Building Civic Literacy through Talking Points and Writing Prompts

Social skills to enhance communication and develop conflict resolution strategies

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Annapolis, Maryland
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Barbara San Gabino

Carol Lopashanski
In celebration for diversity and unity of children everywhere...
May they ever take heart...
Rationale for

Building Civic Literacy through Talking Points and Writing Prompts

Teachers are in a unique position to greatly influence children. Goleman (1987) found that high-risk students flourished in adverse conditions and against all odds if they had a strong connection with one or more significant adult outside the home. This finding continues to be affirmed in this new millennium.

As educators we have worked with students collectively for sixty years. In this era where our children relate more to video games, computers and television than to people, there is even more of a need for meaningful interpersonal communication. Thus, we offer Building Civic Literacy through Talking Points and Writing Prompts to the educators of the 21st Century.

Building Civic Literacy through Talking Points and Writing Prompts is a convenient way for teachers to model, practice and reinforce prosocial behaviors in their students. It helps students develop empathy, impulse control, and anger management while problem solving the conflicts of others as well as their own. It provides ways for teachers and students to explore conflicts and problems together. This shared experience fosters communication in making connections, enhancing discussion and modeling problem solving. What better life skill could we give our students than this important building block for social competence?
HOW TO USE THE TEMPLATES

Each Building Civic Literacy through Talking Points and Writing Prompts template is designed to be used and reused with a variety of appropriate literature or real life/role play situations. The overview chart (see next page) identifies social skills and specific student outcomes. The templates have been field tested in many learning environments and have been shown to be an effective extension of the skills taught in Second Step offered by the Committee for Children. The templates are used in morning meetings, language arts, social studies, media and guidance lessons. They provide a structure for verbal and/or written communications which allows the educator to connect with individual students.

Procedurally the story is read or the real life situation is described or role-played. Follow-up discussions occur using the template as a guide with students recording their responses. The amount of individual writing will vary with the grade level. Responses may range from the teacher as the recorder to independent completion at the intermediate and middle school levels.

The instructional setting is versatile. The templates succeed in building a bridge between the educator and the student whether used as a whole class activity, in cooperative peer groups paired learning, as individual assignments, in counseling sessions or with conflict resolution.
**TALKING POINTS AND WRITING PROMPTS**

**THROUGH LITERATURE AND REAL LIFE SITUATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEMPLATE</th>
<th>SOCIAL SKILLS for Civil Literacy</th>
<th>TALKING POINTS and WRITING PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perspective talking</td>
<td>Analyzing conflicts different perspectives. Dialoging different points of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Empathizing</td>
<td>Questioning using stances: Global Interpretive, Personal and Critical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Making decisions based on action consequences</td>
<td>Understanding cause and effect using feelings and possible responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I messages</td>
<td>Identifying feelings, problems and stating possible actions with I messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Affirmations and change</td>
<td>Achieving a personal goal using affirmations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Resolving problems</td>
<td>Utilizing a checklist of questions to evaluate an agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Positive self-talk</td>
<td>Using affirmations in achieving goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interpersonal problem solving</td>
<td>Analyzing perspectives considering situations, reactions and personal reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Positive Characteristics</td>
<td>Assessing traits and characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Balancing strengths/weaknesses</td>
<td>Identifying characteristics traits in self and others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THINK IT THROUGH

1. Who are you angry with?
2. What are you angry about?
3. What started it?
4. When did it start?
5. What did you do?
6. What could you have done?
7. What did the other person do?
8. What did the other person want?
9. What did you want?
10. What is the best thing to do now?

THINK About the kinds of conflicts listed below....

- Teasing/Put-downs
- Friendship disputes
- Intimidation
- Arguments
- Shoving/pushing

THINK About these ways to solve a problem or conflict...

Humor
Compromise
Taking turns
Apologizing

Avoiding
Postponing
Getting help

Or......
READING/THINKING

Questioning Using Stances

GLOBAL
Can I understand what the selection is mainly about?
What was the major conflict in the story?

Interpretive
Can I understand in detail by drawing conclusions?
What was your first impression of ____________?
Was it an accurate one? Why?

Personal
Can I “see myself” in relation to what I read?
Identify some of ____________’s feelings that are like feelings you have had.

Critical
Can I judge things about the author’s craft?
How does the author make this story seem real?
Give examples.

