

Life Skills Guide

Date: Sept. 2005 – May 2006

Level: Grade 6, 7, 8

Objective:

This *Life Skills Guide* provides teachers with a plan they may use to foster and promote the life skills in their students. The sixteen life skills that are addressed in this guide are: respect, patience, effort, perseverance, problem solving, responsibility, organization, cooperation, curiosity, initiative, flexibility, integrity, caring, friendship, sense of humor, and common sense.

This guide provides ideas and lessons for nine, fifty minute class meetings. The goal of meetings #1-4 is to inform the students about the life skills and to help them recognize the life skills in themselves and in others at home and at school. The goal of meetings #5-9 is to focus more specifically on three life skills: responsibility, respect, and friendship.

Standards Addressed:

Language Arts CDE 1.0 Grade 6, 7, 8: Listening and Speaking Strategies: Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

Language Arts CDE 2.0 Grade 6, 7, 8: Speaking Applications: Student speaking demonstrates a command of standard American English and the organizational and delivery strategies.

Materials Needed:

Handouts are included in this packet

Table of contents

	page #
Meeting #1: Go over class meeting purpose and rules and set up food and drink calendar with students. Bonding Activity.	2-3
Meeting #2: Life skills pre-survey. Students set life skill goals.	4-8
Meeting #3: Group collaboration to solve dilemmas.	9-12
Meeting #4: Identify role models for the life skills.	13
Meeting #5: Focus on the life skill of responsibility- role play.	14
Meeting #6 and #7: Check in with students on their life skill goals. Focus on the life skill of respect- role play and/or write.	15
Meeting #8: Focus on the life of skill of friendship.	16
<i>Meeting #9: Determine if life skill goals set at the beginning of the year were achieved by the students and fill out the life skills post-survey to determine the effectiveness of the class meetings.</i>	17-19

Class Meeting #1

Overview: *Teacher and students go over the class meeting purpose and rules, set up a drop box in the room where students can put in questions they want discussed at the next class meeting, set up a food and drink calendar, and then participate in a bonding activity.*

1. Inform students that the purpose of the class meetings is to help students establish a positive relationship with their peers and with an adult at the school and to provide a place for students to get help with issues they are facing. Show them where the drop box is and explain that if there is something they want addressed at the next meeting they can drop it anonymously into the drop box.

2. Come up with the class meeting rules together as a class. Rules that help a trusting and supportive environment include:

a. Confidentiality- what is said in the room stays in the room. Gossiping outside of class will not be tolerated. However, the teacher should inform the class that he/she is obligated to notify the principal/school counselor/CPS if a student speaks about being physically or mentally harmed or intends to harm someone else.

b. Use pseudo names when talking about others when possible. Say “I have a friend who...” to protect the identity of those not present.

c. Only one person speaks at a time. Give others your full attention when they are speaking.

d. Everyone has the right to pass.

3. Come up with a food and drink calendar. Determine who will bring food and drinks to each meeting. Mark it down on the class calendar.

4. Do a bonding activity together. Possible bonding activities are included below.

Bonding Activities: Taken From: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/>.

1. Two Truths and a Wish

The teacher models the activity by telling two things that are true about herself or himself and one thing that is a wish – one thing that she or he *wishes* was true but is not. She/He reads the statements in front of the class and the class guesses which statement is a wish. It may be helpful to have kids write their three statements on a note card. Each student takes a turn and reads his/her statements in front of the class.

2. Kiss for the Kids!

All students start this activity in a seated position. Then the teacher will give the following, or similar, instructions for students to follow:

- If you traveled this summer, stand up.
- If you have a brother, sit down.
- If you are the youngest of all the children in your family, stand up.

- If you own a pet, sit down.
- If you have a sister, stand up.
- If you have moved at least once in your life, sit down.
- If you speak more than one language, stand up.
- If you know what you want to be when you grow up sit down.
- If you have been to Hawaii, stand up.
- If you were kissed by someone this morning, sit down.

At this point in the activity the teacher gives a (chocolate) kiss to all those who are standing and say, “We all need a kiss a day!”

3. Already a Test!

Students take out a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil and the teacher explains to them – in complete seriousness, of course – that this will be the hardest test of the entire year because they have not prepared in class for the test. The students title the paper “Teacher.” The students answer questions about the teacher either independently or in groups. Questions could include: “Where was he/she was born?” “What his/her father does for a living?” “How many brothers and/or sisters he/she has– if any?” At the end of the “test,” the teacher gives the answers, and the kids marvel at the discrepancy of their answers.

