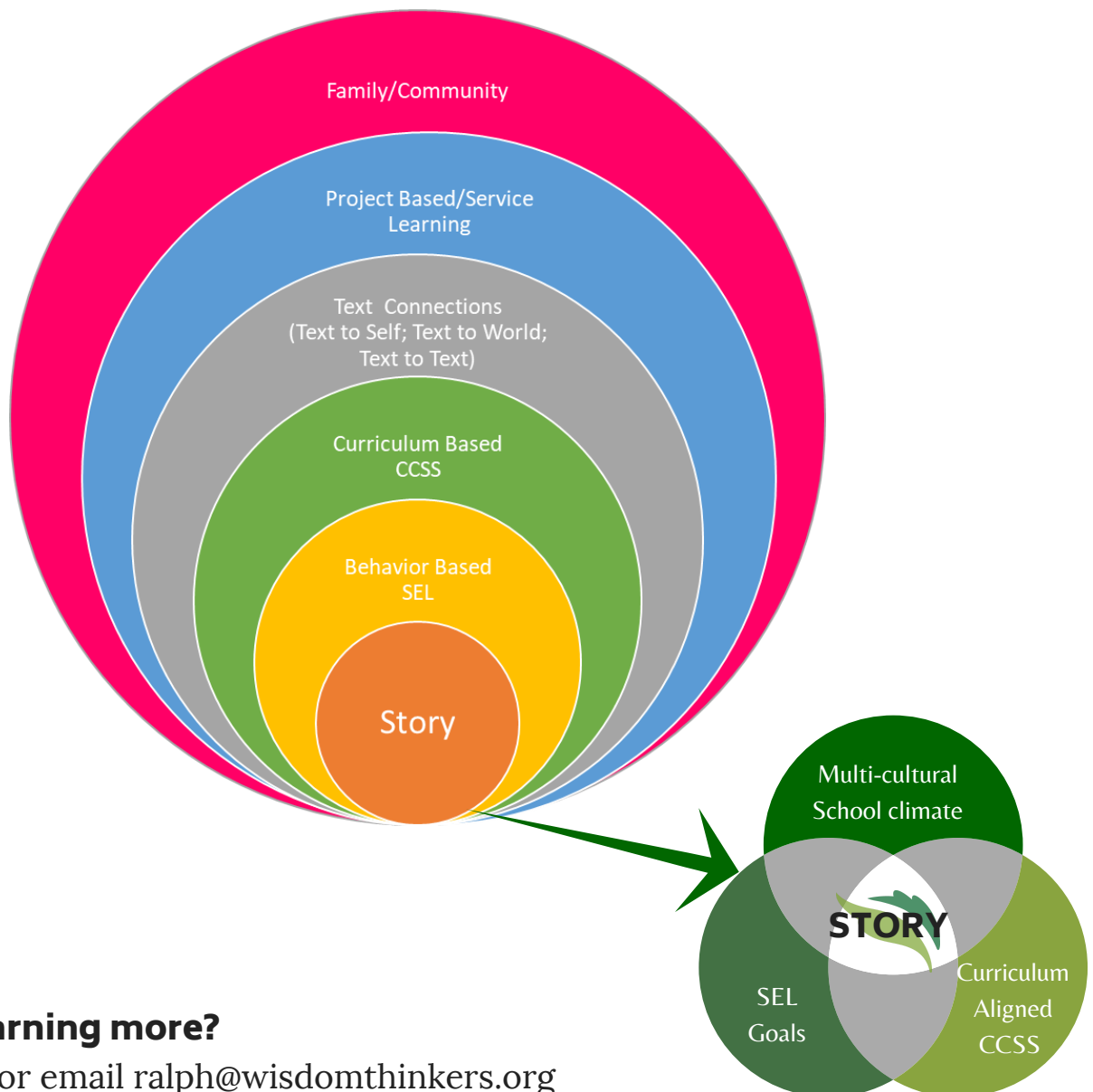


Combining Academic Character and Social Emotional Learning Curriculum

CREATE a school climate that **honors diversity**, **nurtures character**, and **deters bullying**.

Align your district with New York State **Social Emotional Learning Goals** with our **Multi-Cultural** wisdom stories.

Seamlessly embed the stories into ELA with cross-curricular reference to math, science, social studies, and includes **Special Needs** and/or ELL accommodations.



Interested in learning more?

Call 888.793.7257 or email ralph@wisdomthinkers.org



Ralph Singh Founder and CEO, Wisdom Thinkers Network

Author, Educator, Story-teller, and Community Builder, Chairs the Wisdom Thinkers Network and currently consults to develop curricula and resources in poor rural, poor urban, and everywhere in between, to help create a school climate which nurtures character, honors diversity, and deters bullying. As Chair of WTN, he also convenes roundtables to help break down the ideological gridlock and build a shared narrative.

Following 9-11, four teens got drunk and mistook the Sikhs' turbans for followers of bin Laden and torched his place of worship, Gobind Sadan, "God's House without Walls." He immediately went public with Baba Virsa Singh ji's powerful statement of forgiveness which was carried around the world. Rooted in the teachings of Guru Nanak and the Sikh Gurus, "Everyone is part of my community, I see no one as an outsider or other," it galvanized the local community and helped transform the lives of the young people. They wrote from jail, "if only we'd known your story," we never would have done this."