WRITING MY RESPONSES

BE A PROBLEM SOLVER....

DRAW A CHARACTER

ANALYZE A CONFLICT....

DRAW A CHARACTER
### CONFLICTING FEELINGS

Analyze the conflict between the two characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did __________________ act?</th>
<th>What could __________________ do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insulted</td>
<td>Solve the problem by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>➢ Use feeling words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>➢ Use active listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting Mad</td>
<td>➢ Stay calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>➢ Keep trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shocked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW DID THE CHARACTER ACT?**

1. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

**WHAT COULD THE CHARACTER DO?**

1. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Describe one of your conflicts. How did you act?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

What do you prefer to do the next time?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Can you think of four more feeling words?

Embarrassed  Silly  Scared  Sad
Yucky   Proud  Angry  Frustrated
Shocked  Happy  Lonely  Excited

I feel ____________________________________________________
When a friend says I’m fun to play with so I will ________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
I feel ____________________________________________________
When I have to wait for answers or wait for ________________
_________________________________________________________________
So I will ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
I feel ____________________________________________________
When I’m not sure where to go or what to do so I will ____________
_________________________________________________________________
I feel ____________________________________________________
When I solve my problems so I will ___________________________
_________________________________________________________________
**SETTING GOALS**

This is going to be a great day for me, I love to learn; I make every minute count, I am a top thinker and I always do my best. I know more than I think I know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ How did AFFIRMATIONS help the character achieve his/her goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ How did the character visualize him/herself at different points in the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Would you like to have the character as a friend or classmate? Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My goal the next _____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is to ______________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This means I will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here are some steps to help me reach my goal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNED:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Is the solution clear enough?
Does it tell: Who, what, where, when, and how?
Is the solution fair and even?
Do both people have to do something to make it work?
Can both people really do what they promised?
Will the solution solve the problem?
Will the solution solve the problem for the good?

IMPULSE CONTROL.....What makes a good solution?
What makes for a GOOD SOLUTION?

EVALUATE your solution...
Does it provide for all 7 elements?
Use the checklist.

THINK about these 9 kinds of conflict.......
THINK about a conflict you heard about or saw.....
CREATE A GOOD SOLUTION!

STUDENT #1
Agrees to:

STUDENT #2
Agrees to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teasing/Put-downs</th>
<th>Name Calling/ Harassment</th>
<th>Friendship Dispute</th>
<th>Rumors</th>
<th>Disappointments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Dispute</th>
<th>Arguments</th>
<th>Shoving/Pushing</th>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>OTHER:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. I said “This is going to be a great day for me,” when

2. I said, “I love to learn; I make every minute count,” when

3. I said, “I’m a top thinker and I always do my best,” when

4. I said, “I know more than I think I know,” when

5. I said, “2-4-6-8 I am really GREAT,” when

**AFFIRMATIONS AND GOALS**

- How do you think these affirmations helped me achieve my goals?

- Evaluate your day. What did you do well? What can you improve?

How could you use these 5 affirmations to encourage a friend?
1. This is going to be a great day for YOU!
2. YOU love to learn; YOU make every minute count!
3. YOU’RE a top thinker and YOU always do your best!
4. YOU know more than YOU think YOU know!
5. 2-4-6-8 YOU are really great!!
**ANALYSIS OF PERSPECTIVES...Interpersonal Problem Solving...**

| TITLE: ______________________ | AUTHOR: ______________________ | NAME: ______________________ |
| SITUATIONS                      | CHARACTER’S ACTION            | READER/WRITER’S REACTION       |
| SITUATION 1:                   | CHARACTER’S ACTION 1          | READER/WRITER’S REACTION 1     |
| SITUATION 2:                   | CHARACTER’S ACTION 2          | READER/WRITER’S REACTION 2     |
| SITUATION 3:                   | CHARACTER’S ACTION 3          | READER/WRITER’S REACTION 3     |

These are situations I faced in the story.

This is how the author had the character handle the situation.

This is how I would have handled the situation.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**
PERSONAL STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

FORCED CHOICE ACTIVITY

From the list below select five characteristics or traits which you feel are most important for a friend or a mediator/conflict manager to have.

