

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES  
**TRAIN-THE-TRAINER GUIDE**

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THREE-HOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL WORKSHOP



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# INTRODUCTION

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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	<b>Welcome: What Is Overcoming Obstacles?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants are given the history and an overview of CEF.</li> <li>• The purpose and goals of the workshop and a brief synopsis of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum are presented.</li> <li>• Educators discuss how the program can be used to meet the needs of their school and students.</li> </ul>	<i>Program Overview</i> , pages i—v	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the Workshop Questionnaire</li> <li>• Sign-in sheet</li> </ul>
10	<b>“People Bingo”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants recognize their individual strengths by playing a group interaction game.</li> <li>• This activity allows participants a chance to show off their positive traits and builds trust and cohesion.</li> </ul>	<i>Confidence Building</i> , pages 42—43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet</li> <li>• Pens</li> </ul>
20	<b>“Tall Towers/ Let the Contest Begin”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<i>Module Six: Problem Solving</i> , pages 352—353	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 sheets of newspaper per group</li> <li>• 3 feet of masking tape per group</li> <li>• Chart paper</li> <li>• Markers</li> </ul>
10	<b>“If I Were...”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants explore ideas and images that represent them as individuals and share their answers with the group.</li> <li>• This activity encourages participants to reflect on their identities.</li> </ul>	<i>Getting Started</i> , pages 5—6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 piece of paper per participant</li> </ul>
5	<b>BREAK</b>			
15	<b>“Let’s Make a Deal”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants mutually create and agree upon a contract that will help the group work well together.</li> <li>• This activity will help participants understand the importance of guidelines when working in groups.</li> </ul>	<i>Getting Started</i> , pages 18—19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chalkboard, transparency, or a piece of poster paper</li> </ul>

# WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Min.	Activity	Description	Curriculum Page Numbers	Materials Needed
15	“On Your Way”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to begin working on achieving a long-term goal, participants set stepping-stone goals for themselves.</li> <li>• This activity will help participants realize that every long-term goal, even one that seems impossible at first, is made up of smaller goals that can be achieved one at a time.</li> </ul>	<i>Module Three: Goal Setting</i> , pages 204—205	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the “On Your Way” activity sheet</li> <li>• Pens</li> </ul>
20	“The Maze”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants recognize that they do not need to abandon a goal when they meet obstacles or difficulties.</li> <li>• This activity reveals that, in order to achieve long-term goals, action plans sometimes need to be revised to compensate for the difficulties one encounters.</li> </ul>	<i>Module Three: Goal Setting</i> , pages 214—215	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of “The Maze” activity sheet</li> <li>• Masking tape</li> </ul>
5	<b>BREAK</b>			
45	“Express Yourself!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants will take part in a debate in which they express and listen to opinions in order to learn and practice effective communication skills.</li> <li>• This activity will help participants identify the benefits of assertive behavior and effective communication skills.</li> </ul>	<i>Module One: Communication</i> , pages 130—131	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity rules displayed where all participants can see</li> </ul>
10	“Pass It On”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants take part in a race to pass a penny from one end of a line to the other to learn the importance of using teamwork skills.</li> <li>• This activity will help participants learn the importance of patience and cooperation to teamwork.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 pennies</li> <li>• Supplemental activity from the Activity Sheets section</li> </ul>
5	Q & A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants are invited to ask questions they may have about the workshop or the curriculum.</li> <li>• Participants are reminded that the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum team is available via phone and email to answer questions and assist with implementation planning.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the Ongoing Support Contact Sheet</li> <li>• Copies of the Frequently Asked Questions</li> </ul>

# WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS

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## 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” section of the following page where workshop participants will be able to see them.
5. Set up the maze that will be used during “The Maze” activity. For workshops with thirty or more attendees, create two or more smaller mazes.
6. 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.
7. 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)

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3. Begin the training by reading the “Fast Facts” below.

### “Fast Facts”

- Today I have the luxury of **3** hours to introduce you to Overcoming Obstacles, so let’s get started! Over the past
  - **26** years, Overcoming Obstacles has helped over 230,000 educators teach more than
  - **55** 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. Tell participants that the first activity will help them identify their individual strengths by engaging them in a group game. Then, begin facilitating the “People Bingo” activity.

### Activity #1: “People Bingo”

1. Distribute copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet and pens.
2. Refer to pages 42-43 of the *Confidence Building* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
  - Ask participants whether they felt it was difficult to find people who could sign the various squares. Encourage them to support their responses with examples, and challenge participants to demonstrate the talents they signed their names to.

## WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

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- Discuss with participants the importance of having students identify their own strengths. For example, it encourages the class to build trust and rapport.
  - Ask educators to share how they would modify the activity to suit the needs of their own students and classroom dynamics.
4. After you finish your debrief, tell the participants that you will be organizing 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 “Tall Towers/Let the Contest Begin” activity.

### **Activity #2: “Tall Towers/Let the Contest Begin”**

1. Distribute the newspapers, masking tape, chart paper, and markers to each group.
2. Refer to pages 352-353 of *Module Six: Problem Solving* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
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 participants to share examples of how they used the skills of communication, decision making, and goal setting during the “Tall Towers/Let the Contest Begin” activity.

## WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

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- 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 skill development.
4. Inform participants that in the next activity they will explore and share ideas and images that represent their individuality. Then, begin facilitating the “If I Were...” activity.

### **Activity #3: “If I Were...”**

1. Distribute paper and pens to participants.
2. Refer to pages 5-6 of the *Getting Started* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
  - State that one of the benefits of Overcoming Obstacles is that students are able to learn more about themselves and each other, discuss issues that are important to them, share opinions, and participate in engaging discussions and hands-on activities.
  - Ask participants to share why their students’ personal involvement in the course is important. As a group, discuss the benefits of teamwork and camaraderie in school.
4. Thank the educators for the work they have completed so far and then dismiss them for a five-minute break.

### **Break**

1. Collect the sign-in sheet.
2. Welcome the participants back to the workshop, and allow them a few moments to settle in. Then, begin facilitating the “Let’s Make a Deal” activity.

## WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

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### Activity #4: “Let’s Make a Deal”

1. In this activity, you will need to use a prominently displayed chalkboard, transparency, or a piece of poster paper.
2. Refer to pages 18-19 of the *Getting Started* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
  - Ask participants to recall what the Overcoming Obstacles course is all about.
  - Call on several educators to share what their classroom dynamics are like. Have them identify ways they can help their students work well together and follow class guidelines.
4. Tell participants that in the next activity they will focus on the core skill of goal setting. Then, begin facilitating the “On Your Way” activity.

### Activity #5: “On Your Way”

1. Distribute copies of the “On Your Way” activity sheet and pens.
2. Refer to pages 204-205 of *Module Three: Goal Setting* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
  - Call on several participants to share their goals and the steps they identified for achieving them.
  - Ask participants to discuss the importance of stepping-stone goals for their students. Also, encourage them to discuss what some of their students’ long-term goals might be.
  - Explain that this activity not only helps students create a plan for accomplishing their goals but also helps teachers identify ways they can be most supportive of their students’ aspirations.

## WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

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4. Inform participants that in the next activity they will learn about perseverance and creating action plans that help them achieve their goals. Then, begin facilitating “The Maze” activity.

