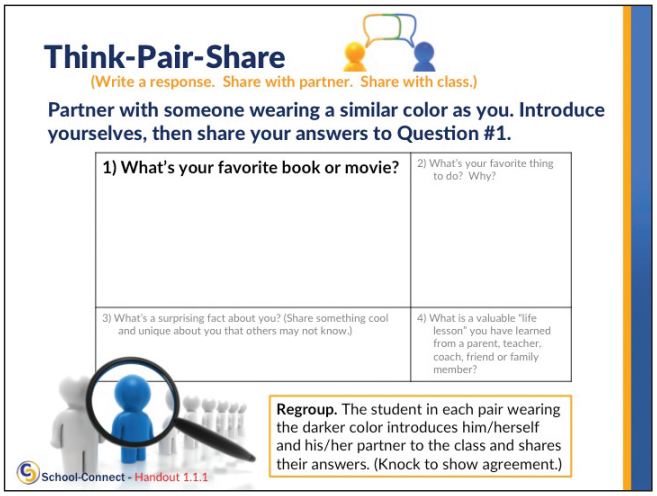
Lesson Overviews

The first week of class is a critical window for students, as they decide whether they will look forward to being there over the ensuing semester/year. Lessons 1.1-1.4 help to create positive connections among class members and establish the course subject — social and emotional learning (SEL) — as pertinent and relevant to their lives.



1 .1 Getting to Know You

Having a sense of belonging or sense of community — feeling cared for and in turn caring for others — is a basic human need and contributes to student motivation (Deci, 1995). Research in the area of school-connectedness has found that schools that meet this need have students who bond more easily to school, are willing to abide by school norms, and are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors (Resnick et al., 1997). The classroom unit is an ideal place to develop a sense of community. Positive classroom climates can spill over into the larger school environment, creating a feeling of connectedness among staff and students and preventing the feeling of anomie and facelessness that too often plagues large schools (Lleras, 2008).

Teachers can help create a positive classroom climate by devoting time for class members to learn each other's names and something about everyone as a person. This lesson provides that opportunity and also introduces a key curriculum strategy — Think-Pair-Share — that encourages students to listen to one another and work together. Students also exercise a key workplace social skill, introducing another person in a group setting.

During this get acquainted process, students begin to shift their focus from their own anxieties about school, to learning about others and slowly developing a sense of trust. As students feel more comfortable and secure with their teachers and classmates, they experience the classroom environment in a positive light, which helps to reduce absenteeism and increase academic achievement (Moos & Moos, 1978).

Note: If School-Connect is being implemented in a dedicated course, teachers are encouraged to prepare and provide a course syllabus, review it with the class (see Teacher's Guide), and specify what materials students will need for the class, e.g., binder, ruled paper.

1.2 Creating First Impressions

First impressions are quick to form, ranging from fractions of a second when based on looks and up to 30 seconds when taking in other qualities, such as in a job interview (Willis & Todorov, 2006; Lees, 2012). Poor first impressions are tough though not impossible to reverse, especially when the person forming an impression values openness and fairness (Halvorson, 2012). The first week of classes, when students meet their teachers and many of their classmates for the first time, is "the time" to aid students in making positive impressions on others.

This lesson covers the many cues that go into forming an impression. It also focuses on a social skill — shaking hands — that might seem antiquated or foreign to some students, but is very important in the workplace and more formal social situations. First impressions in these venues can have a big impact on students' lives.

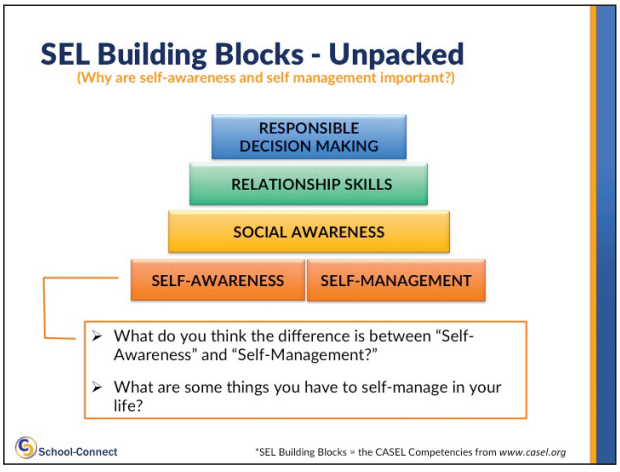
Practicing shaking hands and then competing for the "State's Best Shake" designation, not only helps students develop a critical social skill, it also injects

a sense of fun into class. It creates a "first impression" of the class as a place where students move, interact, learn together, and laugh — all of which help them to look forward to coming to class. Teachers can reinforce this skill every day by greeting students by name at the door as they enter class, shaking hands, and making positive comments.