In response, Ralph developed his award winning multi-cultural "Stories to Light our Way, Journey to the World of Good," draws on stories from the world's traditions and cultures, to positively impact behavior and academics, and bring an understanding of shared values into schools and community. Presented on audio CD and study guides, stories are aligned to both the SEL competencies and key character traits, and integrated into ELA-standards lesson plans, Pre-K through 8. They are easily implemented by teachers and internalized by students. They have proven especially effective in reaching special needs and non-verbal students, those at risk, and others who tend to slip through the cracks.

Together with his middle and high school inquiry model service-learning game, "Change the Story, a game to Alter Reality," endorsed by Harvard's Dr. Richard Weissbourd and Dr. David Streight, and WTN's turn-key Oral history project help foster more compassionate, engaged, pluralistic citizens and lead to a more dedicated, ethical workforce.

For over 40 years, Ralph has focused on spirituality and values in education and in public life. He developed and taught "Exploring Spirituality" (Character Ed from the Inside Out) for upper school and adult education programs and was part of the CNY Education Consortium's taskforce on Values in Public Education where he helped develop and name their Schools of Character project which was administered throughout the state by Syracuse University.

Ralph has presented at Character.org (CEP), Association for Moral Education, in Nanjing and at their joint conference with Harvard and the Tisch School at Tufts on "Civic engagement: A cultural revolution?," internationally in India, and with the Club of Rome's task force on the "Quest for Values." He has authored or edited five books, including his own stories at Baba Virsa Singh Ji's feet, *A Path to Follow*, *A Life to Lead*, which chronicles his life as Babaji's first foreign devotee. His blogs and articles have been featured in Character.org, CSEE.org, Huffington Post, and most recently collaborated with Dr. Darcia Narvaez, and Dr. Tonia Bock, on a book chapter entitled, "The Nurturing Classroom" in *Nurture, Care, Respect, and Trust, Transformative Pedagogy Inspired by Janusz Korczak*, Myers Press.

He is a graduate of The Gunnery, received his degree in Japanese Area Studies from the University of Rochester, and maintains a lifelong study/practice of prayer and meditation and spiritual traditions.

About Stories to Light Our Way

Infusing and aligning culturally responsive read aloud stories to create positive classroom culture and school climate with NYS Social Emotional Learning Core Competencies and ELA Common Core State Standards

Honor Diversity ∞

Nurture Character ∞

Discourage Bullying ∞

The *Stories to Light Our Way* curriculum teaches children life lessons using a traditional oral language format. The stories are universal and expose children to diverse cultures around the world. The modern world has lost its stories, and with it the ability to connect shared values between home, school, and society to create a positive norm for our children. Wisdom stories provide a simple vehicle to impact both character and social emotional development, while creating a safe, welcoming class culture, while easily extending a common vocabulary to home and society.

The Stories come with a Parents Choice award winning audio CD, ideal for listening stations or just playing for children who need to improve listening skills, and cover behavior traits from self-control, forgiveness, respect, courage, caring and kindness, citizenship, to name a few. The lessons are valuable and worthy of class time to read aloud and discuss connections to self, text, and the world. They produce quality conversations in short periods of time. To accommodate district/school needs, focus has been on embedding Stories with English Language Arts instruction aligning to language and literacy skills. They seamlessly integrate Character Ed and Social Emotional Learning with Academics.

With the formation of New York State Safe Schools Task Force, deliberations concluded the need for a focus on social emotional learning and a promotion of school climate. New York State's Every Student Succeeds Act includes a goal to ensure all students have access to support for social-emotional well-being. The task force conclusions are based on research that students benefit in many areas with direct instruction in social emotional skills.

To accommodate district/school needs, we have updated Stories to Light Our Way to align with Social Emotional Learning Competencies/Benchmarks. Equally important, Stories to Light Our Way 2.0 will provide school districts with a preventative approach that addresses social emotional learning within a culturally diverse curriculum.

Crosswalk Aligning Academic to Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks (Grade 3 Sample)

NYS SEL Benchmarks



Academic Learning Standards

Grade 3 Sample Crosswalk	Social Emotional Learning Benchmark			Anchor Standards (Reading)									Anchor Standards (Writing)									Anchor Standards (Speaking and Listening)						Anchor Standards (Language)						Activities to Demonstrate Understanding																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																										
				Key Ideas & Details			Craft & Structure			Integration of Knowledge & Ideas			Text Type & Purposes			Production and Distribution of Writing			Research to Build and Present Knowledge			Comprehension and Collaboration			Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas			Conventions of Standard English		Knowledge of Language		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																												
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NEW YORK'S GOALS TO GUIDE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING BENCHMARKS

1. Develop **self-awareness** and **self-management** skills essential to success in school and in life.
2. Use **social-awareness** and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain **positive relationships**.
3. Demonstrate **ethical decision-making skills** and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

STORY MATRIX

We are all fellow travelers, young and old alike, on the path of how to be good. Each story is like a journey. They can carry us to far-away places, places where special people live, and special things happen. But the most special place is in our hearts. And when we connect with the light in our hearts, we can learn how to brighten our whole world and make our world the most special place.