### **Activity #6: “The Maze”**

1. Distribute copies of “The Maze” activity sheet.
2. Refer to pages 214-215 of *Module Three: Goal Setting* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
  - Explain that in order to achieve long-term goals, action plans sometimes need to be revised to compensate for the difficulties one encounters.
  - Ask several participants to share what kinds of obstacles and difficulties their students encounter.
4. Let participants know that you will now take five minutes to answer any questions they have regarding the workshop. Allow participants to ask questions about what they have learned so far in the workshop and/or make general inquiries about the curriculum.
5. Thank the educators again for the work they have completed so far and then dismiss them for a five-minute break.

### **Break**

1. Welcome the participants back to the workshop, and allow them a few moments to settle in.
2. Tell the participants that the next activity will help them teach their students how to express and listen to opinions in a constructive manner by engaging them in a controlled debate. Then, begin facilitating the “Express Yourself!” activity.

## WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

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### **Activity #7: “Express Yourself!”**

1. Prominently display the activity rules.
2. Refer to pages 130-131 of *Module One: Communication* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
  - Call on volunteers to describe effective communication skills.
  - Ask participants to describe how their students will benefit from practicing assertive behavior during disagreements.
  - Remind the educators that, as with other Overcoming Obstacles activities, the lesson can be modified to meet the needs of their students. Ask for several volunteers to share their thoughts on how they would do this.
4. Tell the participants that you will now facilitate a team activity that is available as an additional resource to the curriculum. The purpose of the activity is to help students understand the importance of patience and communication when working as part of a team. Organize participants into two groups. Then, begin facilitating the “Pass It On” activity.

### **Activity #8: “Pass It On”**

1. Refer to the “Pass It On” activity sheet located in your *Train-the-Trainer Guide* for instructions on facilitating this activity. Demonstrate the penny-passing technique before beginning the race to make sure that the process is clear.
2. Debrief the activity:
  - Ask both groups to identify what factors helped them perform the task and what factors made the task difficult.
  - Call on several volunteers to share how this activity will help their students develop stronger teamwork skills.

## WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

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- Ask the participants to identify how they would use this activity with their students and if there are any modifications they might make. Call on several volunteers to share their responses.
3. 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.

### 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](http://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.

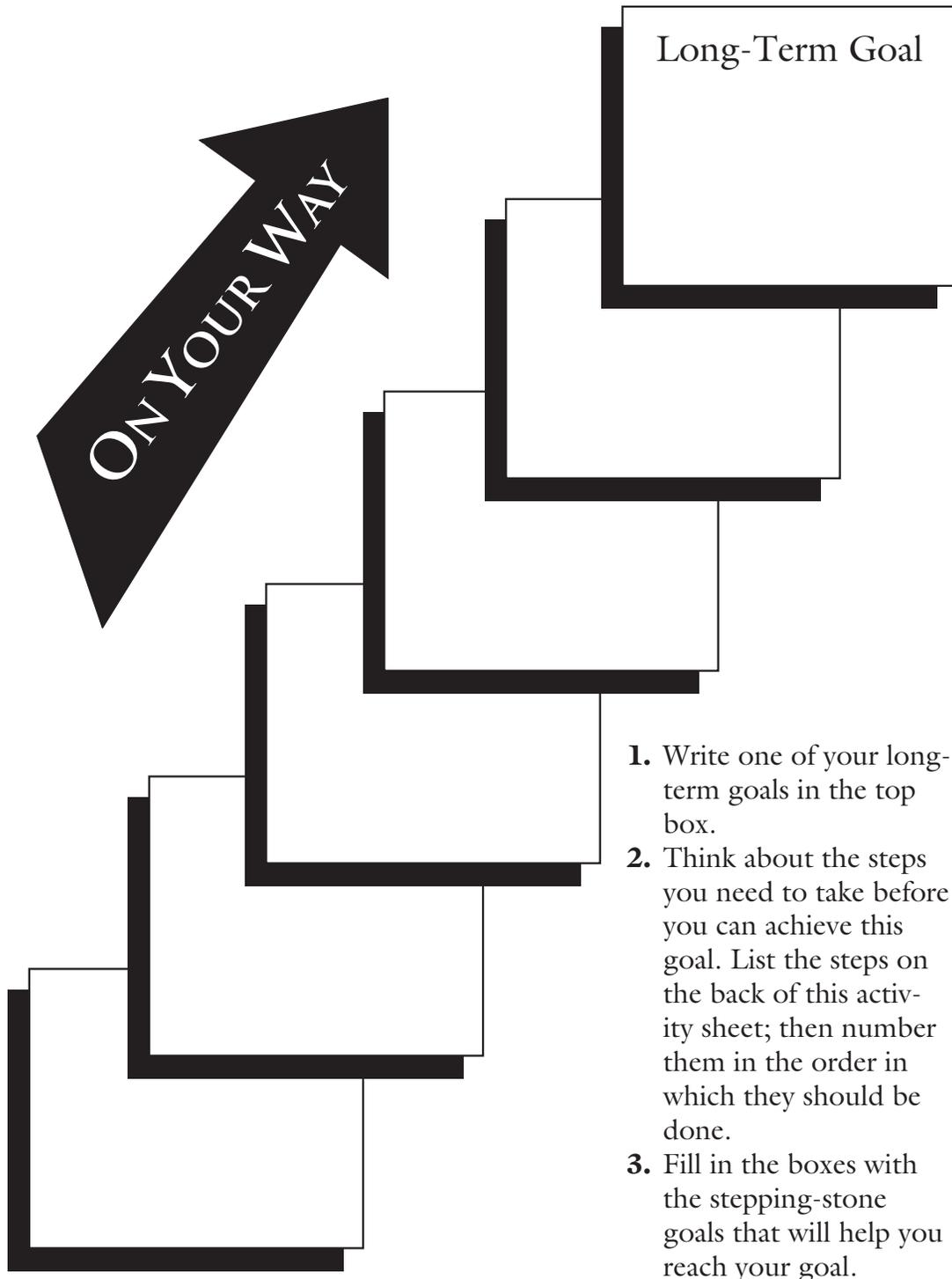
# WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

## Bingo

Is good at math	Always works hard	Likes to join in activities	Can organize anything	Can use a computer
Speaks more than one language	Tells great stories and jokes	Is a good speller	Plays a team sport	Likes to read
Knows how to swim	Can play a musical instrument		Has a good memory	Is good at building or making things
Likes to make charts and graphs	Likes to figure out how things work	Likes to write	Likes to be in plays	Likes to help others
Is a good cook	Keeps a personal diary or journal	Likes to design posters and murals	Is a good artist	Is a great dancer

# WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

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# WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

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## PASS IT ON!

### **LESSON OBJECTIVE:**

Students use teamwork skills in a race to pass a penny from one end of a line to the other. Students discuss the importance of using these skills in their daily lives.

**TIME ESTIMATE:** 30 minutes

**REQUIRED MATERIALS:** Two pennies

### **PROCEDURE:**

- Divide the class into two groups of equal size. Have the groups stand in two lines shoulder-to-shoulder and facing the other team.
- Explain that the groups will be competing to pass a penny from one end of their line to the other. The student at the end of each line will have a penny placed on the back of one hand. Upon a signal, these students will then transfer the penny to their other hand by placing the backs of their hands together and then flipping both hands at once. When the penny is on the back of their other hand, they must pass it to the next player by using the same method. If a penny is dropped, it must be taken back to the beginning and the team must start over.
- Before beginning the race, model the passing technique to make sure the process is clear.
- To start the race, place a penny on the back of the last student's hand at the end of each team line. When both groups are ready, signal for the race to start.
- The first group to complete the penny pass is the winner.