4. Candy Gets Kids Talking!

Note: Before preparing or distributing any food in the classroom, make sure you are aware of children’s allergies or dietary restrictions and caution children about choking hazards.

Bring in Skittles, one of your students’ favorite candies for sure! (Another favorite, M&Ms, are an option.) Tell the kids to take as many as they want. Most are pretty apprehensive – after all, it’s the first day of school! – So they usually take about ten to fifteen Skittles. The teacher should take some too. For each Skittle they took the students must say one thing about themselves. The teacher demonstrates first, of course. An option: Each color of candy represents a category students must speak about. Example: orange = scary memories, red = great vacations, green = something about your family, blue = favorite hobbies, etc. The activity is a real icebreaker, and the kids love it! After that, they feel comfortable, and the class is no longer quiet.

5. The Me Shield

For this activity, the teacher may want to use a copy of a banner from a Red Cross education program, drawn like a shield and divided into four sections. Pose seven questions students can answer about themselves:

- What are three things you are good at?
- What do you like most about your family?
- What do your friends like about you?
- What do you think you can do better than almost anyone else your age?
- What do you dream about doing one day?

- What is something you have already done that makes you feel really good?
- What is one thing you are planning to change about yourself so you will be even better?

Each student writes his or her name at the top of the paper and answers four of the seven questions, one answer per section, on the banner. Students can write their answers or use a combination of art and writing to express themselves. The students volunteer to share their banners, and the teacher can proudly display them after the students have had a chance to decorate them.

Class Meeting #2

Overview: Inform students that the goal of these nine meetings is to concentrate on the life skills. Brainstorm together the life skills they think they need to know to get through school/life

successfully. Have students take the pre-survey and collect them when they are finished. Use the surveys to help you determine which life skills your class should focus on in future meetings.

Give them the list of life skills and ask students to think of three that they will set as goals to work on over the year. For example, maybe a student's goal is to be more organized this year or to be a better friend. How will he/she accomplish this? Have students write out their three goals and how they plan to achieve them. Set these aside somewhere so that they can refer to their goals throughout the year. The life skills, meeting survey, and goal setting format follows.

Moraga School District's Life Skills

RESPECT: To have consideration for others

PATIENCE: To wait calmly for someone or something

EFFORT: To try your hardest

PERSEVERANCE: To keep working until the job is done in spite of difficulties

PROBLEM SOLVING: To seek solutions everyday as well as in difficult situations

RESPONSIBILITY: To be accountable for your own actions

ORGANIZATION: To plan, arrange and implement in an orderly way

COOPERATION: To work together toward a common goal

CURIOSITY: A desire to learn about or know about a full range of things

INITIATIVE: To do something because it needs to be done

FLEXIBILITY: The ability to change plans or course of action when necessary

INTEGRITY: To be honest, sincere and to conduct oneself according to a sense of what's right and wrong

CARING: To feel concern for others

FRIENDSHIP: To make and keep a friend through mutual trust and caring**SENSE OF**

HUMOR: To laugh and be playful without hurting others

COMMON SENSE: To use good judgment

Class Meeting Survey

Please rate the following (circle the appropriate number): Please be honest, your answers will help your teacher know what to focus on in class meetings this year.

	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. If I try to talk to one of my teachers before or after class about a problem, they listen to me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have made a positive contribution to the school community, either inside or outside of class.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My opinions are respected by other students.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am respectful of other students' opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students at my school are caring towards one another.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I help out other students and teachers without being asked.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I write down my homework daily and keep an organized binder throughout the year.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have made good friends at school that I trust and care about.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I have a problem, I first try to solve it on my own and if I can't solve it I ask others for help.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Students at school take responsibility for their own actions.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I enjoy working with others on group projects in class.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When things don't go my way, I am flexible and make the best of things.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I am struggling with homework I do the best I can first and then ask my parents or teacher for help.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I can always tell when my	1	2	3	4	5

friends are joking.

15. If I get problems wrong on my homework, I take time to figure out why I missed them before moving on. 1 2 3 4 5

16. When a friend shares something private with me I am a good listener and don't tell other people. 1 2 3 4 5

17. If a good friend asked to copy my homework, I would let them. 1 2 3 4 5

Do you have a problem at school or at home that you would like help with? Please provide a description below: (Remember- if you are facing challenges, chances are other classmates are facing similar challenges.)

HOW TO SET GOALS Taken From: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/>.