1.3 Introducing Social and Emotional Learning

With the publication of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, author and psychologist Daniel Goleman started a revolution that would eventually be felt throughout the worlds of business and education. In it, he cited the ability to identify, understand, and manage our emotions as more important to success in life than academic learning or technical expertise (Goleman, 1995).

The university professors, researchers, and practitioners on whose work Goleman based his book coined the term "social and emotional learning" (SEL) and documented its positive effects on students' social skills, attitudes, behavior, and capacity to learn (Durlak, et. al., 2011). This different way of "being smart" is comprised of five social and emotional competency areas — social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). These five competency areas provide the blueprint for the School-Connect curriculum.



A meta-analysis of SEL-based interventions in K-12 classrooms found that students demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile point gain in achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).

This lesson introduces the SEL competencies, and notes how they address the qualities most desired by employers in workplace hires, i.e., professionalism/work ethic, teamwork collaboration, oral communications and ethics/social responsibility (Casner-Loto & Barrington, 2006). Students take a baseline measurement of their social and emotional skills, noting those they feel good at and those they need to improve upon. This self-assessment can be administered again at the end of the course to evaluate progress.

1.4 Creating a Social Contract

The more students experience self-determination in the classroom, the greater the likelihood they will become actively engaged in learning and take responsibility for contributing in class (Decci, 1995). Providing students with opportunities to voice their ideas and opinions and make meaningful choices is often referred to as "voice and choice" or student autonomy. When students experience autonomy-supportive teacher behavior and classroom environments they are less likely to disengage and drop out of school (Vallerand et al., 1997).

One way to provide for greater voice and choice in the classroom is to involve students in creating and agreeing on classroom guidelines — i.e., expectations of how members of the class will treat one another. This lesson introduces guidelines as a social contract which students create, discuss, and sign. It starts with an individual reflection on a classroom within which students felt a sense of belonging. Students share and build on these experiences by drafting proposed behavioral guidelines in small groups. Deciding on the final guidelines — the social contract — as a class provides direct experience in the democratic process.

Students who are unfamiliar with having voice and choice may feel uncomfortable and make light of this activity. This is often due to a view of rules as something imposed from above rather than agreements that they help to establish. For years, they may have seen themselves as either followers or rebels, not as initiators and supporters of a code of conduct. They also may feel uncertain about how to arrive at a group decision, and may hide their lack of experience by dropping out of the process. Checking in with groups and answering procedural questions will help to keep students focused on the task.

It does little good to have students create a social contract if the teacher is going to assume sole responsibility for getting students to adhere to it. To create a caring classroom environment that is conducive to learning, the students and teacher need to take shared responsibility for helping one another follow the guidelines. The lesson introduces the practice of "calling fouls" when guidelines are broken, a process that calls for speaking up, apologizing, and providing supportive compliments. Initially, this process takes more time than having the teacher lay out the rules and consequences, but it can ultimately save time by creating an ethos of respect and responsibility that helps to reduce the frequency of disciplinary issues.

If this lesson does not fall at the beginning of a semester, teachers can use it as an opportunity for the class to reflect on classroom behavior and make adjustments to existing rules, and for the teacher to get buy-in for students taking more initiative in classroom management and standing up for themselves and others.

Establishing effective academic habits and behaviors lays a foundation for success in school. Lessons 1.5 and 1.6 provide a fresh start for students, especially those who have trouble orientating themselves academically. For this reason, it is important they receive these lessons within the first or second week of class.

1.5 Applying Student Success Skills

This lesson asks for a paradigm shift in how students view school. Rather than seeing themselves as passive recipients of an education and teachers as the suppliers, students are encouraged to view themselves as customers who have hired (through taxes and/or tuition) highly trained professionals (teachers) to help them develop the knowledge and skills necessary for success in school and life. Just as it is foolish to pay for guitar lessons and not practice, it is equally foolish to attend school and not apply oneself.