### **DEBRIEF:**

Ask the students:

- What factors helped your group perform the task?
- What factors made the race difficult?
- How does this challenge relate to teamwork in general?

# APPENDIX

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# WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE

## THREE-HOUR TEACHER-TRAINING WORKSHOP

### MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

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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.

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**PLEASE EMAIL OR FAX YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO:**

[info@overcomingobstacles.org](mailto:info@overcomingobstacles.org) | 1.212.406.7480

# RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS

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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)

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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, the California State Senate passed a resolution to commend Overcoming Obstacles for its positive impact on Los Angeles's students. That same year, the mayor of Los Angeles issued a commendation to Overcoming Obstacles for its work.

## RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

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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.

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, résumé 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 tenth grade and more than half improved their attendance by over 50%.

In 1995, Overcoming Obstacles received a grant from the Community Development Department in Los Angeles 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.

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**PART IV: DEMONSTRATING THE SKILLS****SERVICE LEARNING ..... 459**

1. Introduction
2. Getting Started
3. Designing a Plan
4. Finalizing the Action Plan and Getting Approval
5. Taking Action
6. Assessment

**LESSONS**

1. Introduction to Service Learning
2. Designing an Action Plan
3. Gathering Information and Making the Commitment
4. Formalizing and Finalizing the Action Plan
5. Giving Presentations
6. Taking Action
7. The Big Day
8. Self-Assessment
9. Public Assessment

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LESSON

# IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES 2

## A G E N D A

- Starter
- People Bingo
- Some of Both
- Make Them Work for You
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize that each individual has personal strengths.

Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Students will identify ways in which they can use their weaknesses to their advantage.

### Materials Needed

- Two copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet (#2) for each student (Parts I and II)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Ask for a volunteer to play a quick game of catch. Tell the volunteer that he or she may use only one hand to catch. Gently toss a piece of chalk to the student. Then, ask him or her the following questions:

- Which hand did you use to catch the chalk?
- Why did you use this hand rather than the other one? (If the student replies that he or she is right- or left-handed, ask what this means.)
- If one of your hands is dominant, or stronger, does this mean that your other hand is useless or worthless? Why or why not?

Remind students that everyone has strengths. Point out that everyone also has some weaknesses; however, just like the less dominant hand, weaknesses do not need to be obstacles. Tell students that they will identify their individual strengths and will explore the relationship between strengths and weaknesses.

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**Part I People Bingo (15 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students recognize their individual strengths by playing a game involving group interaction.

**1. STUDENTS LISTEN TO THE GAME'S DIRECTIONS.**

Distribute copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet (#2), and allow time for students to review it. Then, give the following directions:

- Move around the room, and ask your classmates to sign their names in a square that describes one of their strengths. For example, if a square reads “knows how to swim,” find a classmate who knows how to swim and ask him or her to sign that square.
- Your goal is to get bingo. That means that you must fill five squares in a row with names. Completed rows may read across, down, or diagonally.
- A person’s name cannot be in any winning row more than once.
- When you have filled a row with signatures, call out, “Bingo!”
- If you sign your name to something, you may be asked to prove it.
- You have five minutes to play.

**2. STUDENTS PLAY THE GAME.**

Tell students to begin, allowing them to move freely around the room.

After five minutes, quickly poll the class to see how many students are just one square away from bingo. Decide whether to allow an additional minute or two before ending the game.

**3. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY.**

Ask students if they found it difficult to get signatures for the various squares. As volunteers respond, encourage them to support their responses with details and examples. Allow students to challenge one another. For example, if a student has signed his or her name to the square that reads “speaks more than one language,” the student may be asked to say a few words in another tongue. This often allows students a chance to show off their strengths, and further encourages the class to build trust and a positive rapport.

Summarize the discussion by observing that the activity sheet has 24 different squares on it, each listing a different skill or strength. Point out that everyone has strengths, which is why each student was able to sign his or her name to at least one square.

In the event a student claims that he or she felt unable to sign any square on the sheet, remind the class that it’s impossible to measure all of the skills and strengths that people have—the sheet listed only 24, which is a small number. If pressed, tell the student that he or she kept the commitment to be in class today, and that keeping commitments is a very valuable strength.

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**Part II Some of Both (10 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

**1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR PERSONAL STRENGTHS.**

Distribute new copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet. Ask students to reread each square and to consider whether it lists one of their strengths or traits. If so, have them write their name in the square. If not, ask them to put an X across the square.

Point out that students have begun to identify personal strengths. Allow time for students to add additional squares across the bottom of the chart, indicating other strengths or skills they have.

**2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR PERSONAL WEAKNESSES.**

Explain that even the most talented, respected people have weaknesses or areas in which they don’t excel. Share a weakness of your own with the class; perhaps you are not a great speller, you can’t carry a tune, or you have trouble memorizing things. Write your example on the board.

Invite volunteers to provide examples of their personal weaknesses. Record their responses on the board. If students have difficulty offering examples, refer them to the boxes they left blank on the second “Bingo” activity sheet. The recorded list of weaknesses needs to include only a few examples.

Tell students to use the backs of their activity sheets to list some of their weaknesses.

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**Part III Make Them Work for You (20 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students identify ways to use weaknesses to their advantage.

**1. STUDENTS EXPLORE HOW TO TURN WEAKNESSES INTO STRENGTHS.**

Refer to the list on the board, and challenge students to convert these weaknesses into strengths. Model the thinking process for them by addressing your own example first. For example, you might say, “I’m a poor speller, so I have to proofread carefully. But when I proofread, I usually catch other mistakes, too. This makes my writing stronger than it might be if I were a good speller.”

Ensure that students understand the technique of changing their attitudes in order to convert a weakness into a strength. Explain that this technique will be useful throughout their lives. Provide examples of situations in which converting a weakness into a strength is especially useful (e.g., when being teased, during an interview).

**2. STUDENTS CONTINUE BRAINSTORMING IN SMALL GROUPS.**

Encourage students to brainstorm ways that one of the weaknesses listed on the board can be restated as a strength. If students cannot reasonably convert a weakness, focus the discussion on identifying ways to overcome it.

When the brainstorming session is complete, divide the class into groups of four or five. Explain that within each group, students should brainstorm ways to convert the weaknesses each student has listed on the back of his or her activity sheet. Remind students that if they cannot find ways to convert a weakness into a strength, they should brainstorm ways to overcome it. Suggest that each group appoint a volunteer to take notes on the strategies created to address their individual weaknesses.

**3. STUDENTS SHARE THEIR STRATEGIES.**

Invite a volunteer from each group to share some strategies that the group developed. Be sure to affirm students’ efforts and to encourage supporting ideas from other students.

Conclude the discussion by pointing out that knowing what you’re not good at is actually a real strength. Successful people focus on doing what they’re best at, and make sure to work with others who are strong in the areas in which they are weak. That way, everyone is doing what he or she is best at.

Give examples of this strategy, such as the following:

- Actors often work with business advisors who are paid to manage their finances efficiently.
- Athletes work with coaches who are talented at strategizing.
- Doctors specialize in a particular area, and work with other specialists to treat patients most effectively.

