My Special Word Collection
Lesson 1
Ages 9-12

"I Am" Poems

Objectives:
- Students will determine characteristics that are valuable to them.
- Students will examine the favorable aspects of all characteristics.
- Students will identify their positive qualities and how they are demonstrated.

SEL Skills:
- Self Awareness
- Social Awareness

Associated Book: What’s My Word
Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials:
- Associated book
- Paper
- Pencil
- White board and dry erase marker

Vocabulary:
- Characteristics
- Qualities
- Valuable

Optional Discussion Questions:
- Do you think the qualities you have change over time?
- Why or why not?
Lesson Steps:
Read the book: "What's My Word", either independently over time or as a read-aloud over time.
Ask: What qualities or traits do you think are valuable to have (i.e. kindness, perseverance, positive attitude, curiosity, open-mindedness, etc.)? You can have a pre-planned list for students as needed.
Ask and discuss: All students have valuable qualities, but some are more visible than others. How do your and other students' qualities shine, even when they are more "quiet"?
Activity: Students will write a small poem using 4-5 chosen characteristics and how they express their qualities (i.e. I am open-minded. I listen to the life stories of others to understand their point of view). Have an example to share.

Home Extensions:
Parent Activity: Ask your child to share their poem with you. Share some positive qualities you see in your child that they may not recognize.
Parent tips: Helping your child to understand who they are is an important step in helping them build relationships and interact with others.

Cross-Curricular Opportunities: Goal Setting
Ask each student to think of a characteristic they would like to develop. Help them plan out small goals and practice activities they can accomplish to cultivate that quality.
Be a Reporter

Objectives:
- Students will discuss the term, “injustice” and share examples.
- Students will examine components of news articles.
- Students will use elements of a story to compose a news article.

SEL Skills:
- Responsible Decision Making
- Social Awareness

Associated Book: Alejandra Fights Back
Duration: 20 minutes

Materials:
- Associated book (optional)
- Paper
- Pencils
- Computer/Tablet if possible

Vocabulary:
- Research
- Organize
- Injustice

Optional Discussion Questions:
- Do you think news articles should be informative versus persuasive?
- Why or Why not?
Lesson Steps:

Read the book: Have students read “Alejandra Fights Back” in partners or individually.

Ask: How did Alejandra’s campaign improve injustice in her community? Have there been times when something felt unfair? What are some ways you can organize with others to fight injustices you have witnessed?

Ask and discuss: Talk to students about the purpose of most news articles (to inform) and the main components of news articles (Header, 5 W’s). Ask them to include vocabulary from the book and remind them that the article should be one paragraph.

Activity: Have students imagine they are reporters writing an article about how Alejandra fought back against the companies in the story. Ask students to generate a list of 5 questions they could ask the person they’re interviewing. Type or write articles to display in a class newspaper.

Home Extensions:

Parent Activity: Alejandra talks about feeling “hormiguitas” in her belly. Talk to your child about what they think this means. Together, talk about the things that give her courage in the story. For example, encouragement from a family member, making your friends and family proud and knowing that you’re doing something important to help others. What things would help your child to feel courageous?

Parent tips: This is a great opportunity to talk and learn about cultures that are different from yours. If you have a similar culture to Alejandra, discuss similarities and differences that your family has compared to Alejandra’s.

Cross-Curricular Opportunities:

Ask students to brainstorm injustices they have seen in their community and research which community leader they can send a letter of concern and a potential plan.
Community Projects

Objectives:
- Students will brainstorm ideas to improve the school or surrounding community.
- Students will present ideas to classmates.
- Students will create a plan to implement the chosen idea.

SEL Skills:
- Self Awareness
- Social Awareness

Associated Book: Any from the collection
Duration: 20 minutes

Materials:
- Book from the collection
- Paper
- Pencil/Pen

Vocabulary:
- Community

Optional Discussion Questions:
Brainstorm if there is a problem or issue your class can be leaders on to solve. Are students cleaning up after themselves in the cafeteria or in shared spaces? Are the halls bright and welcoming, is this an opportunity for a class to "adopt" a space? How can your students serve as leaders for younger children in setting expectations for the school community?
Lesson Steps:

**Ask:** In partners or small groups, ask the students to brainstorm ideas of how they could help make their community better (i.e. recycling, trash pick up, collecting food to donate, sending letters to an assisted living facility).

**Activity:** In pairs or groups prepare a short 2-3 minute presentation for the class on your idea for making your community (class or school) a better place. Is there a problem your group is working to solve? After each presentation, the class will vote on the idea they would like to implement.

**Ask and Discuss:** Create a plan to prepare and implement the idea (have them consider the time frame, who will be involved, and the steps to carry out the project). This project may take a few days or weeks to complete. Ensure that students plan accordingly.

Home Extensions:

**Parent Activity:** Talk to your child about ways they can help create a better home environment. What chores do they have or can they have to help out around the home?

**Parent tips:** Providing your child with responsibilities at home can help them develop self-discipline and self-motivation.

Cross-Curricular Opportunities:

If the project is something that the whole school can be a part of, students can prepare a presentation to ask the principal. If it is approved, students can create flyers to post in the school or send home with the students. They can also design or write dialogue for a performance explaining the purpose and importance of the project.
Your Community

Objectives:
- Students will examine and reflect on the positive aspects of their community.
- Students will use a graphic organizer to sort their ideas.

SEL Skills:
- Relationship Skills
- Social Awareness

Associated Book: Ahmad's Market
Duration: Two 20 minute lessons or 40 minutes

Materials:
- Associated book (optional)
- Paper
- Pencil

Vocabulary:
- Community
- Diversity
- Unique

Optional Discussion Questions:
- What were some parts of Ahmad's neighborhood that you found interesting?
- What was different about Ahmad's neighborhood compared to yours?
- What was the same?
Lesson Steps:

Read the book: Students can read the book, “Ahmad’s Market” with partners or individually, or it can be a class read-aloud.

Ask and discuss: Divide students into groups of 3-4 and give them these questions to discuss in their groups: At the end of the story, the community comes together to create a beautiful mural of diversity. What would we include if we created a classroom mural that represents our community? What makes our class, school, and town/community beautiful? What is unique about our community?

Activity: Provide a graphic organizer for each group to organize ideas they would include in a mural about their community. Share ideas out-loud with the class or one other group if time.

Home Extensions:

Parent Activity: After Demetriana learns that Ahmad’s market has been vandalized, she feels scared. Talk with your child about the word vandalized and what it means for the shop in the story. Then ask your child why Demetriana feels scared and how they think Mr. Ahmad will feel.

Parent tips: Building empathy and appreciation for diversity provide your child with deeper social awareness.

Cross-Curricular Opportunities:

Create a classroom mural from the students’ ideas using a large sheet of butcher paper and paint. Ask students to draw out their designs with a pencil before they paint. If possible, bring in a local artist to talk to the students about creating art for the community.