SLANT, a strategy for improving student engagement and influencing how teachers perceive and interact with students, was originally developed by Edwin Ellis (1989) for use with learning disordered adolescents and is now widely disseminated and revised by others. In this curriculum, SLANT stands for: **S**it up in the "Magic T" (first two rows and two central rows of desks), **L**ean forward and listen, **A**sk questions, **N**od encouragement, and **T**ake notes and talk to the teacher. SLANT helps students to become active, as opposed to passive, classroom participants and more invested in learning. Students also realize that they have the power to positively influence their teachers for, in general, teachers are happier helping students who are attentive, put forth effort, and are open to suggestions and feedback, than those who do not exhibit these qualities.

The lesson also provides an introduction to empathy, without naming it as such. As students participate in a simulated activity in which they stand and present in front of their peers and experience attentive and inattentive students (who were assigned these roles), they begin to see what it feels like to be a teacher. This role-playing activity is both fun and enlightening.

The lesson closes with a reflection on the effect that "poisonous zeroes" from missed assignments can have on students' final grades. Calculating and comparing points earned on late assignments provides an "ah-ha" moment for many students.

1. 6 Playing Plan-O-Rama

An essential skill for helping students to develop effective self-management practices is keeping an organized planner, which is the focus of this lesson (Bakunis & Holley, 2004). Students can either use a planner branded and supplied by their school (if available), buy a commercial planner from an office supply store or online, or make their own using the templates provided in this lesson. If the latter, teachers can mark one up as a sample and distribute it in class.

Keeping a planner should be a daily habit, at least during the school week. By targeting when, where, and how they will work in their planner, students are more likely to consistently use one and experience its payoffs in better grades and less anxiety. Teachers can help students to establish this habit early by having regular planner checks during the first few weeks of school, and then checking periodically thereafter. Students can earn points on their execution of components of their planner — e.g., keeping a "to do" list, writing down assignments, checking off completed activities — which can be applied to their course grade.

Teachers may want to note that the student-produced video on the benefits of keeping an organized planner is the product of a Culminating Project — a project-based-learning experience students may partake in at the end of each School-Connect module.

Think of the classroom as a workplace setting where the "work" is getting an education. Lessons 1.7-1.12 help students develop critical workplace skills in the classroom: showing respect and positive regard for their "colleagues," building rapport with their "supervisor," using good communication skills, and working collaboratively with others.

1.7 Celebrating and Building Community

Classroom climate, like workplace morale, requires steady attention. As in any working environment, people do their best when they feel known and appreciated (Yoder, 2014).

This lesson introduces a strategy (known as H.I.P.E.) that can be repeated as often as needed throughout the course. H.I.P.E. asks students to share either: a **H**ighlight from academics, an **I**nterest they are involved with, a **P**ersonal achievement, or an **E**xperience they had. In response to a "share," the teacher says, "That is something to celebrate!" and the class gives a round of applause before going on to the next student volunteer.

Without being too obvious, teachers can highlight some shares more than others. When students highlight an academic accomplishment, helping others, overcoming obstacles to reach a worthy goal, or other activities that build character, teachers can ask follow-up questions about how they felt and

what the outcomes were, thus shining the spotlight a little longer on these types of accomplishments and experiences. Shares such as winning a difficult video game get applause but no real follow up.

This lesson also addresses the negative effects of putdowns and "schadenfreude" — finding pleasure in others' misfortunes. This creates an opportunity to revisit and reinforce the shared guidelines in their social contract created in Lesson 1.4.

1.8 Building Rapport with Teachers

Students are much more likely to do well in classes in which they have a strong and supportive relationship with their teacher (Allen, et al., 2013). As in any relationship, developing rapport is a two-way street — both teachers and students need to share information about their lives, see each other's perspective, and anticipate and be sensitive to each other's needs. Some of these needs are mutual — e.g., the need for respect and responsibility — and will connect the class to their social contract. Other needs will arise out of classroom experiences.

In this lesson, students take the lead by interviewing their teacher(s) about themselves and what they need to be the best teacher they can be. In turn, the teacher interviews the class about the student experience, especially what they need from their teachers to be the best students they can be.

