

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SOCIAL SKILLS LESSON PLAN

CASEL COMPETENCY: SELF MANAGEMENT

SOCIAL SKILL: SELF MOTIVATION

Created by: Robyn Orr

BOOK INFORMATION

Book title: Elephants Cannot Dance

Author: Mo Willems

Publisher and date of publication: Hyperion Books for Children, 2009

ISBN: 978-142311410-9

Number of pages: 55

Reading level or interest level:

BOOK SYNOPSIS

Piggy is excited that he can dance and Gerald tells Piggy that he would love to learn to dance except that elephants don't dance. But Gerald realizes that the book that he can try to dance. SO he tries to copy Piggy's moves but he only does the opposite of what Piggy says. He gets more and more frustrated with himself that he decides he is done. Then Piggy and Gerald's squirrel friends say that they are ready to learn some dance moves, but Piggy says that he can't help them right then because his friend is sad. The squirrels say that they don't mean Piggy. They want to learn to dance from Gerald. So Gerald teaches the squirrels and Piggy how to dance.

This book could be used to help students understand that they should always keep trying because something unique could come from it. Students should feel motivated to not give up when things get hard.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is for students to understand that they should not give up when things get hard. They should learn that even if what they do is not perfect, there is still value in it.

LESSON MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION

Advance preparation:

- Be prepared to share a time where you failed at something and had to work hard to get better at it.
- K-2: Have age-appropriate music ready to be played loud enough for the whole class to hear

KEY VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS

Perseverance: the determination to do something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success

Unique: Being the only one of its kind. Unlike anything else.

Growth mindset: the belief that your abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point.

Mantra: A statement that you repeat frequently. Piggy and Gerald's mantra is, "We will try again."

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Share a time with the class when you tried to succeed and failed. Explain what you did to keep persevering. Explain how it paid off. Tell the students that sometimes when things are hard we have to keep trying. We may not ever become perfect but we can always improve. Explain that this book is about a character who is trying to have a growth mindset.

READ THE BOOK

POST READING DISCUSSION

Ask the students why Gerald thought that he could not dance? How did Gerald show a growth mindset? How did their mantra of "We will try again" help Gerald? What did Piggy do to support Gerald?

Did it pay off for Gerald to keep trying? He may not have danced like he wanted but he discovered a unique dance that was his own. Do you think Gerald is glad he kept trying? What did he get out of it?

POST READING ACTIVITY

K-2: Tell the students that we are going to have a dance party. Explain that they can express how they feel with their body. Sometimes they can dance how they want and sometimes they should follow your move. Explain that some moves may be harder than others, but just like Gerald, don't give up. Turn the music on and announce either "Try this" or "free style" throughout the dance time.

3-6: Ask students to get in groups of 3-4 people. They should each answer the following questions in their groups: Share a time that they tried to succeed at something. What they had to do to persevere? How did it work out? What is something you want to try now?

After students have had time to answer the questions in a group, ask for volunteers to share what they talked about.

CLOSURE

Explain to students that when things get hard, they have got to keep trying. Having a mantra like, "I will try again" will help us have a growth mindset and eventually reach our goal. Explain that even if you don't become perfect at something, there is always something to gain by trying your best. Explain that this week you will be reminding them of trying again.



“Failure is so important. It is the ability to resist failure or use failure that often leads to greater success.”

- J. K. Rowling