1. Define the goal.*
2. Outline the steps needed to achieve it.
3. Consider possible blocks and ways of dealing with them.
4. Set deadlines. (**Deadline could be the 9th session)

*Not every wish can be a goal. For instance, you may wish you could live and stay young forever, but since there's nothing you can do to make that happen, it could never be considered a goal.

In order for something to be a goal:

- It has to be important to you, personally.
- It has to be within your power to make it happen through your own actions.
- It has to be something you have a reasonable chance of achieving.
- It must be clearly defined and have a specific plan of action.

Class Meeting #3

Overview: Have students get into groups of four. Provide each group with a dilemma either from the following selection or from their survey. In groups of four have them read the dilemma and come up with the best solution. Have each group share their best solutions with the class. Discuss as a class which life skills are involved in each solution.

Possible Dilemmas to choose from:

Problem Solving

1. You are a 6th grader that rides the bus to school. By the time that you get on the bus, the bus is always packed and the last remaining seat always seems to be near the back, directly in front of a group of 8th grade boys. The boys have teased you and called you bad names off and on since the beginning of the year. You have already told a teacher who referred you and the boy to the office. The boy was asked to apologize to you and has done so, but now he and his friends are beginning to tease you again. Unfortunately your parents are not able to take you to school in the morning and the school is too far to ride your bike. You:
 - A. Tell your teacher that the teasing has started again.
 - B. Tell your parents to call the boy's parents to let them know the teasing must stop.
 - C. Talk to the boy yourself when he is not with his friends and tell him that he is hurting your feelings.
 - D. Other?

Flexibility

2. It is science class and you just completed the science test. Just then, the school secretary goes on the loud PA system and says, "Tune your TV onto Channel 66 for the first school TV show for the year!" You are super excited and can't wait to watch it, because you are sure that you are in this one! But as you look around you realize that there are still 5 kids or so taking the test. You:
 - A. Start whispering to your teacher from across the room, "You've got to turn on the TV to channel 66!"
 - B. Quietly read the book you brought and wait patiently until all students complete their test even if it means that you will not get to see the bulletin because you know that it is shown in the auditorium.
 - C. Start shouting to those still working, "Hurry Up!"
 - D. Other?

Friendship, Integrity, and Responsibility

3. You are assigned a report that is due on Monday. On Saturday, you decide to cancel plans to go to the movies with two friends, one of which is in your class, so that you can work on your report. You spend all day Saturday writing and rewriting your report, while your friend who went to the movie ends up copying his report from someone in a different class. When the reports are graded and returned by your teacher, your friend receives an A for a grade and you receive a C. You:
 - A. Tell your teacher that your friend copied someone else.
 - B. Find out why you earned a C and work hard to not make the same mistakes on your paper next time, but don't tell on your friend.
 - C. Pout and tell your teacher that she/he graded you unfairly.
 - D. Other?

Friendship and Integrity

4. Brett is missing money that he had brought to buy a donut at brunch. You saw Rey take the money out of Brett's jacket pocket. However, Rey has been your best friend for four years. You:
- A. Use your own money to buy Brett's donut but don't tell him Rey took the money.
 - B. Tell Brett that you saw Rey take the money when you are alone with Brett.
 - C. Tell Brett that you saw Rey take the money while Rey is there.
 - D. Other?

Common Sense, Caring, and Responsibility

5. You have a favorite uncle whom you love dearly. Seemingly, however, he has a drinking problem. One night you find yourself in the car with him, and he is drunk. You really do not want to ride with him, but you are not sure he will be able to make it home safely by himself. Luckily, after missing hitting a tree and another car, your uncle finally pulls in your driveway and parks the car. You:
- A. Tell your mom what happened.
 - B. Keep it to yourself but don't get in the car next time.
 - C. Tell him the next day that you were scared and that you don't want ride with him like that next time.
 - D. Other?

Cooperation, Problem Solving, and Initiative

6. You are assigned a group project with three other students. One student you don't get along with very well, another student has a sports event this weekend and may not be able to do his part, and the third student is someone you feel you cannot count on. You have expressed your concerns to your teacher and she/he said that you need to work it out together. You:
- A. Do the whole thing on your own because you know you can earn the group an A.
 - B. Do your part only and be willing to earn a C.
 - C. Discuss your concerns with your group.
 - D. Other?

Sense of Humor, Respect, and Caring

7. You're in math class and you ask your friend, Liz, for help on a math problem. Liz laughs and says loud enough for others to hear, "You are so stupid! Just kidding" and then proceeds to help you with the problem. You feel embarrassed and have a difficult time focusing on her explanation. This is not the first time she has called you stupid. You:
- A. Tell her right then and there that her comment hurt your feelings.
 - B. Call her stupid.
 - C. Don't say anything and don't ask her for help anymore.
 - D. Other?