*The Stories with Embedded Social and Emotional Learning
Competencies and Character Strengths*

SELF MANAGEMENT

Story Title	Theme	Performance Character Strengths
The Turtle Who Just Couldn't Keep His Mouth Shut	A story of self-control	Responsibility, Self-discipline

SELF AWARENESS

Story Title	Theme	Moral Character Strengths
The Child Who Swallowed the Sun	A story to nurture your hidden gifts	Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Courage, Honesty

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Story Title	Theme	Civic Character Strengths
The Real Bargain	A story of caring and sharing	Empathy, Generosity, Citizenship
The Elephant and the Blind Friends	A story of respect for other's opinions	Inclusion, Acceptance, Consideration

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

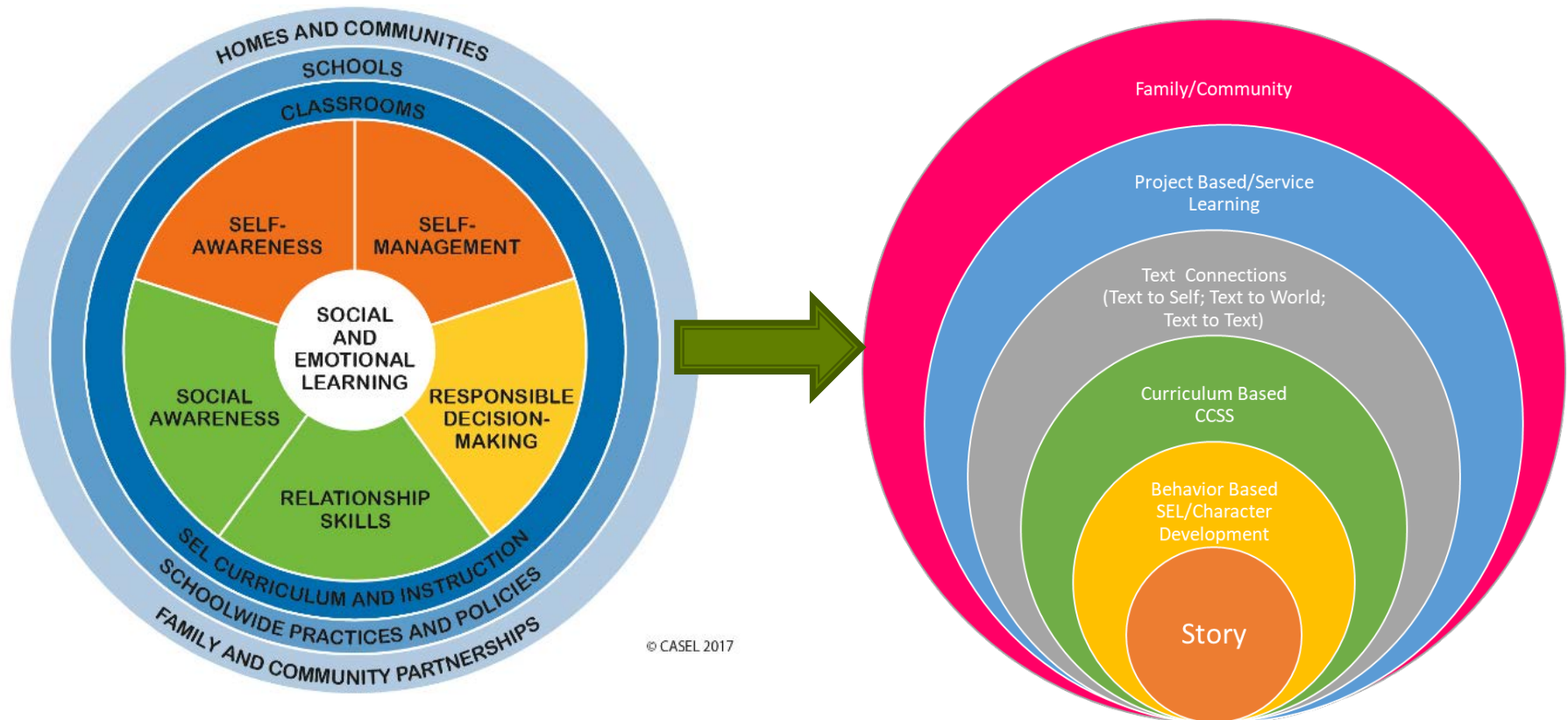
Story Title	Theme	Intellectual Character Strengths
Shifting Sands	A story of forgiveness	Acceptance, Respect, Fairness critical thinking, open-mindedness

ETHICAL & RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

Story Title	Theme	Character Strengths
The Little Girl Who Spoke with Trees	Learning from and taking care of nature	Concern for environment, Citizenship, Responsibility