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**Conclusion** (20 minutes)

Ask students if this process was easy or difficult. Ask them to name a few of their classmates' strengths. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Everyone has strengths. It's important to identify your own strengths so that you can focus on using them.
- Everyone also has weaknesses. It's important to identify your weaknesses so you can create strategies for overcoming them or using them to your advantage.
- Successful, respected people can always identify both their strengths and their weaknesses. It's what enables them to focus on doing what they do best, and to work with others who have strengths in areas in which they are weak.

**Questions for Assessment**

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1. Why is it important to be aware of your own strengths?
2. List three of your personal strengths (or three things that you are good at).
3. What are some ways you can turn a weakness into a strength?

## FINDING SOLUTIONS

**A G E N D A**

- Starter
- Tall Towers
- Let the Contest Begin
- It's Personal
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

**Objectives**

Students will gather information they need in order to complete a task.

Students will collaborate with others and use problem solving skills in order to complete a task.

Students will apply problem solving skills to their own lives.

**Materials Needed**

- 15 sheets of paper (stock white or newsprint) for each group of five students (Part II)
- One three-foot strip of masking tape for each group of five students (Part II)

**Starter** (3 minutes)

State that students have been working on solving problems for the last three lessons. Ask, “If you had a difficult problem to solve, would you feel more comfortable solving it now than you would have at the beginning of the year?” Ask students to explain their answers.

Acknowledge that knowing how to do something usually makes us feel more able and confident about doing it. Explain that today students will continue strengthening their problem solving skills by solving more problems.

**Part I Tall Towers** (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students gather information they need in order to complete a task.

**1. STUDENTS CONSIDER A CHALLENGE.**

Begin the activity by telling students that they are going to participate in a contest to see who can build the tallest tower. Explain that everyone will use the same materials and will have the same amount of time to work.

Ask students to help you clear space for the contest by moving all chairs and desks to the front, back, and sides of the room. Tell students to leave as much open floor space as possible for the contest.

Stand back and allow students to work. If necessary, remind students not to block the door of the classroom or to pile chairs or desks dangerously high.

**2. STUDENTS ASK QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO GATHER INFORMATION.**

Ask students if they are ready to begin. (*Students should answer no.*) Have students identify the first thing they should do when faced with a problem. (*Students should respond: gather information.*)

Tell students to ask you questions about the contest’s rules, which are listed below:

- Students will work in teams of five to build towers.
- Each group will be given 15 sheets of paper and some masking tape. These are the only materials that can be used.
- Towers must be freestanding—they cannot be taped to desks or any other objects.
- There will be 10 minutes allotted for work.
- The tallest structure that can stand on its own will win.
- The winning group does not have to participate in cleanup.

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**Part II Let the Contest Begin** (25–30 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students collaborate with others and use problem solving skills in order to complete a task.

**1. STUDENTS FORM GROUPS AND ORGANIZE TASKS.**

Divide the class into groups of five. Give each group 15 sheets of paper and a strip of masking tape. Suggest that students discuss options and then try them out in order to consider pros and cons before using the tape.

**2. STUDENTS BUILD TOWERS.**

Start the contest and observe students as they work. After 10 minutes have passed, announce that time is up. Have the class decide on the winning tower or towers, and then instruct students to put the room back in order. Observe their ability to work together.

**3. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY.**

Ask students to describe the winning strategies. Through questions and comments, guide students to describe what worked and what didn't work. If necessary, help students realize that the towers with the strongest bases were most successful.

Point out that students used all the steps of the problem solving process in order to solve this problem. Ask students to explain how each step was used. (*Students should mention the following: They gathered information when asking questions about the contest. They identified options when considering how the tower could be built. They considered pros and cons when they tried the options. They made a decision when they chose an option and built the tower.*)

Have students identify the skills they relied on in order to participate in this contest and build the towers. Through discussion, help students realize that in addition to decision making and problem solving skills, they also used goal setting, planning, and time management skills, as well as their abilities to follow instructions and work together as a team.

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**Part III It's Personal** (10–15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students apply problem solving skills to their own lives.

**1. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR LIVES.**

Explain that students will begin to solve one more problem before they leave class today. Ask them to think about what is happening in their lives. Suggest that they think about the following:

- Problems they may have with friends
- Problems or obstacles they are facing in trying to reach a goal
- A past problem

## 2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY A PROBLEM.

Tell students to take out a sheet of paper and identify the problem they would like to solve or specify the unsolved problem from their past. Remind them to take their time and properly identify their problems. Remind them that identifying a problem accurately is often half the battle.

Have students begin to list possible options they could employ in order to solve the problems they identified. Explain that they have the remainder of the class period to think about the problems, list options for solving them, and weigh pros and cons for each option before deciding on a solution.

Assure students that they do not need to work out the problem before the end of class—especially if they need to gather any information. Invite students to talk with you if they need help.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if they think that successful people are usually good problem solvers. Invite volunteers to explain their answers. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Use all the steps of the problem solving process when facing a problem: gather information that's needed, identify as many options as possible, weigh the pros and cons for each option, and decide on the best solution.
- The best solution to a difficult problem is a thoughtful one, so take the time to think it through.

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### Questions for Assessment

1. Describe a problem you have faced this week. It does not have to be a big problem. It can be something like a quiz you took in school or a game in which you competed. Describe how you used or did not use the problem solving process. If you did use any of the steps, were you aware of it at the time?
2. List three skills you have learned in this course that can help you solve problems. Explain how each skill can help you.

# WHO ARE YOU?

## A G E N D A

- Starter
- The Name Game
- If I Were...
- Untying the Knot
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

### Objectives

Students will identify themselves and learn their classmates' names.

Students will explore and share ideas and images that represent them as individuals.

Students will break down personal space boundaries and develop teamwork skills.

### Materials Needed

- A sheet of writing paper for each student (Part II)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Welcome students. Ask them to seat themselves alphabetically, but to complete this task without talking to each other. Allow several moments for students to attempt this task. When students begin to get frustrated, ask them to identify why they are having difficulty completing the assignment. (*Students should say that they don't know each other's names.*)

Tell students that this course is all about them. Explain that if they are going to feel comfortable talking about ideas and learning together, they need to get to know one another.

Explain to students that the purpose of today's lesson is for them to learn each other's names, to learn some facts about one another, and to consider some facts and feelings about themselves.

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**Part I The Name Game (15 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students play a game in which they identify themselves and learn their classmates' names.

**1. STUDENTS LISTEN TO DIRECTIONS.**

Ask students to arrange themselves according to the order of their birthdays. (Allow them to speak as they complete this task.) Once they have arranged themselves, ask them to sit in a large circle. Take a place in the circle yourself. Explain that students will take turns saying their names, along with facts or adjectives about their names or themselves. For example, students might say "My name is Cheryl—with a C," "I'm Mark, after my grandfather," or "I'm Soccer Sally." Give students a few moments to think of how they will introduce themselves.

**2. STUDENTS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES TO THE GROUP AND REARRANGE THEMSELVES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER.**

Begin by saying your name and a fact about yourself, and then have students take turns doing the same. As students introduce themselves, invite them to rearrange themselves in alphabetical order by their first names. Explain that students whose names begin with "A" should be together, followed by students whose names begin with "B," and so on. Observe how students accomplish this task. Step in to give guidance or to offer suggestions, but only when necessary.