Cooperation and Friendship

8. You are playing on a basketball team and you really want to win. A new player named Ed joins the team that is not very good. Your other team members make fun of him and are purposely not passing to him. You can tell that Ed is frustrated and looking pretty bummed out. You:
- A. Pass it to Ed because you know that winning isn't everything.
 - B. Don't pass it Ed because the team is there to win.
 - C. Ask the coach to talk to the other players.
 - D. Other?

Organization

9. You are feeling very frustrated with school. Your binder is broken and a big mess, you are missing assignments, and it takes you a long time to find your homework when the teacher is collecting it. You know you need to get organized now. You:
- A. Begin writing your homework in your student planner and purchase a new binder.
 - B. Ask your parents or your teacher for help getting organized.
 - C. Don't do anything and continue to feel overwhelmed
 - D. Other?

Patience and Initiative

10. You are in class and everyone is working on an assignment. You have a question on the assignment but see that your teacher is helping someone else. You are raising your hand for what seems like forever but she is busy. You:
- A. Skip that part of the assignment and go back to it when your teacher is available to help.
 - B. Ask the student next to you for the answer so that you can move on.
 - C. Ask the student your question and have them help you.
 - D. Other?

Responsibility and Organization

11. You are feeling very overwhelmed. You have a ton of homework, a quiz, and work to do in a group project- all of which was assigned two days ago and due tomorrow. To top it off, you have a sports game after school and your team depends on you. You:
- A. Decide you can do it all, and if not you know you can copy your friend's homework tomorrow.
 - B. You make a list of priorities and the time each will take and do things the best you can in order of priority.
 - C. Have mom write you a note saying you couldn't do it all.
 - D. Other?

Perseverance, Flexibility, Responsibility

12. Your teacher has allowed you to tape your group's presentation to show to the class. Your group has spent a week writing and memorizing your lines. The project is due tomorrow. After two rehearsals your brother films it. The next day, your group is ready to show your class the presentation. You put in your video, press play, and to your dismay, there is no

sound. You are extremely frustrated and feel terrible since your brother was the one who filmed it. After messing around with the TV and the VCR for a few minutes, your teacher is asking your group to do your presentation then and there. You:

- A. Say “no way!” We spent a week getting this presentation together to videotape.
- B. Do your presentation in front of the class the best you can and yell at your brother later.
- C. Do the presentation in front of the class. You realize that you should have checked the tape last night and that your brother is not to blame.
- D. Other?

Friendship, Respect, and Integrity

13. You are cruising around on the Internet and come across a site some kids at school put up that says some really mean things about your close friend. You:

- A. Tell your friend and together add really mean stuff about those kids on your own site.
- B. Tell your mom knowing that she will call the parents of the kids at school.
- C. Go directly up to the kids that are putting that mean information on their site.
- D. Other:

Class Meeting #4

Overview: Begin by asking students how they are progressing on their goals. In what ways have they demonstrated their chosen life skills to work on at home or at school in the past month?

Next, have students independently choose five people they know, that are excellent role models for the life skills. They will list the person, which life skills he or she is a role model for, and specific examples of how he or she models the life skill(s) in his or her daily life. Students will then share these with the class.

You may want to use the chart below:

My Role Model:	Life skill(s) he or she demonstrates:	Examples of how he/she demonstrates the Life Skill(s)

Class Meeting #5

Overview: Tell the class that you are focusing on the life skill of responsibility today. In groups of four, provide students with a hypothetical dilemma (provided below). Give students ten minutes to read the dilemma and decide together in their group how they would resolve it. Have them role play the dilemma and their solution in front of the class. Discuss as a class the following three questions after each dilemma.

- *Does your decision indicate that you are a responsible person? In what ways*
- *Do you believe you decided to do what's right?*
- *Would you respect yourself more, or less if you actually carried out your decision?*

Taken From: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/>.

Hypothetical #1: The guy/gal you really like invited you to a party where there will be no adult supervision. Your parents forbid you to attend unsupervised events. Your friend wants you to lie to your parents so the two of you can go. What do you do?

Hypothetical #2: There's a group of popular kids in school that you've wanted to get in with. They start liking you, but they think your best friend is weird and they want you to stop hanging around with him/her. You've been best friends for years. What do you do?

Hypothetical #3: You and a girl or boy you really care about share an intimate romantic moment after a party and agree not to talk about it to others. A few days later you discover that a lot of people have heard about it. What do you do?