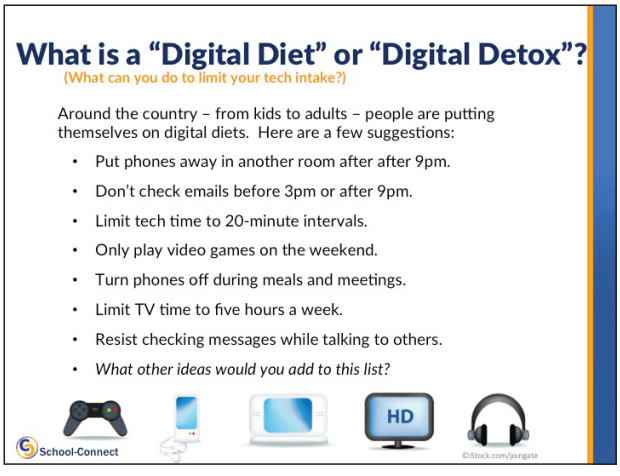
At first, some students are uncomfortable speaking with adults and may not realize how important it is to learn how to relate well to authority figures. With quieter students, it is helpful to check in by email or to write encouraging notes when returning assignments. It is also important to help students understand that building rapport with teachers is a valuable skill that can be transferred to the workplace and to life in general. Teachers can continue this exchange by greeting students by name at the door every class period, asking questions, and recognizing current events in students' lives in informal conversation and through classroom H.I.P.E. sessions.

Expanding the interview process to administrators and support staff (e.g., assistant principal, school counselor) requires some advance planning and preparation of participants but pays off in helping students and staff form stronger connections with one another. To keep the focus on building rapport, teachers can help staff adhere to the two-way interview process and avoid devolving into a straight presentation or lecture on roles and responsibilities.

1.9 Reviving Digital Zombies

In a 2014-2015 national survey, 92% of teens reported going online daily, with 24% reporting being online "almost constantly." Much of this access was from smartphones and much of the activity was on social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram (Lenhart, 2015).

Social media has its upside (sharing information easily, communicating with each other in real time, widening a social network), but its downside may not be as readily apparent, at least to students. Studies have documented the decrease of empathy in young people over time and suggest that reduced "face time" through excessive use of technology may be the responsible (Konrath, et al. 2010). It is easy to witness this disconnect as young people bury themselves in their devices, even in social settings where they could interact more directly. Additionally, there is growing evidence that excessive high-tech immersion can re-wire young brains and encourage distracted and addictive behavior (Small & Vorgan, 2008) and lead to depressive symptoms (Davila, et al., 2012).



This lesson provides fun and engaging group activities, such as creating and presenting a spoken word poem, that provide a sharp contrast to at-a-distance social media experiences. These activities, along with frank discussions on students' experiences with the downside of social media, easily set the stage for students devising a "digital diet" that favors moderation over excess. The good news is that reducing time on social media can quickly lead to an increase in emotional recognition and perspective-taking skills — two components of empathy (Uhis, et al., 2014).

The message of this lesson — "disconnect to connect" — provides an excellent lead in to the next lesson on recognizing emotions in others and "reading" social situations.

1.10 Tuning Into Others

Observing others within a social setting — their facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, as well as what they are saying and how they are interacting with one another — helps students exercise impulse control and is integral to developing a capacity for empathy (Hoffman, 2000). Psychologist and author Daniel Goleman (1995) calls this ability to tune into others' emotions "social radar." While some people are naturally socially intuitive, others need to develop these abilities through study and practice.

This lesson provides instruction and practice in identifying facial expressions for different emotions. The photographs provided are the property of Dr. Paul Ekman (2003), a psychologist who has devoted his entire career to studying the causes and effects of emotions, as well as delineating the cues that indicate seven "basic" emotions displayed in cultures around the world.

In addition to observing physical and behavioral cues, students need to mentally take a step back and focus their attention on what is happening on a deeper level in actual situations. Such "contemplation" can be difficult for teenagers whose reactions to various situations are honed by playing fast-action video games and who are accustomed to being passive receptors of television programming rather

than active observers of the social environment. Additionally, students who live in chaotic home environments may have learned to react quickly or to shut themselves off psychologically from others.

Social observation gives students an opportunity to better understand cause and effect, and gain a different perspective on their world. Like Earnest Thompson Seton, the gifted naturalist and wildlife artist who devised a method of observation for learning about the natural environment, students can become trained observers of human nature.