Story title/SEL skill	Essential Question	Enduring Understanding
THE TURTLE WHO COULDN'T KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT – <i>a story of self-control.</i> SEL skill: Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is the ability to successfully manage your emotions /feelings, thoughts, and actions in different situations important in life? 	When I practice self-management skills, I will be able to manage and express emotions in relationships, respect diverse viewpoints, seek help when needed, set and work on achieving academic goals.
THE CHILD WHO SWALLOWED THE SUN – <i>a story about recognizing and nurturing your hidden gifts.</i> SEL skill: Self-awareness	Everyone has special gifts and talents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are your special gifts/talents? 	When I practice self-awareness, I will be able to recognize and name my own and others' emotions, build on my strengths, and develop a growth mindset.
THE REAL BARGAIN – <i>a story about caring and sharing; helping others gives us the best value.</i> SEL skill: Social Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it important to show concern for others, and share with those in need? How can we understand that "value" doesn't depend on \$ signs? What does empathy sound and feel like? 	When I practice social- awareness over time, I will be able to consider and understand others' perspectives and opinions, show empathy, and have a greater appreciation for people from diverse cultures.
THE ELEPHANT AND THE BLIND FRIENDS – <i>a story for respect for others and their opinions.</i> SEL skill: Social Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it important to respect each other's opinions and perspectives? 	When I practice social- awareness over time, I will be able to consider and understand others' perspectives and opinions, show empathy, and have a greater appreciation for people from diverse cultures.
SHIFTING SANDS – <i>a story of forgiveness.</i> SEL skill: Relationship Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it important to forgive? What does forgiveness look, sound and feel like? 	When I practice establishing and building relationship skills, I will be able to communicate effectively, exhibit cooperative learning and work toward group goal, and work to prevent interpersonal conflict, but manage and resolve it when it occurs.
THE LITTLE GIRL WHO SPOKE WITH TREES – <i>a story of stewardship – when we take care of nature it will take care of us.</i> SEL skill: Responsible & ethical decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it important to take care of nature/environment? What can we learn from nature? What can you do to help make your class, family, community and world a better place? 	When I practice responsible and ethical decision making, I will be able to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions using ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. Most importantly, I will consider my actions in consideration of the well-being of myself, others, the community, and the world.

Moving from Theory to Practice: Stories to Light Our Way

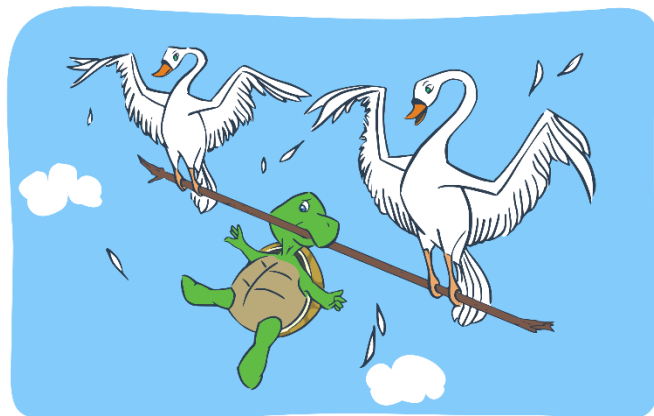


"The Turtle Who Just Couldn't Keep His Mouth Shut"

A Story of Self Control

The focus of "The Turtle Who Just Couldn't Keep His Mouth Shut" is the importance of self-control. Self-Control is the skill that helps children learn to control their feelings and behaviors in order to make good decisions, while aiding in reducing impulsive actions and dealing effectively with frustration. Gaining self-control over our own actions frees us to develop good self-esteem and self-respect.

They will also learn who their real friends are, and who just keeps them down. Through the turtle they can explore what it means to get "stuck in the mud" and who and how they can get out of the troubles that bog them down.



STORY EXCERPT:

Snappy the Snapping Turtle was always snapping at anything or anyone who came near him. Even those who just happened to say, "Good morning," nearly got their heads bitten off. He was so angry that soon there was no one in the pond who would go near him. You might be grumpy, too, if you were always stuck in the mud.

But everything changed the day a pair of swans on their way home spotted the little pond where Snappy lived and decided to drop in for a rest. Snappy had never seen anything so beautiful.

It was hard for the pond residents to believe but Snappy actually made friends with the swans.

Then one year it didn't rain at all. The pond began to dry up under the heat of the burning sun. Everyone in the area, both the people and animals, were starving. The birds were leaving to find a better home.

Snappy came up with an idea. He told the swans to get a long stick. "My snappy jaws are strong enough so that if you fly slowly you could hold the two ends and carry me along. Once I clamp down on something, nothing escapes my grip."

But the swans were worried. What if Snappy couldn't control himself and opened his mouth? He would lose his grip and fall down. They made him promise not to open his mouth, no matter what.

So off the three friends flew. Higher and higher, over hills, valleys, fields and plains they went. But no matter what new things he saw he still kept his promise and held on tight.

But then, they flew over a city. The people of the city were amazed to see such a strange sight. They laughed and clapped their hands. Snappy tried his best to ignore them. But then someone shouted, "Look at the swans carrying that silly turtle." That made Snappy angry. "Why are you foolish people making such a racket?" he snapped. He had forgotten his promise. He lost his grip on the stick. Down, down, down he fell and crashed to the ground, because he just couldn't keep his mouth shut.

