Living out the Golden Rule with Sensitivity and Empathy

Gifted First Graders

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# Living out the Golden Rule with Sensitivity and Empathy

**First Grade Gifted Learners**

## Unit at a Glance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Goal(s)</th>
<th>Supplies/Preparation</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will better understand the definition of the Golden Rule</td>
<td>Gather: chart paper and markers biographies of famous individuals who model the Golden Rule, <a href="http://www.betterworldheroes.com/">http://www.betterworldheroes.com/</a> journals for students, graphic organizers</td>
<td>Discussion Brainstorming Reading and note-taking and/or completing graphic organizers Journaling</td>
<td>Class Charts Journal entry Group products Preliminary Role Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students will discuss how situations in life make it difficult to carry out the Golden Rule</td>
<td>Copy of <em>The Old Grandfather and the Grandson</em> Copy Venn diagrams Discussion Questions Develop problem-solving situations</td>
<td>Theater of the Oppressed Role play Discussion Groups Journaling</td>
<td>Venn Organizer Journal entry Role Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students will collaborate on what it means to be sensitive to the feelings of others</td>
<td>Copy of <em>Wifrid Gordon MacDonald Partridge</em> Gather: Chart paper and markers Supplies for posters celebrating sensitivities in the classroom</td>
<td>Brainstorming Poster development</td>
<td>Contracts for Role Model study Class charts poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students will reflect on sensitivity and empathy</td>
<td>Copy of <em>Max Book</em> Journals Drawing paper</td>
<td>Brainstorming Journaling Field Trip</td>
<td>Brochure Journal entry Bulletin Board Role Model study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students will discuss what it feels like to be sensitive and empathic</td>
<td>Copy of <em>Collector of Moments</em> Gather Quotes, definitions, pictures, etc. for discussion-starters Copy organizers</td>
<td>Discussion Group-building activities Role play Art project</td>
<td>Journal entry Individual organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conclusion</td>
<td>Prepare for presentations of role model study</td>
<td>Discussion Presentation</td>
<td>Role Model presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 1:
What is the Golden Rule?

Introduction

Students are often asked if they are following the Golden Rule yet no one has taken time to discuss or explain what it means to live out the Golden Rule. In this lesson students will review examples and definitions of the Golden Rule. Children then will investigate and discuss what the Golden Rule means to them.

Suggested Lesson Sequence

Introduction
With students, brainstorm their understanding of what the Golden Rule is and what it is not. Encourage them to share their questions about how to follow the rule. Introduce various famous people in history from [http://www.betterworldheroes.com/](http://www.betterworldheroes.com/)
Invite students to share commonalities and differences found in their list of individuals. Record this information on chart paper to post in the classroom and guide the rest of the unit.

Whole Group Activities

1. Share various definitions of the Golden Rule. Discuss the definitions. What do students agree with? What do they disagree with? With the class, develop a definition of the Golden Rule on chart paper to post in the classroom. This definition may be changed throughout the unit as students develop their understanding of the Golden Rule.

2. Provide small groups of students with short biographies and other information about world heroes. These groups should read and discuss what these biographies suggest about the Golden Rule. They might record and discuss characteristics of someone who carries out the Golden Rule, that they note in the biographies, compare these biographies with the class definition, or discuss advantages and disadvantages they perceive while reading. They might compare and contrast the people described in these biographies, or find examples and non-examples of behaviors as they read. Students should determine how their discussions proceed. Each group should prepare some product (chart, graphic organizer, outline, etc.) to share with the group to help all students learn about these people.

3. What is good and bad about being a hero? Provide students with a graphic organizer on which they can record their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of being a hero. Discuss these as a class. Make a classroom list of advantages and disadvantages of living by the Golden Rule.

Independent Activities

1. Set aside 15 or 20 minutes for students to journal about their own feelings about the Golden Rule. What does it mean to them? What effect does carrying out the
Living out the Golden Rule

Golden Rule have on their life, their relationships, or their interests? What questions do they have about what it means? What advantages and disadvantages do they see?

2. Encourage students to pursue further research on people that they find interesting. Ultimately, they should choose an exemplifier of the Golden Rule as a “role model” to investigate throughout the course of this unit and present on at the end of the unit.

Conclusion
Post class definitions, questions, and other thoughts about living the Golden Rule that students would like to pursue throughout the unit. Encourage students to continue to research people that they find interesting in preparation for their individual role model studies.
Session 2:

Students will discuss how situations in life make it difficult to carry out the Golden Rule?

