III A Day in My Life (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing how the skills it offers are useful in their own lives.

1. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE HOW THE LIFE SKILLS THEY WILL LEARN THROUGH OVERCOMING OBSTACLES APPLY TO THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES.

Have students repeat the previous activity, this time working alone and substituting activities in their own lives for Camilla's. Have students list on a sheet of paper 10 activities in their daily schedule. They may include some of the same activities from the "A Day in a Life" activity sheet (#2), but should also include at least two specific issues that they are dealing with at this time (e.g., getting a better grade on the next math test).

Ask students to jot down notes for each activity identifying the skills from the "Table of Contents" activity sheet that they would use to successfully complete it. Have them comment on how applying the skills they will develop through the Overcoming Obstacles course will help them to become more successful.

Invite students to share examples of ways in which the skills they will learn through Overcoming Obstacles apply to their own lives. Suggest that students save their notes and responses to this activity. As they progress through the curriculum, they can return to their notes from this discussion to check how their mastery of the life skills they are learning is deepening.

2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY SKILLS THAT WILL PREPARE THEM FOR POTENTIAL OBSTACLES THAT MAY ARISE ON THE JOB.

Give the class one minute to arrange themselves into small groups of three to five students. Place the slips of paper with the job titles in a hat. Pass the hat around, and have each student draw one slip.

Have students work in their groups to identify the jobs they have drawn, name obstacles they might face in those jobs, and identify life skills they will develop in this class that could help them overcome those obstacles. Encourage students to help each other identify obstacles and relevant life skills.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name some of the skills they will learn in this course. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The Overcoming Obstacles course is about the life skills that are relevant to success at home, at school, with peers, and on the job.
- The Overcoming Obstacles course allows students to learn and practice these skills, helping them to overcome obstacles in their daily lives.
- The Overcoming Obstacles curriculum is relevant to students' lives now and in the future as adults.

Questions for Assessment

1. Describe an obstacle you have faced in your life. What skills helped you overcome this obstacle?
2. What skills would you most like to learn in this course?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program developed?

The 1992 United States Department of Labor report, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*, outlined the skills employees need to succeed in the twenty-first century workforce and how employers and communities could ensure that students learn these skills. In response to this, the Overcoming Obstacles life skills curriculum was developed and, since its inception, it has helped over 46,000 educators across all fifty U.S. states and one hundred additional countries teach more than 15 million young people the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life.

2. In which settings can Overcoming Obstacles be taught?

Overcoming Obstacles is taught in a variety of settings, including advisory periods, after-school programs, peer mentoring initiatives, and infusion into core content classes. Educators can contact CEF for assistance with creating implementation plans that meet the needs of their schools and students.

3. What skills and topics are covered in the curriculum?

Beginning with essential communication, decision making, and goal setting skills, Overcoming Obstacles covers 25 additional skills, including:

- Anger management
- Bullying prevention
- Career preparation*
- College preparation*
- Confidence
- Understanding diversity
- Financial management*
- Leadership
- Personal health
- Problem solving
- Responsibility
- Self-esteem
- Service learning
- Stress management
- Study skills
- Time management

4. How much does Overcoming Obstacles cost?

All materials, training, and support provided by Overcoming Obstacles are available through the internet for *free*, now and forever. If preferred, printed copies of the curriculum and handbooks are available at cost.

* Included in the high school level only

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

5. How is Overcoming Obstacles free?

Overcoming Obstacles is a nonprofit US-based organization that receives support from individuals, corporations, and private foundations to fund its activities. In 2010, Overcoming Obstacles introduced the gifting initiative that provided its curricula to new school partners at no cost. In 2014, the board of directors expanded this initiative worldwide so the Overcoming Obstacles curricula, training, and support would be available for free to all educators, schools, and school districts forever.

6. How do I access the curriculum?

All of our materials are available for free as PDF downloads after registering for an account on our website. In addition to the elementary, middle school, and high school materials, the following handbooks are available for download, free of charge:

- Anti-bullying Handbook
- Back-to-School Orientation Handbook
- Respect Handbook
- Activity Sheet Translation in Spanish and French
- Select Activity Sheets in Arabic, Russian, Simplified Chinese, and Portuguese

A free app is also available for iPads and Android tablets.

7. Can I get a printed copy of the curriculum materials or handbooks?

Printed copies of the curricula and handbooks are available for purchase at cost. To order, please call 1-212-406-7488.

8. What types of students benefit from Overcoming Obstacles?

Our program will benefit your entire student body, no matter their struggles, talents, or circumstances. Through Overcoming Obstacles, students who are experiencing academic and social difficulties will be able to improve their time management, goal setting, and study skills. Students who have already excelled academically will be able to learn and practice confidence, independent thinking, and leadership skills. Through life skills instruction, all of your students will improve their attendance, behavior, and chances for graduation.

9. What is included with ongoing support?

You can contact Overcoming Obstacles for information on best practices and help with implementation planning that includes assistance with lesson selection and suggestions for tailoring the curriculum to students' needs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

10. What are the differences between the high school and middle school curricula?

Both the middle school curriculum and high school curriculum incorporate the same philosophy, pedagogy, and structure. They cover similar topics, such as problem solving, conflict resolution, and stress management, but do so in an age-appropriate manner. The middle school curriculum presents skills that are relevant to the needs of younger adolescents. The high school program reinforces and develops the same skills with applications that are relevant to the needs of teenagers, and includes lessons on continuing education, employment, and financial responsibility.

11. Are curriculum materials available at the elementary school level?

The elementary level of the Overcoming Obstacles life skills curriculum will be released in early 2018.

12. Does the curriculum have to be taught in a specific order?

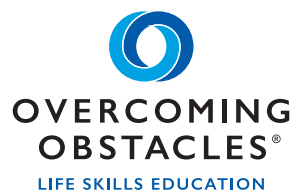
With the exception of the *Getting Started* and *Looking to the Future* modules, the modules can be taught in any order and prioritized according to topic.

13. How much personal information should I disclose to my students when facilitating a group discussion or activity?

We recommend that you only be as forthcoming as is appropriate within your school. The Overcoming Obstacles curriculum materials create a positive environment that encourages student-centered discussions; the conclusions and questions for assessment included at the end of every lesson provide a guide to facilitating these discussions.

14. What should I do if a student does not want to participate?

If a student is hesitant to participate in group activities or discussions at first, allow him or her time to sit back and observe, and then offer another invitation to join the group. Like many adults, some students may not feel comfortable talking about themselves in group settings or participating in team activities. If the student still expresses reluctance, let him or her know that everyone's participation in the group is vital and work with him or her to identify solutions. When students realize that the activities are engaging and build on their strengths, they often join in and become enthusiastic participants. Overcoming Obstacles will help students discover a different side of themselves, and it is your role as lesson facilitator to help them start the process.



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