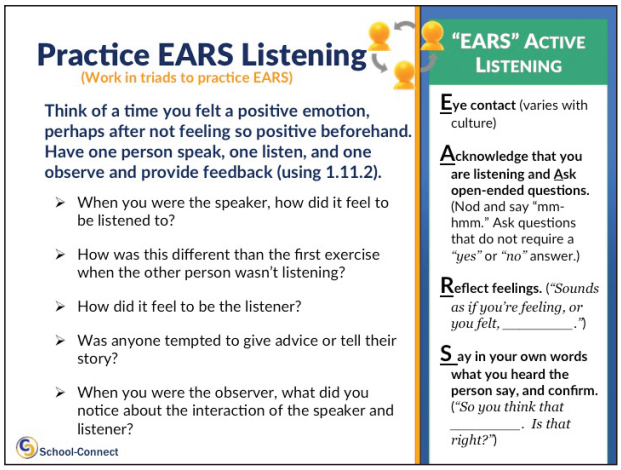
1.11 Using Active Listening

Our ability to take others' perspective — to understand how they think and feel — is the second component of empathy, and is foundational to problem solving and relationship building (Feshbach & Feshbach, 2011).

Role-playing exercises have long been regarded as an effective strategy for developing the skill of perspective taking (Bandura, 1976, 1985). Active listening — a set of techniques that helps people focus their attention, reflect feelings, restate or paraphrase what they are hearing, and check for understanding — is key to understanding the experience of others and taking their perspective. Famed psychologist Carl Rogers popularized the strategy, and it is now standard practice in psychotherapy and the business world (Rogers & Farson, 1957).

As with any new skill, students may feel uncomfortable when first engaging in active listening. The suggested sentence structures may feel contrived, but,

with practice, students should be able to naturally integrate the techniques into their own conversational style. Over time, experiencing the natural benefits of active listening will reinforce students' use of the techniques. Teachers can aid this process by regularly modeling the skill inside and outside of class, and cuing students when to use the skill, e.g., in group activities and application assignments in which they interview others.



1.12 Collaborating Effectively

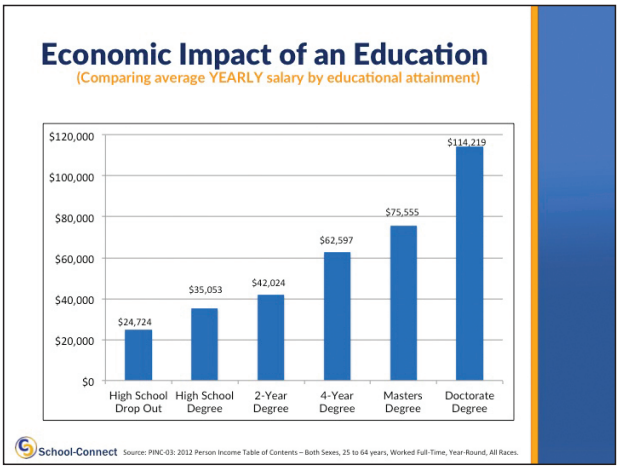
As students learned in Lesson 1.3, "teamwork collaboration" is one of the top five workplace skills desired by employers in new hires (Casner-Latto & Barrington, 2006). In this lesson, students rotate through a series of engaging activities that spotlight different collaboration skills: providing equal opportunities to speak, presuming positive intent of others, being open-minded to the opinions of others, speaking your truth, and disagreeing without being disagreeable. Setting up the lesson requires that teachers gather a few supplies and think through how students will move with ease through these "ports of call," but it is well worth the effort.

At Austin High School in Austin, TX, where this lesson was piloted as part of a freshman seminar course, students who completed the course gave presentations on this lesson at faculty in-services in order to spread these collaboration practices throughout the school. This is a great example of how School-Connect offers opportunities for student-driven initiatives that increase their sense of autonomy and connectedness to school and how school faculty can benefit from skills embedded in School-Connect lessons.

Students who develop the beliefs, attitudes, and thinking habits that promote engagement in learning are more likely to learn and apply study skills and persevere through obstacles and setbacks in school (Dweck, 1999). The next four lessons focus on these critical dispositions, inspiring the "will," and the final three lessons focus on study skills, providing the "way."

1.13 Valuing an Education

When setting goals, it is helpful to use big-picture "why" thinking; this involves focusing on the reasons to go for the goal, and owning and valuing those reasons (Halvorson, 2011). This is especially true for doing well in school. Ninth grade students may rarely contemplate their lives beyond that year, month, week or day — or expect anything better in life than what they have. When students don't connect the rewards of having an education to doing well in school, they can easily lack motivation and fall quickly behind in the more rigorous academic environment of high school.