Afterward, go around the circle and have students introduce themselves again, in alphabetical order. Allow students to make final adjustments in seating.

**3. STUDENTS IDENTIFY CLASSMATES BY NAME.**

Tell students that they are going to introduce themselves, alphabetically, one more time. This time, challenge them to say their own name and repeat the

names of the people who have gone before them. Tell students that they may help each other if they get stuck. If you have a large class, consider dividing students into groups of six or eight for this portion of the activity.

When students have finished, tell them that it will be much easier for them to work together now that they know each other.

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## Part II If I Were... (20 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students explore and share ideas and images that represent them as individuals.

### 1. STUDENTS EXPLORE AND IDENTIFY IDEAS AND IMAGES THAT REPRESENT THEM AS INDIVIDUALS.

Ask students to take out a piece of paper. Give sheets of paper to students who don't have any and tell them that it is their responsibility to bring paper with them in the future. Explain that being prepared is important in this course—and that includes having writing materials.

Ask students to write answers to the following questions. Point out that these questions require students to think about themselves—something this course will help them learn to do.

Pause after each question, allowing students time to jot down answers:

- If you were a book, what book or type of book would you be?
- If you were a character in a story or a movie, who would you be?
- If you were a piece of clothing, what would you be?
- If you were an animal, what would you be?
- If you were food, what would you be?
- If you were one of the four elements—earth, wind, water, or fire—which one would you be?

### 2. STUDENTS SHARE THEIR ANSWERS.

Choose a group of students who are similar in some way (e.g., all boys in the room wearing black shoes, all girls with blue eyes, all students with birthdays in September, all students in the back row). Invite this group of students to read their answers to the first question. Encourage them to explain their choices. Express interest in and appreciation for all responses. If a student is reluctant to explain, accept this and move on.

As students respond, observe reactions from the rest of the class. Make notes about their reactions for use in forming class guidelines during part III of lesson 3.

Choose a different group of students, and invite them to share their responses to the second question. Continue in this manner until each student in the room has had a chance to respond and all questions have been answered.

### 3. STUDENTS RECEIVE AFFIRMATION AND INSPIRATION.

Praise students for their participation. Restate that the goal of this course is for students to learn things about themselves and each other. Tell students that they will all have opportunities to discuss issues that are important to them, share opinions, and participate in discussions and activities.

Say, “How much or how little you learn in this course depends on each of you. I promise that if you are active and participate, you will learn something. You will also improve your chances for success in school, in work, and in everything you choose to do!”

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## Part III Untying the Knot (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students play a group interaction game that breaks down personal space boundaries and helps them develop teamwork skills.

### 1. STUDENTS FORM SMALL GROUPS.

Set up some open space in your classroom or take the class outside. Ask students to form groups of eight or nine, with boys and girls represented equally in each group. Try to form groups of students who don't seem to know each other well.

### 2. STUDENTS LISTEN TO DIRECTIONS AND THEN PLAY THE GAME.

Have each group stand in a circle. If space is limited, have only one or two groups working at the same time. Tell students to listen closely to these directions before following them:

- First, reach your right hand into the center of the circle.
- Join your right hand with another person who is not standing next to you.
- Now, reach your left hand into the center of the circle.
- Join your left hand with a different person who is not standing next to you.
- Without letting go of one another's hands, untangle yourselves and form a circle again. When you would like someone to move or take some sort of action, you must address that person by name.

As students work, encourage their efforts. Make observations about the relative success of each group for use in the next step.

**3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES.**

Comment on the outcome of the game. Ask questions such as the following:

- I noticed that a few groups seemed to work especially well together. How did you manage to untangle yourselves?
- Was this activity easy or difficult?
- I noticed that some groups fell apart right away. What happened?
- What would you do differently if you had to do this activity again?
- What was the most difficult part of this activity?

Ask students if they are able to remember most of their classmates' names. If necessary, go around the room again and have students say their names.

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**Conclusion** (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain why personal involvement in this class is important. Ask students to name some people in the class that they didn't know before and what they have learned about those people. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Each student is an important member of this class.
- It's important that everyone in this class makes an effort to get to know everyone else and work together. The success of the class as a whole depends on this.
- Each student needs to take an active role in the class. Individual success depends on this.

**Questions for Assessment**


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1. Why is it important to get to know everyone in this class?
2. If you could be like someone else in your family, whom would you be like? List three characteristics you admire in this person.
3. List three things you can do to take an active part in learning in this class.

## WORKING IN TEAMS

**A G E N D A**

- Starter
- Team Sentences
- What's Important to Whom?
- Let's Make a Deal
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

**Objectives**

Students will identify the benefits and challenges of working in teams.

Students will identify the traits, people, and future aspirations that they value and those that are valued by others.

Students will synthesize guidelines for the class's work and interactions.

**Materials Needed**

- Three note cards, each with a topic written on it (Part I)
- Poster board and colored markers (Part III)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Ask students to express a preference for something. For example, ask for a show of hands in response to a simple question, such as “Who would rather have a cat than a dog for a pet?” or “Who would rather learn to play the guitar than learn to play a sport?”

Call on a student whose hand is raised and ask a follow-up question, such as “Why would you rather have a cat?” or “Why would you prefer to learn to play the guitar?” Give the student who responds your full attention. If others interrupt, ask that they give the student time to finish speaking.

Say, “This class is about each one of you and the things that are important to you. In this class, each one of you counts.” Ask students whether they think the things that are important to them should be considered important to others. Encourage volunteers to explain their answers. Tell students that in this class, what they value is what’s most important.

Tell students that today they will begin to consider what’s important to them. Using that information, they will also work together to establish some guidelines for the class.

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**Part I Team Sentences (15 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students work in teams to create sentences, and begin considering the traits, people, and goals that they value most.

**1. STUDENTS FORM SMALL GROUPS AND LISTEN TO DIRECTIONS.**

Divide the class into three teams. Tell students that they are going to play a game. Then, read the following directions out loud:

- Each team will be given a topic and five minutes to write a sentence about it on the board. Each team must work together to write their sentence.
- As a team, you must complete the sentence without talking to one another.
- Only one person from each team can be at the board at a time. The first person will write one word, and then go to the back of the line. The next person will add the next word, and so on.
- You must form a complete sentence. A fragment or a grammatically incorrect sentence will not count. If a team writes an incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentence, it must start over.
- The sentence must end with a period or an exclamation point. When the sentence is complete, the team should cheer.

**2. STUDENTS WORK IN TEAMS TO CREATE SENTENCES.**

Have each team line up facing the board. Remind students that each team must work in complete silence. Give the first person in each team a piece of chalk and a note card with one of the following topics written on it:

- My Role Model
- A Good Friend Is Someone Who
- Happiness Is
- After This School Year Is Over
- As a Freshman in High School

Suggest that students use the topics to start their sentences.

**3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE ACTIVITY.**

When students have finished, invite members of each team to describe what was difficult about creating the sentences. Invite members of teams that completed sentences to describe what helped them succeed. Then, ask all students what they would do differently if they were to play this game again.

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**Part II What's Important to Whom? (15 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students identify some traits, people, and goals that are important to them, and learn about what is important to others.

**1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY PERSONAL PREFERENCES, PLANS, AND VALUES.**

Refer to the sentences that each team created in part I. Say, "I'll bet not everyone in the first group has the same role model." Invite each member of the first group to explain whom they would have written about if they had been working on their own. Ask a volunteer from another group to record the responses on the board.