Hypothetical #4: Your parents reluctantly permit you to go to a party after you promise there will be no alcohol or other drugs. Your date's older brother is driving. After an hour you notice that he's on his third can of beer. Nobody else at the party has a car. What do you do?

Class Meeting #6 and 7

Overview: Check in with students to determine how they are doing on achieving their life skills goals. Let the class know that today you will be focusing on the life skill of respecting yourself and others in the context of peer pressure. Taken From: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/>.

1. Have students discuss or write about the kinds of pressures they feel:

- a) as a student
- b) as a friend
- c) as a son or daughter or family member.

How do they deal with those pressures? Are they satisfied with the way they deal with them, or are there any ways to handle those pressures better?

2. Have the class brainstorm ways to deal with pressures. Make a list and post it on the wall as a reminder for people when they need it.

3. Make up some hypothetical situations and have the kids do role plays in which they practice resisting negative pressures. In each case the person doing the resisting has two objectives: 1) to refuse to do it, and 2) to persuade the others not to, as well. Here are some ideas to start with.

- a. Your good friend wants you to join him/her in experimenting with a drug.

b. Several kids you know are planning to play a cruel practical joke on someone and they want you to join in.

c. You work as an assistant to a teacher and could easily get your hands on a copy of an upcoming test. Your friends want you to steal a copy of the test for them so they can cheat.

4. Break the class into groups and have each group develop a plan for creating a climate of positive peer pressure for the following:

a. Staying in school and doing well.

b. Staying free of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

c. Abstaining from sexual activity.

d. Respecting each other.

e. Non-violent behavior.

Then, have them present their plans to the whole class for discussion and critique.

Class Meeting #8

Overview: Generate a list with the students about what qualities they look for in a good friend. Next have students work together to determine how they would handle the following sticky situations. For each situation given below, answer these questions:

Taken From: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/>.

- **How would this make you feel?**
- **What is a positive way to deal with it?**
- **What is a harmful way to deal with it?**

a. Your friend starts acting in ways that you think are wrong (drugs, stealing, being rude, etc.).

b. You find out your friend has been telling stories about you that aren't true.

c. Your friend keeps saying or doing something that hurts your feelings.

d. Your friend invites you to go swimming, but calls back an hour later to cancel. You find out your friend went swimming with someone else.

e. You and your friend both want to run for the same class office.

- g. You and your best friend have romantic feelings toward the same person.
- h. Two friends of yours are at odds with each other. They demand that you choose between them. You don't want to lose either of them.
- i. Your friend wants to spend more time with you than you want to spend with him or her. You like this person very much, but you want more freedom to see other people, too.
- j. Your friend is on the brink of failing a class and begs you to help him/her cheat on the final exam.

Class Meeting #9

Overview: Pass back the life skill goals handout the students filled out at the beginning of the school year. Have students write whether they have achieved their goal or not and how they have achieved this goal. For example, if their goal was to be more organized they should reflect back on their actions this year to determine if they have achieved this goal. Have students share their progress with one another.

Next, have students take the post survey. Compare the results of this post survey with the results of the pre-survey to determine the effectiveness of the class meetings this year. The post-survey follows.

Class Meeting Post-Survey

Please rate the following (circle the appropriate number): Remember that this survey is anonymous so please be honest. Your answers will help your teacher determine the impact that focusing on the life skills in class meetings has had on your school experience this year.

	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. If I try to talk to one of my teachers before or after class about a problem, they listen to me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have made a positive contribution to the school community, either inside or outside of class.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My opinions are respected by other students.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am respectful of other students' opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students at school are caring towards one another.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I help out other students and	1	2	3	4	5

teachers without being asked.

7. I write down my homework daily and keep an organized binder throughout the year.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have made good friends at school that I trust and care about.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I have a problem, I first try to solve it on my own and if I can't solve it I ask others for help.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Students at school take responsibility for their own actions.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I enjoy working with others on group projects in class.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When things don't go my way, I am flexible and make the best of things.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I am struggling with homework I do the best I can first and then ask my parents or teacher for help.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I can always tell when my friends are joking.	1	2	3	4	5
15. If I get problems wrong on my homework, I take time to figure out why I missed them before moving on.	1	2	3	4	5
16. When a friend shares something private with me I am a good listener and don't tell other people.	1	2	3	4	5
17. If a good friend asked to copy my homework, I would let them.	1	2	3	4	5

Do you feel that focusing on the life skills in the class meetings has had a positive impact on your school experience this year? Please explain why or why not.