___ Friendly  ___ Strict  ___ Quiet  ___ Bashful
___ Courteous  ___ Hard-nosed  ___ Thoughtful  ___ Popular
___ Mean  ___ Obedient  ___ Patient  ___ Careful
___ Forgiving  ___ Cheerful  ___ Power-Hungry  ___ Agreeable
___ Clean  ___ Intelligent  ___ Selfish  ___ Ambitious
___ Honest  ___ Tricky  ___ Fair  ___ Concerned
PREFERENCES....

SIMILARITES and DIFFERENCES

TITLE: _____________________________

What are some traits that describe the character?

What traits do you think the character might want to improve or change?

What do you think are the character’s best traits?

Other traits I have observed in people are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proud</th>
<th>Outspoken</th>
<th>Sensitive</th>
<th>Quiet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bossy</td>
<td>Talented</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Crabby</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Forgetful</td>
<td>Polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careful</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>Nagging</td>
<td>Shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
<td>Stubborn</td>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MY REFLECTIONS

SHIELD

Traits I admire in my friends are:

Other traits I have observed in people are:

My best traits are:

Traits I would like to improve or change are:
List of Books for:

Building Civic Literacy through Talking Points and Writing Prompts

These are suggested titles. The TEMPLATES can be used with any story you would read aloud to your class. Additional useful titles are William Bennett’s Children’s’ Book of Virtues and any Collection of Aesop’s Fables.

TEMPLATE 1

K-3  Matthew and Tilly by Rebecca C. Jones
K-3  George and Martha Round and Round by James Marshall
K-3  Goggles by Ezra Jack Keats
K-3  Let’s Be Enemies by Janice May Udry
K-3  Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
1-3  Get in a Fight by Stan & Jan Berenstain
2-5  Jamaica Tag-Along by Juanita Havill
3-5  Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Marid Surat
3-5  Old Henry by Joan W. Blos
3-5  Getting used to Henry by Cari Best

TEMPLATE 2

K-1  Geraldine’s Blanket by Holly Keller
K-3  Matthew and Tilly by Rebecca C. Jones
K-3  Jamaica’s Find by Juanita Havill
K-3  It wasn’t My Fault by Helen Lester
K-3  Goggles by Ezra Jack Keats
K-3  Let’s Be Enemies by Janice May Udry
K-3  No Fighting, No Biting by Else Holmelund Minarik
K-5  It’s Mine by Leo Lionni
K-5  We Are Best Friends by Aliki
K-5  Something Beautiful by Sharon Dennis Wyeth
2-5  Babushka Baba Yaga by Patricia Polacco
2-5  Just Plain Fancy by Patricia Polacco
2-5  Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker
2-5  The Bobbin Girl by Emily Arnold McCully
2-5  Jamaica Tag-Along by Juanita Havill
3-5  Wiley and the Hairy Man retold by Judy Sierra
3-5  Getting used to Henry by Cari Best
3-5  The Case of the Cat’s Meow by Crosby Bonsall
3-5  Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Maria Surat
K-2 A Letter to Amy by Ezra Jack Keats
K-3 Matthew and Tilly by Rebecca C. Jones
K-3 On Monday When It Rained by Cherryl Kachenmeister
K-3 Best Friends for Frances by Russell Hoban
K-3 George and Martha Round and Round by James Marshall
K-3 No Fighting, No Biting by Else Holmelund Minarik
2-5 Just Plain Fancy by Patricia Polacco
2-5 Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker
2-5 Now One Foot, Now The Other by Tomie de Paola
2-5 Jamaica Tag-Along by Juanita Havill
3-5 Willie’s Not The Hugging Kind by Joyce Barrett
3-5 Old Henry by Joan W. Blos
3-5 Getting used to Henry by Cari Best
3-5 The Case of the Cat’s Meow by Crosby Bonsall
3-5 Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Maria Surat
3-5 Wiley and the Hairy Man retold by Judy Sierra