Proceed in a similar manner with the topics covered in each sentence, eliciting responses from the members of each group. Essentially, ask students to discuss what they value in a friend, what their idea of happiness is, what they will do at the end of the school year, and what they have considered about their freshman year in high school.

**2. STUDENTS ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR PREFERENCES, PLANS, AND VALUES.**

Ask students to consider their classmates' various responses and to note similarities and differences between the responses. Summarize by stating how these responses show that people have different goals and value different things. Comment that this makes sense, since we are all different people.

Say, "Different things are important to different people. This class will help

you identify what’s important to you, your personal goals, and ways you can reach those goals.”

### 3. STUDENTS CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER.

Make the observation that although each student has individual preferences and values different things, they worked as a team to complete their sentences.

Emphasize the importance of learning to accept one another in order to work together. Say, “It will always be necessary to work with others in life. People may be different from you—they may like different things, come from different places, and have different goals. But as you have seen, people with differences can work together. This course will also help you learn how to work successfully with others.”

Remind students that this will happen only if they choose to participate and apply what they learn. State again that the choice to learn is always up to each of them.

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## Part III Let’s Make a Deal (15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students mutually create and agree upon a contract that establishes some class guidelines.

### 1. STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE NEED TO CREATE GUIDELINES.

Explain that in order to make sure that everyone is given the same chance to succeed in this class, everyone—including you, the teacher—needs to consider and decide on some guidelines that the class will follow.

Say, “Let’s make a deal. I’m willing to do some things that will help us work well together, and I’d like you to agree to do some things, too. Here’s what I promise to do. Tell me what you think.”

### 2. STUDENTS LISTEN TO THE TEACHER’S COMMITMENTS.

Make a list of things that you, as the teacher, promise to do. If you recorded observations about classroom behavior during previous class sessions, refer to them as you develop your list. Your list might be similar to the following:

- I’ll be on time.
- I’ll listen respectfully to what each person has to say.
- I’ll treat everyone with courtesy.
- I’ll never put anyone down.
- I’ll make my best effort to be prepared for each class.

Invite a volunteer to record your commitments on the board.

### 3. STUDENTS NEGOTIATE AND AGREE TO TERMS.

Once you have recorded your own list, have students brainstorm a list of commitments that they will need to follow in order for the class to work well together. Record their responses on the board. Students may copy items from your list.

Invite students to discuss each statement. Explain that in making a deal, all parties must agree to the terms. Ask questions such as the following to prompt discussion and thinking:

- Can everyone agree to this?
- Does everyone agree that this is important to us?
- Is there anything else we should add?

Guide the class to discuss and formulate a final list of guidelines containing no more than 10 items. If students are having difficulty reaching a consensus, invite explanations from those who seem to maintain the minority opinion. Then, take a quick “yea” or “nay” vote to resolve the issue. Remind students that everyone is welcome to express an opinion, but not everyone has to agree with it.

Have volunteers use the markers to transfer the final list to poster board. Then, invite each student to sign the list. Afterward, post the list prominently in the room. Refer to specific items on the list as necessary, and remind students of their agreement to these guidelines.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to recall what this class is about. Ask them how recognizing differences in traits, goals, and values can be a benefit when working in teams. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Each student in this class has goals, and each student values certain traits and certain people.
- In order to work well together, it’s important to acknowledge and accept that everyone values different things and has different ideas.
- We have made an agreement to follow a list of guidelines that we think will help us work well together. We need to help each other follow these guidelines.

### Questions for Assessment

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1. Why is it important to learn to work with others in a group?
2. List three things you can do to successfully work with others in a group.
3. List three reasons why we set rules or guidelines in the classroom.

## STEPPING-STONE GOALS

**A G E N D A**

- Starter
- Step This Way
- Break It Down
- On Your Way
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

**Objectives**

Students will recognize that long-term goals can be broken into a series of steps, or smaller goals.

Students will identify short-term and medium-range goals and become aware of their importance to achieving long-term goals.

Students will set stepping-stone goals for themselves.

**Materials Needed**

- One copy of the “Step This Way” activity sheet (#2) for each group of three to four students (Before class, cut each activity sheet into one set of six squares. You will need one set for each group of students.) (Part I)
- Two copies of the “On Your Way” activity sheet (#3) for each student (Part III)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever taken a bus somewhere. Then, say, “Imagine that you are on a bus and the bus driver announces, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, I don’t know exactly where I’m going, but I’ll drive around for a while. If I come close to where you want to get off, just let me know.’” After students have reacted, ask:

- Would you want to be on this bus?
- What do you think of this bus driver?

Say, “Today, we’re going to talk about how important it is to make a plan that will help you get to where you want to go.”

**Part I Step This Way (20 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students recognize that long-term goals can be broken down into a series of steps, or smaller goals.

**1. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE ACTIVITY.**

Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Give each group one set of squares from the “Step This Way” activity sheet (#2). Jumble the order of the squares before giving each group its set. Explain that each group has a set of puzzle pieces and that students are to do the following:

- Arrange the squares in an order that will enable them to achieve a final goal.
- Experiment with different arrangements before making their decision.
- Number the squares in order from one to six, with six being the long-term goal.

**2. STUDENTS DETERMINE STEPS IN A SEQUENCE.**

Circulate among students as they work. If students are having difficulty sequencing their squares, suggest that they start at the end by numbering and identifying the long-term goal first (i.e., “be chosen for the basketball team”).

After students have finished working, invite members of each group to share their results with the class. Through discussion, guide students to settle on this sequence of events:

1. Decide that you want to be on the basketball team.
2. Start practicing, and find out when tryouts are.
3. Find someone who can help you improve the skills you’re having trouble with.
4. Eat well and make sure to get a lot of rest the week before tryouts.

5. Try out for the basketball team.
6. Be chosen for the basketball team.

### 3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE ACTIVITY.

Model an evaluation of this long-term goal by verbally reinforcing the criteria that students have previously used. Ask them to identify each criterion you use. You might say the following:

- If I really liked playing basketball, I would want to be on the team (*personal*).
- This goal is something I could work for and achieve in the future (*realistic*).
- I would enjoy being on the basketball team and being involved in school activities (*consequences*).
- I could prepare for it over the next year (*time frame/deadlines*).

Point out that all long-term goals can be broken into smaller steps, and that each of these smaller steps is really another goal in itself. Explain that long-term goals can sometimes seem impossible to achieve because they are far in the future, but making a plan to achieve a dream can help it come true.

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## Part II Break It Down (15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students identify short-term and medium-range goals and become aware of their importance to achieving long-term goals.

### 1. STUDENTS EVALUATE ANOTHER LONG-TERM GOAL.

Invite students to consider another example of a long-term goal. On the board, draw five large boxes in a row, connected with arrows from left to right. In the last box on the right, write, “Buy a pair of roller blades.”

Ask students to evaluate this goal and decide whether it is a valid one. If necessary, prompt students to add a deadline or time frame (e.g., by summer vacation). Then, above the box, label it as a long-term goal.