"Valuing" an education can have two meanings — an extrinsic one, i.e., how education affects lifetime earnings and lifestyle, and an intrinsic one, i.e., valuing learning for its own sake. This lesson focuses more on the former. The "Life I Dream Of" activity

asks students to consider the type of home, car, vacation, schedule, and work/career they would like in their adult life. While the emphasis may at first seem slanted toward material rewards, understanding the earnings they need to support themselves and at what level are key considerations in making important life decisions. Disadvantaged students may not have considered a lifestyle different than the one they presently have, nor how education level connects to what they want to be, and do, in life. The impact of dropping out of school and/or having poor grades on future opportunities and lifetime earnings can make an indelible impression on young minds. By allowing the information to speak for itself and avoiding lecturing on this issue, teachers can help increase students' intrinsic motivation.

1.14 Developing Academic Supports

Many factors affect students' attitudes toward academic work and worth. A desire to learn and excel academically is greatly aided by a well-developed academic support system that includes the social support of peers (i.e., being a good student is looked upon admirably) and key adults who provide guidance and nurturance (Benard, 1991).

Most schools put a lot of effort into academic supports, yet many students don't know much about what supports are available on their campus or how to access them. This lesson provides a structured opportunity to highlight school resources and at the same time encourage student motivation and peer support in accessing these resources. A strong academic support system comes from within as well as from outside the individual. The next lesson will zero in on the psychology of this internal dynamic.

1.15 Understanding Mindsets

The ideal student loves learning, seeks challenges, values effort, and — when faced with obstacles or setbacks — persists and delights in conquering them. Students who excel and/or exceed others' expectations of them possess another defining characteristic that accounts for all others — a belief that intelligence is malleable, that with effort and guidance a person can, in effect, "grow smarter" and develop new abilities. This lesson — possibly the most important in the curriculum — explores the thinking patterns that can lead students in different directions in school and in life.

Psychologist Carol Dweck (2006, 1999) uses the term "self-theories" for our underlying beliefs about intelligence and other abilities. Self-theories are a form of learned automatic thought, operating below the surface but having a profound impact on our behavior. There are two overarching classes of self-theories: entity theory (represented by a "fixed mindset") and incremental theory (represented by a "growth mindset"). A fixed mindset holds that we are born with a set amount of intelligence and ability. A growth mindset holds that, like the description of the ideal student, effort and perseverance pay off. Dr. Dweck's research suggests that roughly half the people in the United States have a fixed mindset, and half have a growth mindset.

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

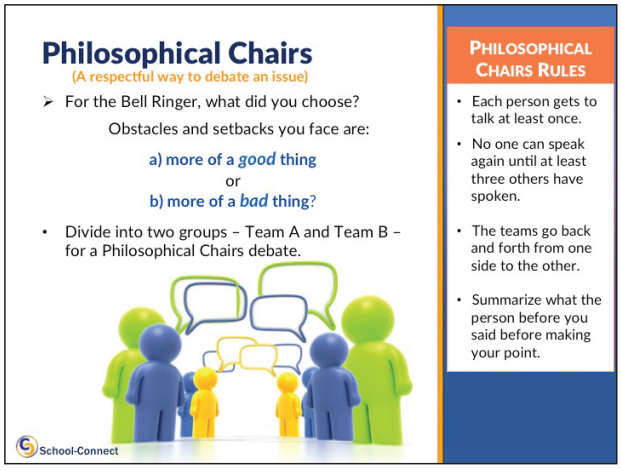
(How do mindsets differ? What are the effects of each?)

How different mindsets respond to:	FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
Challenges	Avoids challenges and prefers repeating previous successes	Loves challenges and learning new things
Obstacles	Gives up easily	Persists in the face of setbacks
Criticism	Ignores useful negative feedback	Learns from criticism
Failures	Blames circumstances and/or others, or sees it as a lack of talent	Sees as an indication to apply more effort; sees as an opportunity to grow
Success of others	Feels threatened by success of others	Finds lessons and inspiration in success of others
Working with Others	Acts competitively with others	Works collaboratively with others

Which mindset we possess can have a direct impact on our motivation to learn, our response to new experiences, and our success in school and in life. Through self-awareness and exposure to alternative modes of thinking, those with fixed mindsets can question the usefulness of their beliefs and expand their horizons, and those with growth mindsets can gain a better understanding and appreciation of what has helped them to develop and succeed. Should we choose, we can change or "grow our mindset".