Introduction

There are times in life where the needs of others may place a burden of an individual. Students need to be able to see how their actions affect how others treat them. Students will read a passage about a grandfather and a grandson. Then compare and contrast the characters in the story.

Suggested Activities

Introduction

Students will read *The Old Grandfather and his Grandson*. Then students will compare and contrast the perspectives of all individuals in the story. Students will investigate experiences in their own lives where they have assumed the role of each person.

Whole Group Activities

1. Ask students to consider what character they most identify with. What characteristics do they see in themselves and in others? How do they handle their role in a situation? They might consider different affective behaviors depicted in a Venn diagram (appendix).
2. Ask students to give a detailed description of a time when they felt others were not carrying out the Golden Rule. Use a theater of the oppressed format for role playing each scenario.

Independent Activities

1. Set aside 15 or 20 minutes for students to journal about how they feel as they deal with treatment of others. What causes them to treat others poorly? What do they feel caused others to treat them poorly? How do they build bridges with others? What do they do, or want to do, to handle these conflicts? What questions do they have? What assistance do they wish they had?
2. As students make a decision about their role model research projects, they may wish to choose a role model who shares their belief in how others should be treated. Provide time for students to conduct independent research and assist them in finding resources as needed.

Conclusion

Some students may struggle more with empathy than other students. Provide these students with opportunities to shadow empathetic persons that share their affiliations. You may help these students to find mentors and network with others who can help assist them.
Session 3:

**Students will collaborate on what it means to be sensitive to the feelings of others**

**Introduction**

There are times in life where sharing a personal experience allows students to reflect on how their treatment of others can be seen from that other person’s perspective. This lesson allows students to explore such avenues.

**Suggested Lesson Sequence**

Introduction

Consider starting the lesson with Mem Fox’s story Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge. Ask students: What it means to be sensitive to the feelings of others? Why? What are the consequences (positive and negative) of your choices? Discuss the responsibility that students have to others and to themselves.

Whole Group Activities

1. Discuss why you think Wilfrid told Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper all of his secrets? Reflect on a person in your life when you had a special friend like Miss Nancy. What did you do for that person? How did it make you feel?
2. Develop a list of suggestions for “How to show empathy” that is likely to yield success. Students may wish to develop a poster, brochure, or other product that can be shared with other students.
3. Invite a role model from your own life to come in and share how special your relationship. Allow students to ask questions about how to maintain such a relationship.
4. In small groups, offer students the opportunity to design classroom posters celebrating sensitivity in the classroom.

Independent Activities

1. Plan a basket of simple yet special things to share with an important friend.
2. Write and illustrate a poem about an important friendship in your life
3. Create a classroom mobile that captures the lesson learned through Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge.
4. As they research their role model, encourage them to look for ways that this person dealt with sensitivities and insensitivities. What were the consequences of these choices? Are these choices that you would make? Why or why not?

Conclusion

End this session with a discussion about how students’ feelings about sensitivity and empathy have changed. Hopefully, students feel more conscientious and responsible for their own actions.
Session 4:
Students will better understand sensitivity and empathy

Introduction
What makes us different makes us unique, but this is not always easy to deal with. This lesson will require students to reflect on ways that they add to stereotypes and ways that they are mold breakers. By reflecting on how we are different it creates empathy and understanding for the differences of others.

Suggested Lesson Activities

Introduction
Begin this lesson with Max by Rachel Isadora. Have students identify characteristics of who Max is. How does Max fit into a stereotypical role and how does he break the mold? Have students journal about themselves and roles they fit into and molds they break. It is a good idea to make sure students are very comfortable sharing their journals before any discussion about them takes place.

Whole Group Activities
1. Create a “Breaking the Mold” bulletin board. Find examples of famous people who accomplished great things in atypical settings, such as women in engineering, male nurses, or African American presidents. Include examples of “Breaking the Mold” in the classroom, by teacher and students (voluntarily submitted for the bulletin board!) that led to learning and, ultimately, success.
2. Provide students with a variety of situations, or have them develop their own situations. In small groups, have them complete a chart with possible responses of a for a mold breaker.
3. Encourage students to recognize and own their feelings by creating “emotion barometers.” Brainstorm a list of words to describe a wide variety of emotions – not just happy and sad, but surprised, exhilarated, stressed, furious, bored, and others. Each student should write these on a card and, if desired, decorate it. Laminate these cards and provide students with a paperclip to mark their current emotions. Periodically, encourage students to consider what they are feeling and mark it on their barometers. Discuss how emotions influence, but do not control, behavior, and that being aware of emotions and their causes can help to cope with them.
4. Provide students with copies of the “My Peers” and/or “Ways I am Different/Ways I am the Same” sheets for them to fill out. These may serve as good discussion starters as students consider that they can have a variety of friends who are like them in different ways, or that all people are unique in some ways and similar to others in other ways.

