

Language Arts supplement

Critical thinking and writing

Ripple Effects for Teens provides literally thousands of opportunities for daily practice of the critical thinking and writing process. The animated brain/journal offers more than 390 writing exercises for each of 5 basic tasks: describing experiences, identifying feelings related to it, listing options, declaring goals and identifying people in the community who can help. That's almost 2000 screens of writing exercises, enough to do a full set every class day for two years. The teacher may choose a theme for the day from the topic list on the cell phone, or let students choose a topic of interest to them.

A bridge to communication for English language learners

The built-in structure and word prompts are especially useful in empowering students with low language ability and ESL students to name and understand their experience. It gives them a bridge to communication that does not require them to first become adept in a foreign language. Students who are more comfortable writing in their native language, are able to do so.

Key sentence structures

There are a few key sentence structures, which are not only essential to forming basic cognitive structures, but are also essential components of social-emotional learning. They include: if/then; why/because, both/and; I feel (this)/when (that) happens. Drills in these structures are found under the topics: "consequences", "motives", "mixed feelings," "communicating feelings".

Vocabulary building

Ripple Effects program is also an easy-to-use tool for building a rich vocabulary, especially in the realm of social-emotional experience. Many boys may especially find this difficult to articulate. For example, early on students can learn the names for feelings ("identifying feelings"). One week, they can be encouraged to choose from a list of value words, like "fairness," or "responsibility" and write about one of them. The next week they might write about appearance related issues. The following week they may learn appropriate language for social topics like race, class or gender. Another week, they can target health issues like AIDS or drug addiction.

Confidentiality issues

To protect their privacy, student entries into the brain/journal are password protected and encrypted. In settings where it is important to know what they have written, simply require students to print their "memories," or save the file to a location you designate.

Goals of intervention

Youth will:

- Understand and practice the critical thinking process
- Develop critical writing skills
- Understand key language structures related to social-emotional competency:
- Develop a vocabulary for social-emotional experience

A suggested scope and sequence

SKILL TOPICS

Key language structures

Predicting consequences
(Understanding) Motives
Mixed feelings
Communicating feelings

Vocabulary of

social emotional experience

Understanding feelings
Identifying feelings
afraid
angry
anxious
disgusted
happy
sad
Paraphrasing

Stating a need
Making a complaint
Apologizing
Introducing yourself
Expressing thanks
Giving a compliment
Receiving a compliment
Expressing sympathy
Courtesy
Respect

Critical thinking and writing

Problem solving

(all journal writing exercises)

CHALLENGE TOPICS

ESL
Dyslexia
Learning disorders
Attention problems