

Teaching “The Formative Five” Skills for Success

Using strategies inspired by the book, “The Formative Five: Fostering Grit, Empathy, and Other Success Skills Every Student Needs” by Thomas R. Hoerr, students will learn about empathy, self-control, integrity, grit, and embracing diversity. Equipped with these essential skills, you'll watch your students master their emotions, build strong relationships, and develop the resilience to overcome obstacles.

To get you started, we've outlined what a lesson might look like, included ideas for teaching each of the "Formative Five" skills, and offered a variety of assessment strategies. While this lesson is aimed at elementary students, it is adaptable to any grade band!

Goals

After teaching these five skills, students will...

- understand and demonstrate the "Formative Five" success skills: empathy, self-control, integrity, grit, and embracing diversity.
- develop a strong sense of self and positive relationships with others.
- create a classroom culture that values respect, responsibility, and perseverance.

Resources

BOOKS

- [*“The Formative Five: Fostering Grit, Empathy, and Other Success Skills Every Student Needs”*](#) by Thomas R. Hoerr
- [*“Mindset: The New Psychology of Success”*](#) by Carol S. Dweck
- [*“Teach Your Dragon to Make Friends”*](#) by Steve Herman

WEBSITES

- [The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- [Character Counts!](#)
- [SEL Resources from the K12 Hub](#)

Getting Started: Lesson Introduction

Start off this unit by explaining the importance of the Formative Five skills and give examples of how they set us up for success in school, relationships, and other aspects of life. Share personal anecdotes or examples of how these skills have helped you. Invite your students to think about how they may already be using these skills in their lives.

We recommend teaching the Formative Five skills as a 5-part unit, taking the time to focus on one skill at a time. For each skill, choose one or more active learning activities from the ideas below. You can also adjust these ideas according to what strategies work best in your classroom (Ex: Group discussion, think-pair-share, etc.).

Empathy

Objective: Students will identify and develop an understanding of their own emotions and the emotions of others.

Strategies:

- Use read-alouds and discussions to explore different perspectives.
- Encourage students to actively listen and share their feelings.
- Ensure your classroom or group setting has been created as a safe space to be vulnerable.
- Model empathetic responses to students' emotions.

Self-Control

Objective: Students will manage their impulses and behaviors in challenging situations.

Strategies:

- Teach strategies for managing anger, frustration, and impulsivity (e.g., deep breathing, taking a break).
- Provide clear expectations and consequences for behavior.
- Offer positive reinforcement for self-control.

Integrity

Objective: Students will act honestly and ethically, even when it's difficult to do so.

Strategies:

- Discuss the difference between honesty and integrity.
- Create a classroom honor code.
- Role-play scenarios that challenge students' integrity.

Grit

Objective: Students will persevere through challenges and setbacks.

Strategies:

- Share stories of people who overcame obstacles.
- Encourage students to set goals and track their progress.
- Celebrate effort and perseverance.

Embracing Diversity

Objective: Students will appreciate and value differences in others.

Strategies:

- Explore different cultures, traditions, and perspectives.
- Encourage students to appreciate and celebrate differences.
- Challenge stereotypes and biases.

Assessment

Assessment will look different depending on your desired outcome. These active assessment strategies can be used throughout the unit to measure student understanding and give them the opportunity to practice their new skills.

- **"Formative Five" Charades:** Students act out scenarios related to each skill, and classmates guess which skill is being demonstrated.
- **"Caught Being Good" Jar:** Students earn tokens for demonstrating the Formative Five, and the class celebrates when the jar is full.
- **Role-playing:** Students practice responding to challenging situations with empathy, self-control, and integrity.

Students should carry these new skills long after the unit has ended. Consider using these long-term assessment strategies throughout the year to check in with your class and refresh them on the importance of the Formative Five skills.

- **Observation:** Continuously observe students during daily activities, lessons, and interactions. This includes observing their behavior in different settings such as group work, independent work, and unstructured playtime.
- **Student Self-Reflection:** Encourage students to reflect on their own behavior and growth in the Formative Five.
- **Class Discussions:** Facilitate discussions where students share their experiences and insights related to the Formative Five.
- **Teacher Reflection:** You should also reflect on your own teaching practices. This includes analyzing how effectively you integrate the Formative Five into lessons, modeling the skills, and creating a supportive classroom environment.

By teaching these formative skills, we can empower students to become successful learners, and compassionate, ethical, and engaged humans ready to make a positive impact on the world.