1.16 Cultivating Curiosity and Grit

Students are born into this world with a natural drive to learn and are not easily deterred — at least not at first. A brief video of curious and determined babies reminds students of how curiosity about the world is central to learning and our biologic make-up, which drives the question: "How can we cultivate curiosity and persevere through obstacles and setbacks in order to learn and grow — and reach our goals?"

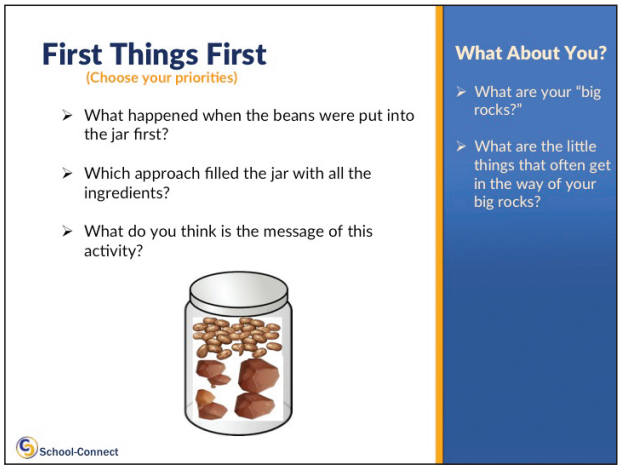


Perseverance in learning tasks is an attribute of the growth mindset. Grit, a super kind of perseverance, refers to having a passionate commitment to a long-term goal and showing unswerving dedication to achieve that goal — whether it be developing into an accomplished guitar-player or getting into college (Duckworth, et al., 2007). Developing grit takes a focused strategy that includes maintaining a deep interest in what you are learning, increasing effort rather than blaming ability, learning from failure, talking to yourself to guide learning, and learning from role models and mentors. By practicing grit in endeavors they care about — whether it be learning to dance "in a year" (as shown in the video) or starting and running a summer lawn service — students become more "gritty" in general and can transfer this to setting and achieving academic, career, and other life goals.

1.17 Focusing and Prioritizing

Valuing an education, developing a good support system, thinking with a growth mindset, and persevering through obstacles and setbacks are not enough. Getting things done on a daily basis is where the rubber meets the road. To be successful academically, students need to be able to prioritize tasks and activities and manage their time wisely. That is, they need to engage in "what" thinking, as in "What do I need to do to (reach my goal)?" (Halvorson, 2011).

Many students received training in time management early in middle school but need a brush-up in order to handle the added demands of high school. The "Rocks in a Jar" activity illustrates why the most important or timely tasks (the big rocks) need to be handled first. It is best if students perform the simulated activity as it will make more of an impact than just watching the student demonstration video. This requires gathering a few materials (plastic cup, golf balls, and dried beans — or similar materials such as rocks and sand). Later, just by saying or thinking "rocks in a jar," students can cue themselves to refocus and apply themselves to their high priority tasks rather than other distractors.



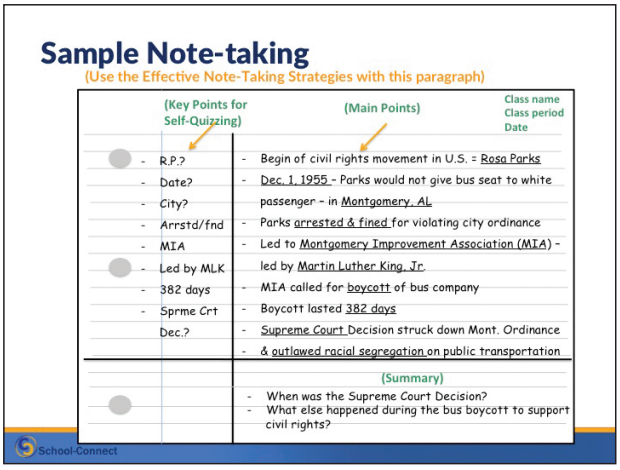
This lesson also explores numerous research-supported strategies — e.g. getting 8-10 hours of sleep a night, doing one thing at a time (i.e., not multi-tasking) — that are most effective when they become habitual. Procrastination, a problem for many students (as well as adults), can be situational (e.g.,

avoiding math homework) or it can be a habit that extends across situations (e.g., being continually late in whatever one does). Students will need ongoing support to eliminate old habits and form new ones. Teachers can institute regular academic check-ins that include reviewing students' planner use, grades and completion of course work in all the classes, and student reflection on new habits. This helps teachers and students to assess progress, resolve problems as they arise, and celebrate successes.