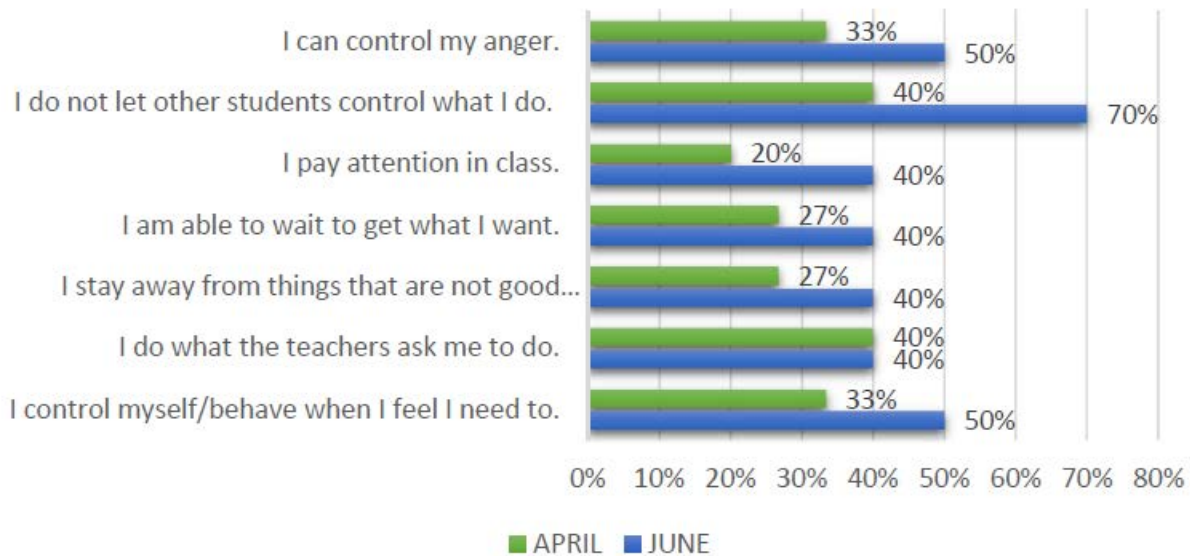
Testimonials

"Over the past 5 years I have used Snappy to set my class expectations at the beginning of the year. I have found that these stories are really the essential missing piece to creating the learning environment and the motivation that is missing in today's society. I had no behavior referrals this year because we were able to reference and use the themes of the stories and characters to deal with any issues that arose. By using them to build this environment, the academic and social development went way beyond my expectations and allowed all my learners to flourish!"

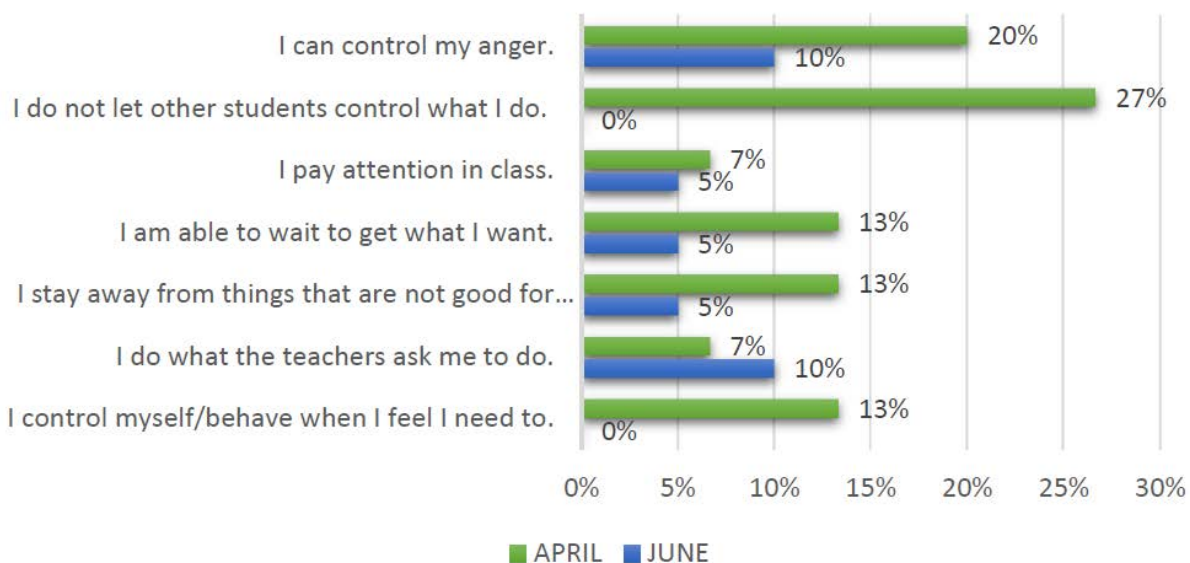
"The stories have helped the children quickly internalize behavioral messages that have otherwise been difficult to teach. They will carry these stories with them for the rest of their lives."

The charts below show the impact of the story, Snappy the Turtle who Couldn't Keep His Mouth Shut," Stories to Light Our Way, on a representative 2nd grade class, reflecting their understanding and ability to recognize key areas of the SEL trait self-management. The 6-question pre-evaluation was administered to the class in April. Shortly thereafter the story was played at an assembly and taken back into the classroom for ongoing discussion and activities. The post evaluation was then given in June before the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Increase in Almost Always | Snappy