### 2. STUDENTS MAKE A PLAN TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL.

Invite the class to brainstorm a plan of action for achieving this goal. Guide students to formulate a series of steps and record them in the boxes you have drawn on the board. Encourage them to erase and rearrange the order of steps as their plan evolves. If needed, add another box or two. However, through questions and comments, help students to keep their plan brief and practical. The final plan may resemble the following:

- Discuss with parents.
- Shop for styles and prices.
- Choose the pair I want.
- Earn and save the money.

### 3. STUDENTS IDENTIFY SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-RANGE GOALS.

Point out that students have just created an action plan by setting stepping-stone goals. Explain that there are three different kinds of stepping-stone goals:

- Short-term goals, which are steps that you want to take in a short time frame (e.g., today, tomorrow, or within the next week)
- Medium-range goals, which are steps that will take a little more time (e.g., a week, a month, or more)
- Long-term goals, which are what you hope to accomplish in the future (e.g., buying the roller blades or making the basketball team next year)

Ask students to identify which steps in their plan on the board are short-term goals, and label those boxes. Then, do the same for medium-range goals.

Tell students that whenever they feel like giving up on a long-term goal, they should make a plan with stepping-stone goals. The plan will give them direction. It will help them find a way to do whatever they wish to do. Remind students that if they need information in order to build a plan, all they need to do is ask questions.

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## Part III On Your Way (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students set stepping-stone goals for themselves in order to begin working on a long-term goal.

### 1. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE ACTIVITY.

Distribute one copy of the “On Your Way” activity sheet (#3) to each student. Give students time to read over the directions. Then, answer any questions they might have. Tell students that they may not need to use all six boxes in the chart; they should use as many as their goal requires.

To prompt students to think about their goals, suggest that they look in their folders and find the “Cloud 9” activity sheet from lesson 4 of *Getting Started*, which illustrates one of their dreams. They should also review the “Valid Goals” activity sheet, which they completed in the last class period. You might also suggest that they think about things they would like to accomplish in the future at home, at school, in sports, over the summer, in high school, or when they are adults.

### 2. STUDENTS WORK INDEPENDENTLY TO ESTABLISH AND EVALUATE THEIR GOALS.

Before students begin working, remind them to evaluate their goals and make sure they are valid. As students work, circulate the classroom and ensure that students have set appropriate goals. Watch for goals that are unrealistic or impossible for students to achieve. By asking questions or offering comments, help students modify or change such goals.

If time permits, invite students to share their goals and the steps they set for achieving them. Then, distribute the remaining copies of the “On Your Way” activity sheet, and suggest that students keep these copies in their folders to fill out the next time they want to establish a new goal.

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**Conclusion** *(2 minutes)*

Ask students to explain the concept of stepping-stone goals. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Every long-term goal, even one that seems impossible at first, is made up of smaller goals that can be achieved one at a time.
- Create stepping-stone plans to achieve long-term goals and dreams.

**Questions for Assessment**

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1. Define “short-term goal.” Give an example.
2. Define “medium-range goal.” Give an example.
3. Define “long-term goal.” Give an example.

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LESSON **4**  
PERSEVERING

**A G E N D A**

- Starter
- The Maze
- The Magic Word
- Make a New Plan, Stan
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

**Objectives**

Students will recognize that they do not need to abandon a goal when they meet obstacles or difficulties.

Students will define “perseverance” and discuss its importance.

Students will revise stepping-stone goals in order to overcome an obstacle and achieve a goal.

**Materials Needed**

- One copy of “The Maze” activity sheet (#5) (Part I)
- A roll of masking tape with which to duplicate the maze on your classroom floor (Part I)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Give students an example or two of fictional characters who exemplify perseverance. Choose characters from books, movies, or television who would currently be well known by your students. Call on students to tell what they know about the characters before making your point. Elicit responses that indicate the obstacles that the characters overcame.

Explain that in today's class, students will learn that they don't have to give up on something that is important to them just because they have run into an obstacle. They can find ways around it in order to keep striving for their goal.

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**Part I The Maze (20 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students recognize that they do not need to abandon a goal when they meet obstacles or difficulties.

**1. SET UP THE ACTIVITY.**

Before class today, recreate “The Maze” activity sheet (#5) on the floor of your classroom with masking tape. The maze should be large enough for students to walk through. On a sheet of paper, write the word “Start” and draw an arrow in colored marker. Then, tape the paper to the floor at the entrance to the maze. On another sheet of paper, write the word “End,” and tape this to the floor at the exit from the maze.

**2. STUDENTS WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH THE MAZE.**

Call on volunteers to find their way through the maze. Allow students to work at it, one at a time. Make comments only to keep order or to move the process along. Encourage as many students as possible to participate, although most will figure out the correct path after a few volunteers have worked through it.

As students work, observe how they react when they meet a dead end in the maze—do they quit or do they back up and keep trying? Also observe how other students react when this happens—do they offer encouragement or help?

**3. STUDENTS MAKE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ACTIVITY.**

Prompt students to make observations about this activity by asking questions and making comments based on your own observations. You might ask:

- Why was this activity hard to do at first?
- Why did it become easier for you later?
- Was it possible for all of the students to successfully reach the end?
- How did you react when you met a dead end? What choices did you have?
- How did the rest of the class react?
- Did having some encouragement motivate you to keep going?

Be sure that students have verbalized that it was possible for everyone to work through the maze and that the students who didn't give up were successful.

## Part II The Magic Word (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students define “perseverance” and discuss its importance.

### 1. STUDENTS DEFINE “PERSEVERANCE.”

Write the verb “persevere” on the board. Prompt students to discuss and formulate a definition of “persevere.” Have volunteers record ideas and definitions on the board.

At the same time, ask a student to look up the word in the dictionary and read the definitions aloud to the class. (Merriam-Webster defines “persevere” as “to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement.”) Challenge students to consider the dictionary definition in light of their own definition and to make adjustments as they see fit.

Ask students if they think that perseverance would help them achieve their goals. Call on individuals to explain their answers.

### 2. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE OBSTACLES THEY MAY FACE AS THEY STRIVE TO ACHIEVE A GOAL.

Point out that no one can accurately predict the future, so it's hard to know exactly what might happen when we make an action plan to achieve a long-term goal. Explain that when students meet an obstacle, their first reaction should not be to give up; it should be to persevere—to keep trying.

Invite students to brainstorm factors that could become difficulties or obstacles to achieving a long-term goal. Prompt students by mentioning obstacles such as the following:

- Time: One stepping-stone goal may take more time than you thought, or there may be other steps you need to take that you didn't know about at first.
- Expenses: Something may cost more than you anticipated, or you may need things that you didn't even know about at first.
- Interest: You may lose interest for a while, or you may choose to do something else temporarily.
- Illness: You may get sick, or you may have to postpone everything for a while because of a health problem.
- Distractions: You may have friends who distract you from your goals.
- Other changes: Your family may move, you may change schools, or individuals who are important to your plan may end their involvement for some reason.

Through discussion, elicit from students the idea that they can overcome these obstacles by revising their stepping-stone goals or by making a new action plan. Remind students that if they persevere, they will overcome obstacles and they will succeed.

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### Part III Make A New Plan, Stan (15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students revise stepping-stone goals in order to overcome an obstacle and achieve a goal.

#### 1. STUDENTS SET STEPPING-STONE GOALS.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Assign a long-term goal to each group, and have them make a plan for achieving it. Choose goals such as the following:

- Make a varsity sports team in your sophomore year of high school.
- Get the lead part in the school play this spring.
- Sing and play in a rock band someday.
- Go to college.