Note: This is the second lesson that provides an example of a Culminating Project by a School-Connect student; it can be used later when introducing Culminating Projects to students.

1.18 Taking Notes Effectively

Now that students have been introduced to Mindset Theory, they are more likely to be motivated to learn and apply key study skills (Dweck, 1999). This lesson introduces and provides practice in the note-taking and study strategies popularized through Cornell Notes (Pauk & Owens, 2013). Presenting this lesson earlier and out of sequence risks students not taking it seriously.



The strategies include students accomplishing the following: summarizing what they hear (in lecture) or read, abbreviating when possible, underlining key words, refining to reduce to key points, and elaborating on the material. Elaboration provides a bridge to understanding complex material. By asking and answering a series of easy-to-remember questions *(Who? What? Where? When? How? So what? New terms?*), students paraphrase content, summarize the main points, compare and contrast, and determine the value of what they are learning. This "connecting and adding on" helps students to integrate the new information into their existing knowledge base. Integrated learning has a more secure place in our memory bank and is easier to apply in meaningful ways (Weinstein & Hume, 1998).

One of the most useful elaboration strategies is teaching new knowledge and skills to someone else. It helps us to assess how well we know the material and what we need to clarify or to understand in greater depth. Teachers can incorporate student teaching into the everyday life of the class by having students brief classmates who have been absent, make presentations on special topics, and "pause and paraphrase" during lectures. In the latter, the teacher pauses, has students paraphrase and share their notes with a partner, and asks the class if they have any clarifying questions.

1.19 Improving Memory Skills, Part 1

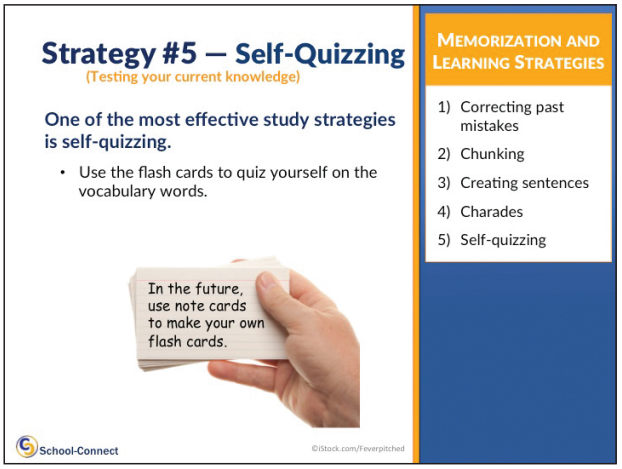
In order to put notes to good effect in studying, students benefit from knowing what aids memory retention for different types of learners, and what research indicates are effective overall strategies. First, students take a vocabulary pre-test to establish a baseline for later comparison. Through a series of experiments comparing auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning, students may draw conclusions about what works for them. They are also introduced to an effective, research-based strategy often overlooked by students: correcting work and giving further attention to items they missed in homework or a quiz or exam.

1.20 Improving Memory Skills, Part 2

This lesson continues to build upon the strategies of Lesson 1.19 and draws attention to strategies that aid rehearsal or self-quizzing — the most effective study practice of all according to research (Dunlosky, et al., 2013). While rehearsal is often dubbed

"rote memorization" and "mindless work," students need strategies by which they can readily store and access information. This is important to acquiring knowledge as well as succeeding academically (e.g., tests such as the SAT assess student retention of vocabulary and mathematical concepts).

The average human brain is capable of storing one million gigabytes of information, and works much like a computerized catalog of library holdings (Reber, 2010). Each piece of information is stored with similar information. Search on one item in the catalog (e.g., the name of a famous person you want to write a report on), and you will likely reveal other relevant information (e.g., books with that person's name in the title). One memory triggers another. All understandings are built upon previous understandings. By using the strategies presented in this lesson — chunking, creating sentences, using flashcards — students devise a system of mental organization that makes it easier to access information at a later date.



An important thing to keep in mind: Memories are situation-dependent. When students are under stress or surrounded by distractions, they may disconnect from their "better" brain, and be temporarily incapable of adequately accessing their brain's natural system of organization. In contrast, when students are in a supportive learning environment, they are more likely to absorb new information and build upon previous understandings. As with any skill, improving one's ability to retain information requires a person's own motivation and effort as well as the support of others.

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