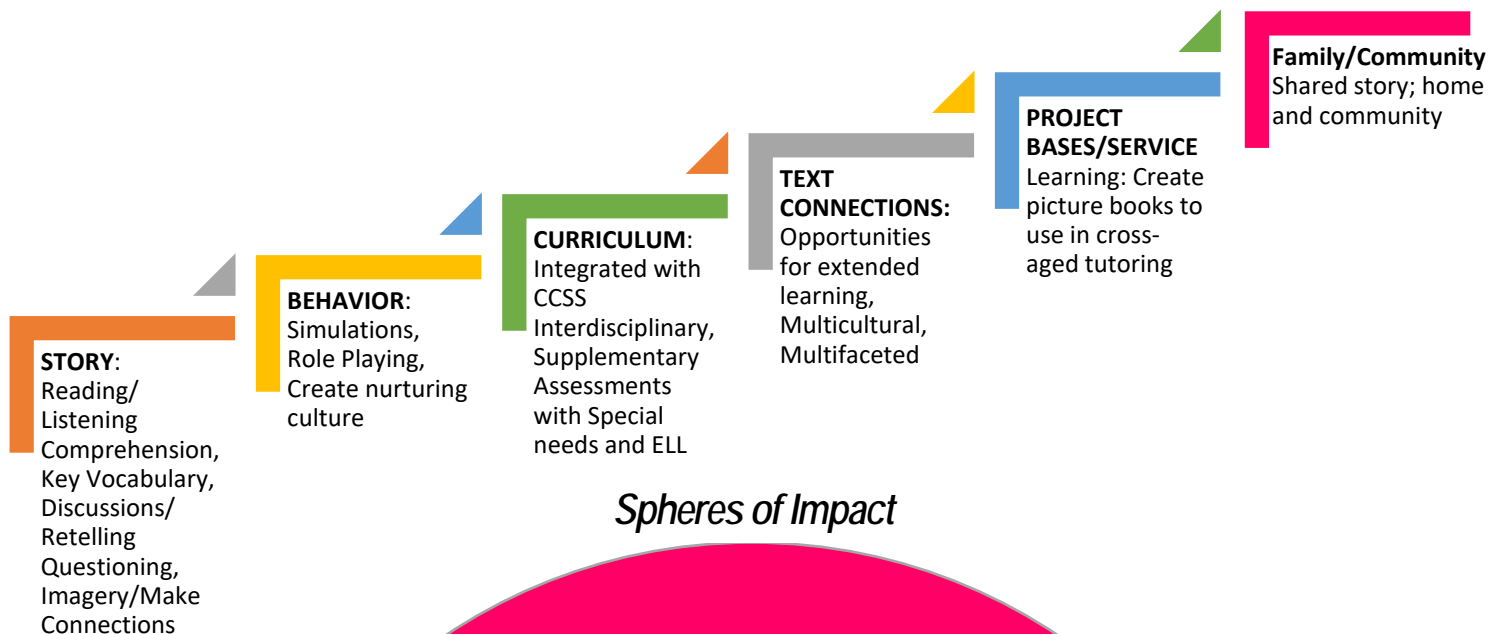


Decrease in Almost Never | Snappy

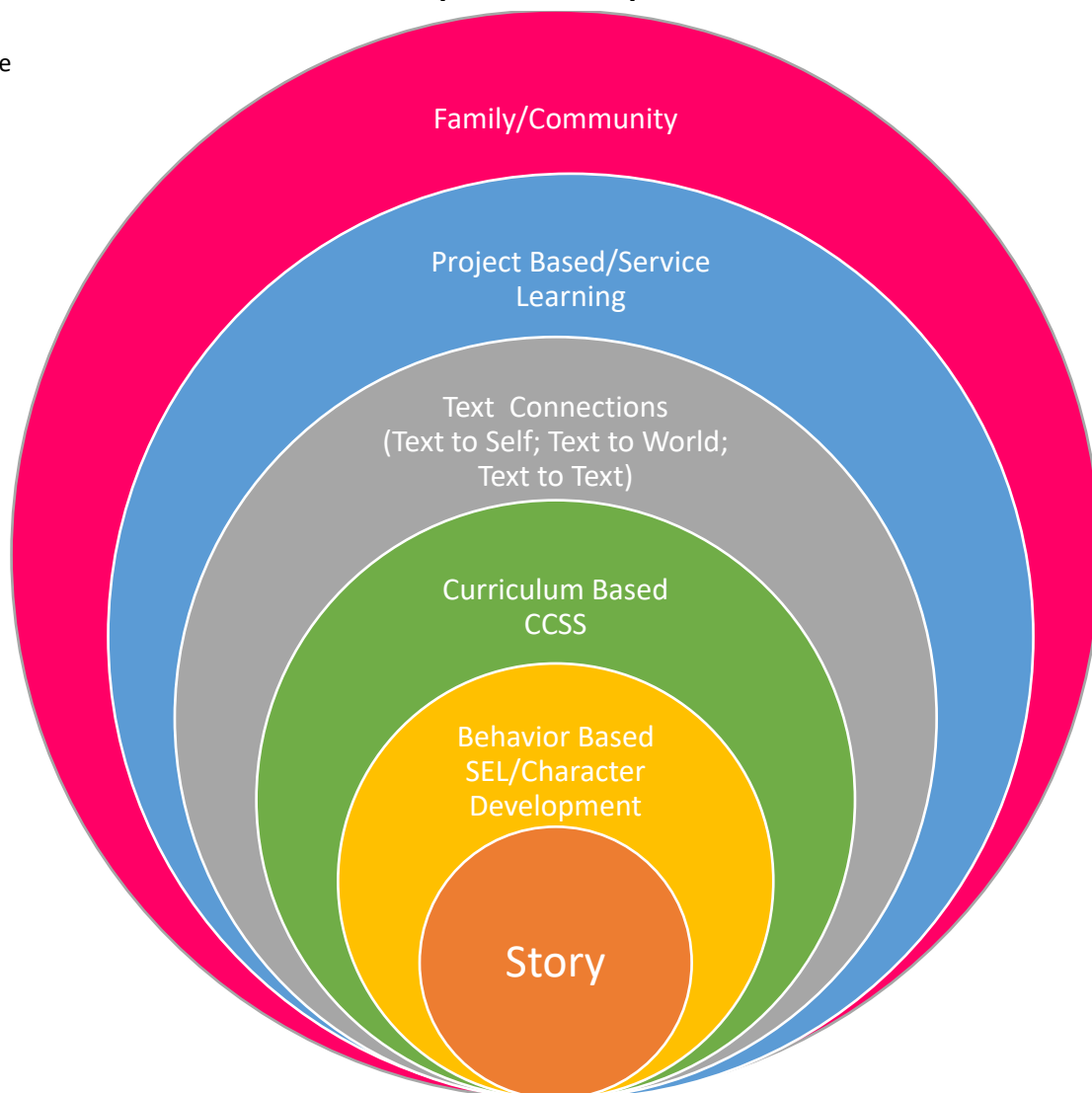


"The Turtle Who Just Couldn't Keep His Mouth Shut"

A Story of Self Control



Spheres of Impact



CHANGING THE STORY!

Middle School Special Needs Parent's Evaluation

Overall Evaluation Results – 90% of family groups responded

- ✓ 94% agreed/strongly agreed the stories **helped their child become more confident**
- ✓ 94% agreed/strongly agreed the stories **helped their child feel more comfortable in school**
- ✓ 94% agreed/strongly agreed the stories **helped them become more involved in their child's education**
- ✓ 63% agreed/strongly agreed the program offered **new information that was useful to them personally**
- ✓ 56% would like to participate in more sessions like this
- ✓ 69% **found this meeting much/more valuable** than other school meetings they've attended

Parent Feedback on Value of Wisdom Thinkers Network Stories and Program

4. Please share 1 key point that you learned and experienced tonight that you might pass on to others.

- listen and let them tell their story
- hold onto kindness and let negativity go
- The family engagement is great for the students. Younger siblings seemed to enjoy the involvement