Independent Activities
1. Set aside 15-20 minutes for students to journal about the stereotypes they have about themselves and others. How do they change these stereotypes?
2. Encourage students to develop ways they can identify harmful stereotypes and ways to combat them.
3. Provide research time for students on their independent role model projects. They may wish to consider ways that these role models dealt with stereotypes? How was their role model a “mold breaker or builder”?

Conclusion
Encourage students to try something that they have never tried before and be a “mold breaker”. You might wish to try this as a class – perhaps no one in the class has rode the city bus before, and you could all go and try it. Discuss stereotypes they had before they went on the ride and their view afterwards.
Session 5: Students will discuss what it feels like to be sensitive and empathic

Introduction
Art is often an avenue of expression. In this lesson students will discover what stories come to life with the Collector of Moments. Students will be asked to create art forms to represent themselves and their role models.

Suggested Lesson Sequence

Introduction Begin this multi-day lesson with the introductory pages of Collector of Moments Discuss with students to goal of this book is to be reflective, empathic and sensitive writers. Read passages from stories written by others that capture the words that complete the photographic moment depicted in Collector of Moments. Discuss: The relationship between the Professor and Max. Why did Max leave the paintings behind for the professor? What messages and meanings can be found in artwork?

Whole Group Activities
1. Encourage students to work in small groups to reflect on the relationship between the Professor and Max. Why did Max leave the paintings behind for the professor? What messages and meanings can be found in artwork?
2. Provide students with a t-chart to compare and contrast this story with all other stories shared in this unit. How does art open the window to expression? Allow students to create posters, brochures, or any art images to express their understandings of sensitivity and empathy in living out the Golden Rule.

Independent Activities
1. As independent writers students will create stories for each of the photos found in Collector of Moments. They will then choose one story to publish for the class.
2. Students may wish to explore the German author behind this book.
3. How would you depict your role model in an art form? Think of ways in which you can be the “collector of moments” in your role models life.

Conclusion
Art is an amazing form of self-expression and an excellent path to conversations. Allow time for students to portray aspects they have in common with their role model in an art form. Then write the story that coincides with the art.
Introduction

Students need the opportunity to debrief their experiences. During this final session, students should present their products and discoveries from their Role Model study, discuss what they learned during the course and how it has impacted their lives, and share new learning about the various topics that have been covered during the unit. Students might wish to revise some of the charts that they’ve made through the course of the unit. This might be too much to finish in one session, so it can be spread out if this is more convenient. Take as much time as students need to feel that they have closure on their experiences.

Suggested Lesson Sequence

For the final session, discuss with students what will be most beneficial to them in closing this unit. Perhaps they’d like to have an evening with refreshments to share their role model studies, or would like to conduct a roundtable discussion in which they share bits from their journals, or invite others from the communities who have impacted their lives.
Books Used in Lesson Design
4. Tolstoy, L. The old grandfather and the grandson.

Websites for Author Information and Story Background
www.gstboces.org/homework/secure/attachments/10730205084838.doc

Websites for Role Model Studies
http://www.betterworldheroes.com/

Books for Role Model Studies
(This list compiled by Bertie Kingore, PhD)
http://www.bertiekingore.com/biographies.htm


Peer Relationships

Appendix

The appendix includes handouts and reproducible masters for use with the lessons in the unit.

Lesson 2
Venn Diagram Pattern

Lesson 4
My Peers
Ways that I am …

Lesson 5
T Chart
My Peers

1. ___________________________ is my peer and friend for ___________________________.
   I like ___________________________ because ______________
   ______________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________.

2. ___________________________ is my peer and friend for ___________________________.
   I like ___________________________ because ______________
   ______________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________.

3. ___________________________ is my peer and friend for ___________________________.
   I like ___________________________ because ______________
   ______________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________.

4. ___________________________ is my peer and friend for ___________________________.
   I like ___________________________ because ______________
   ______________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________.

5. ___________________________ is my peer and friend for ___________________________.
   I like ___________________________ because ______________
   ______________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________.
Ways that I am …

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<th>Different</th>
<th>the Same</th>
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T-Chart Graphic Organizer

Name:              Date:

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