Give students about five minutes to work out an action plan for achieving their goal.

#### 2. STUDENTS REVISE THEIR PLANS.

After students have completed their plans, explain that they have run into an obstacle. Suggest the following obstacles to overcome:

- You make the varsity team, but break your ankle the summer before your sophomore year in high school.
- You win the lead part in the play, but you get laryngitis.
- You are in a band whose members can't play their instruments very well.
- You go to college, but must earn more money for tuition.

Encourage students to make new action plans based on the difficulties they have encountered. Give them another five minutes to work out their new plans.

When students have finished, invite volunteers from each group to share their new action plans with the class. Encourage other students to offer additional suggestions for overcoming the obstacles presented to each group.

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**Conclusion** (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain how they can ensure that their goals are realistic. Ask students to define “persevere.” Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- To overcome obstacles on the road to achieving a long-term goal, revise your action plan.
- Successful people don’t give up—they persevere.

**Questions for Assessment**

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1. Explain why perseverance is vital for achieving your goals.
2. Describe a situation in your life in which you faced an obstacle and overcame it.
3. Think of an obstacle that could come between you and your long-term goal. Write down ways that you can overcome or avoid this obstacle; then, revise your plan in a way that lets you still achieve your long-term goal.

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LESSON **5**

# EXPRESSING OPINIONS CONSTRUCTIVELY

## **A G E N D A**

- Starter
- Why a Debate?
- How Will It Work?
- Express Yourself!
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

### **Objectives**

Students will recognize that it is possible to communicate productively when disagreeing with others.

Students will participate in a debate, using effective communication skills to express and listen to opinions.

### **Materials Needed**

- An overhead transparency or poster to display the rules for the debate (Part II)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Begin by sharing with students the following joke about miscommunication. Use gestures and tone of voice to illustrate the story:

Two students are riding home on the bus one day. Suddenly, one of them points out the window and exclaims, “Look at that dog with one eye!” The other student quickly covers one eye and says, “Where? I don’t see a dog!”

Point out that even when people are communicating well, sometimes misunderstandings can still occur. Say, “This doesn’t happen on purpose, and it isn’t done to mislead or hurt anyone. When misunderstandings happen, remember to laugh. Keep this advice in mind as we put our communication skills to the test today.”

**Part I Why a Debate? (5 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students recognize that it is possible to communicate productively when disagreeing with others.

**1. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF A DEBATE.**

Ask students to explain what a debate is. After a few responses, focus on important points by asking questions such as the following:

- Is an argument the same as a debate? (*An argument is usually a private, informal discussion between two people about something personal. A debate is more formal in that it has rules and is usually a public event.*)
- What is the purpose of a debate? (*The purpose of a debate is to give or express reasons for and against something, and present both sides of an issue.*)
- What debates have you heard or seen? Can you think of any examples of a debate? (*Most students will probably cite candidates running for public office who have debated each other on television.*)
- How would you describe the types of behavior normally exhibited by participants in a debate? (*Participants in a debate are mindful of the debate’s rules, respect differing opinions, and calmly explain their side of the issue.*)

**2. STUDENTS CONSIDER THE CONCEPT OF FRIENDLY DISAGREEMENTS.**

Ask students if they think it is possible to communicate effectively even when they disagree with someone. Encourage students to explain their answers, prompting them to give reasons and cite examples.

Guide students to the understanding that assertive behaviors would allow them to communicate effectively in such situations. If necessary, remind them that passive and aggressive behaviors can sometimes produce negative reactions in other people. Ask volunteers to explain why.

**Part II How Will It Work? (10 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students choose a topic to debate and become familiar with rules for the debate.

**1. STUDENTS CHOOSE A TOPIC.**

Explain that students are going to conduct a debate in class today. Point out that before the class can debate, they must decide on an issue to discuss.

Read the list of statements below one at a time, asking for a show of hands after each one from students who agree and disagree. Ask volunteers to record on the board each statement number, along with the number of students who agree and disagree.

1. I think that students should be required to wear uniforms to school.
2. I think that schools should be able to perform random locker searches for drugs and weapons.
3. Students who get in trouble with the law off school grounds should be expelled.
4. Boys and girls should be allowed to try out for and play on any school sports team.
5. Students who fail classes should be promoted to the next grade.
6. Schools and libraries should block parts of the internet on computers used by young people.
7. I think that children should be allowed to see any movie they choose, including R-rated movies.
8. Animals should be left to live in their natural habitats, not kept in zoos or circuses.

Explain that the class will debate the topic that has the most even number of students agreeing and disagreeing. If necessary, conduct another vote to break ties, flip a coin, or draw statements from a hat.

**2. STUDENTS REVIEW RULES FOR THE DEBATE.**

Explain that during the debate, students will need to communicate their thoughts and opinions in the most effective way possible. They will also need to listen carefully to the opinions of others in order to formulate a response. In order to do this, everyone must follow some basic rules.

Display the following list of rules, which you have prepared as a poster or transparency before class. Read through them aloud, or call on a volunteer to read each one:

- Only one person may speak at a time.
- Speakers must alternate from one side to the other.

- If you want to make a point, you must raise your hand and wait to be called on.
- You cannot raise your hand until the person who is speaking has finished.
- If someone on the other side makes a point you agree with, you must get out of your seat and move to the other side. This does not mean that you have permanently changed sides; this means only that you agree with one particular point. When someone on the other side (that is, your original side) makes a point that you agree with, return to your seat.

### Part III Express Yourself! (30 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students participate in a debate, using effective communication skills to express and listen to opinions.

#### 1. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE DEBATE.

Direct students to assist you with lining up chairs to form two rows facing each other. Remember that students will be moving back and forth between rows, so be sure that there are no obstacles to block their way.

Read aloud the statement that the class will debate, and write it prominently on the board. Have all students who agree with the statement sit in one row, and those who disagree sit in the other row.

#### 2. STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE DEBATE.

Begin the debate by asking, “Who has an opinion about this statement?” Call on a student who has a hand raised.

As the debate coach, it is important that you enforce the rules by letting only one student talk at a time, calling on students from alternating sides, calling only on those who wait until others stop talking before raising their hand, and reminding students to change sides when they agree with points made by someone on the other side.

It is also important that you do not offer an opinion or take sides on the topic. Be sure to keep the discussion on track, and keep individual students from dominating the discussion. Give students a one-minute warning before ending the debate. (Allow about 10 minutes of class time for the final discussion.)

#### 3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE.

When the debate is finished, have students discuss their experience. Ask questions such as the following to prompt them:

- How was this debate different from disagreements you have in everyday life?
- What did you find difficult about the debate?
- What behaviors did you find most effective in communicating your opinion?

- What behaviors did you find most frustrating when listening to others?
- Did you change your mind about anything during the debate?
- Was it difficult to remember to use assertive behavior during the debate? If so, why do you think it was difficult?

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### **Conclusion** (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain the benefits of practicing assertive behavior during disagreements. Ask students to describe effective communication skills. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Effective communication skills are necessary when expressing your opinions.
- You can improve your communication skills by using them.

### **Questions for Assessment**

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1. What are some things you can do to keep a friendly disagreement from becoming an argument?
2. In what ways was the controlled debate different from disagreements you have in your daily life?
3. What did you find frustrating about the controlled debate? What did you find interesting or helpful?

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## 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)

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### **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)

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### **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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