- It was great to see the families interacting with each other and to see how proud the students were of their work
- informative
- Kids worked well together to create their stories
- Never let your light dull, because of someone else
- The kids were very comfortable
- Let the past go
- If someone hurts you, write it in sand so the winds of forgiveness blow it away and when someone helps me, write it in stone.

5. Please share 1 brief story of change you have seen in your child's daily life?

- his stories are more consistent and he seems less nervous
- his openness with his class
- more helpful and kind
- listening, comfortable
- M. communicates more and asks more questions
- a story of school- his learning and meeting new friends and his education
- more confident
- she is becoming more aware of communication and how to express herself

6. How could we make future sessions like these better?

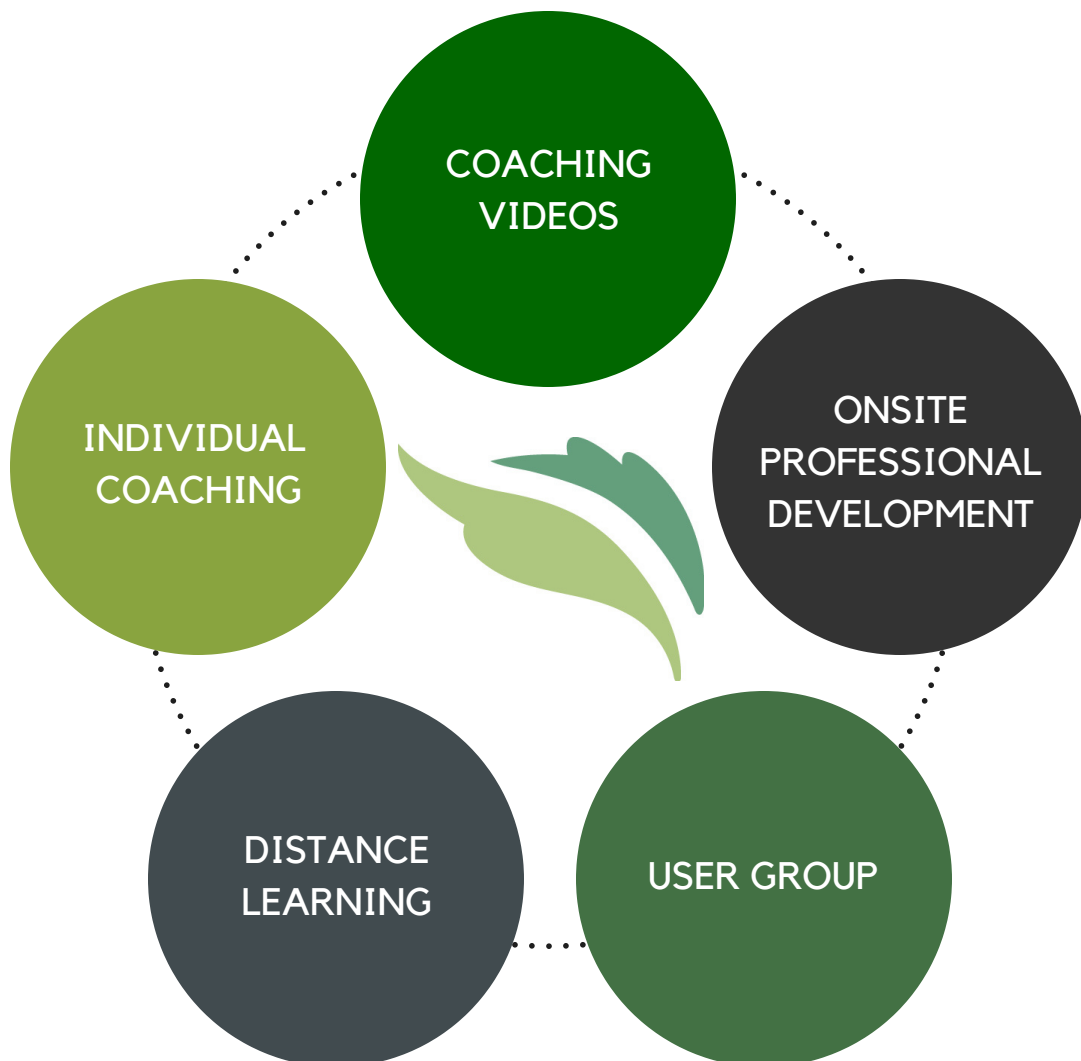
- better sound from the from the stage microphone and computer
- longer with more time to focus
- make them longer
- have a little more time. felt rushed at the end.
- keep on working
- Have the kids line up by the stage at the end to make it easier for pictures
- More organization when handing out t-shirts and other items. Have a group picture

7. Please share any other thoughts you have on this evening's session.

- was lots of fun
- The food was great, loved the video, and how the kids were incorporated in the presentation
- I am very pleased with my granddaughter's improvement!

Professional Development

Wisdom Thinkers Network Circle of Support



BENEFITS OF STORIES TO LIGHT OUR WAY

1. Wisdom Thinkers can quickly become the catalyst that creates a classroom and school wide climate and culture that is less susceptible to student based bullying and harassment.
2. The "Stories" are focused upon the development of a learning environment that prides itself upon the reduction of classroom violence and disruption, within a district's diverse socioeconomic school settings.
3. The Stories are curriculum based programs, designed and created by educators and easily integrated into current SEL bench marks and classroom based curriculum standards.
4. Through EVI, a CTLE provider, Wisdom Thinkers will offer your professionals (classroom teachers, OT's, PT's, Speech Therapist, Special Education teachers) the opportunity to address inappropriate classroom behaviors, within existing instructional plans. Imagine a reduction in disciplinary occurrences based upon the integration of the stories within existing instructional and IEP plans!
5. The Stories have been specifically designed to address and enhance community based engagement and an integrated dialogue. Our goal is to inspire children to become more aware of their surroundings and to begin making positive and permanent changes that will positively enhance their classroom academic experience and outcomes.
6. The Stories directly address our children's interactive learning and behavioral skills. Being curriculum based and easily integrated into existing classroom curriculum, the stories can be easily integrates into existing classroom instruction. No need for addition instructional time to be assigned to the Wisdom Thinkers program rollout.
7. Enhance the local community culture and climate. Skills learned through the Wisdom Thinkers stories are practiced within the home, the community and the classroom, as the transition from a school based initiative to everyday behavioral norms. Communities change one person at a time
8. Our Wisdom Thinker Stories simulate real time life situations that are relevant to today's K-12 students. Consequently, we have seen very enthusiastic student participation and expansion of the program throughout the K-12 grade levels.
9. The adoption of the positive character norms of the stories will help develop and maintain a safer and more successful classroom learning environments.

JOIN THE WISDOM THINKERS MOVEMENT!

Equip all children with a character-rich foundation needed for a meaningful life in school, community, and the workplace.

USER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS | OCTOBER 2017

On-line survey conducted with the support of a masters student in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

- 100% said they plan to **continue to use** Wisdom Thinker Network stories regularly in their work over the next three to five years.
- 81% said **"Stories to Light Our Way" is most useful** in their work, and 25% said "Change the Story-A Game to Alter Reality" is most useful.
- 20% reported that the stories **significantly improved the listening skills** of students, and 80% said they somewhat improved these skills.
- 36% said the stories **significantly connected students with their communities**, and 64% said they somewhat connected students.
- 40% said the stories **significantly reduced disciplinary actions** and 60% said they somewhat reduced disciplinary actions due to problem behaviors.
- 51% had **used the stories for over two years**, of which 25% had used them for **four or more years**.

TESTIMONIALS

"The stories have helped the children quickly internalize behavioral messages that have otherwise been difficult to teach. They will carry these stories with them for the rest of their lives."

- They **cultivate a strong sense of pride** that they will share in the school setting, the community and at home.
- The stories can be used **for multi-cultural character education** as they are diverse and multifaceted.
- The stories seem to have **countless potential in the classroom and community** with involvement from staff, community members and students.
- The stories can help junior high students **deal with feelings**.
- The stories can **empower students to be involved and make changes** in themselves, their home and their communities.
- Love the idea of having High School students share the stories and **discuss the characters with younger**, elementary school students.
- The stories can be incorporated into **Social Emotional Learning and Project Based Learning programs**.
- The stories **create connectedness to others** in the school and community through active learning.
- It is so important to allow students to tell their story, and not **fall into the trap of defining students** by, and teaching a single story.

STUDENT RESPONSE

- "When we listen to the stories and really try to understand them, we can become better citizens and better friends." Here are some of the thoughts kids had when asked about wisdom thinkers:
- The stories make people think more about what they say before they speak the lessons make me want to try harder
- Wisdom Thinkers teaches us to think about the feelings of others
- We can all live in a better community if we care about others.