K-1 Just For You by Mercer Mayer
K-1 Jessica by Kevin
K-1 Geraldine’s Blanket by Holly Keller
K-2 A Letter to Amy by Ezra Jack Keats
K-3 On Monday When It Rained by Cherryl Kachenmeister
K-3 Best Friends for Frances by Russell Hoban
K-3 Bailey Goes Camping by Kevin Henkes
K-3 Sheila Rae, The Brave by Kevin Henkes
K-3 Jamaica’s Find by Juanita Havill
K-3 George and Martha Round and Round by James Marshall
K-3 Let’s Be Enemies by Janice May Udry
K-3 It wasn’t My Fault by Helen Lester
K-3 Louie by Ezra Jack Keats
K-5 Yo! Yes? By Chris Raschka
1-5 Peach and Blue by Sarah S. Kilborne
2-5 Babushka Baba Yaga by Patricia Polacco
2-5 Some Birthday by Patricia Polacco
2-5 Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker
2-5 Going Home by Eve Bunting
2-5 Now One Foot, Now The Other by Tomie de Paola
3-5 Nick Joins In by Joe Lasker
TEMPLATE 5

K-1  Just for You by Mercer Mayer
K-3  Little Louie and the Baby Bloomer by Robert Kraus
K-3  Bailey Goes Camping by Kevin Henkes
K-5  Max Found Two Sticks by Brian Pinkney
K-5  Black, White, Just Right by Marguerite W. Davol
1-3  Ronald Morgan goes to Bat by Patricia Reilly Gift
1-5  Peach and Blue by Sarah S. Kilborne
2-5  Jamaica Tag-Along by Juanita Havill
2-5  Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker
2-5  The Bobbin Girl by Emily Arnold McCully
2-5  Babushka Baba Yaga by Patricia Polacco
2-5  Something Beautiful by Sharon Wyeth
2-5  Oliver Button is a Sissy by Tomie de Paola
3-5  Thank you, Mr. Falker by Patricia Polacco
3-5  The Gates of the Wind by Kathryn Lasky
3-5  Nick Joins In by Joe Lasker

TEMPLATE 6

K-3  Matthew and Tilly by Rebecca C. Jones
K-5  ANY BOOK by Bill Peet
1-3  Get in a Fight by Stan & Jan Berenstain
2-3  Digby and Kate by Barbara Baker
3-5  Old Henry by Joan W. Blos
3-5  Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Maria Surat
TEMPLATE 7

K-1  Just for You by Mercer Mayer
K-1  I like me by Nancy Carlson
K-2  Leo the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus
K-3  Best Friends for Frances by Russell Hoban
K-5  Max Found Two Sticks by Brian Pinkney
1-3  Ronald Morgan Goes to Bat by Patricia Reilly Gift
2-5  Jamaica Tag-along by Juanita Havill
2-5  Babushka Baba Yaga by Patricia Polacco
2-5  Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker
2-5  The Bobbin Girl by Emily Arnold McCully
2-5  Oliver Button is a Sissy by Tomie de Paola
3-5  Nick Joins In by Joe Lasker
3-5  My Buddy by Audrey Ofsofsky
3-5  The Rooster Gift by Pam Conrad
3-5  The Gates of the Wind by Kathryn Lasky
3-5  Wiley and the Hairy Man retold by Judy Sierra
3-5  The Bracelet by Yoshikp Uchida
3-5  Thank you Mr. Falkner by Patricia Polacco
3-5  Satchmo’s Blues by Alan Schroeder

TEMPLATE 8

K-1  Jessica by Keven Henkes
K-1  Geraldine’s Blanket by Holly Keller
K-3  Little Bear’s Friend by Else Holmelund Minarik
K-3  Jamaica’s Find by Juanita Havill
K-3  George and Martha Round and Round by James Marshall
K-3  Goggles by Ezra Jack Keats
K-5  Big Al by Andrew Cements
1-3  Porcupine’s Pajama Party by Terry Webb Harshman
1-3  Ronald Morgan Goes to Bat by Patricia Reilly Gift
1-5  Tikvah Means Hope by Patricia Polacco
2-5  Babushka Baba Yaga by Patricia Polacco
2-5  Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco
2-5  The Bobbin Girl by Emily Arnold McCully
2-5  Going Home by Eve Bunting
2-5  Now One Foot, Now The Other by Tomie de Paola
2-5  Jamaica Tag-along by Juanita Havill
3-5  *The Gates of the Wind* by Kathryn Lasky
3-5  *Willie’s Not The Hugging Kind* by Joyce Barrett
3-5  *Old Henry* by Joan W. Blos
3-5  *Getting Used to Henry* by Cari Best

K-1  *Jessica* by Kevin
K-2  *A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats
K-2  *The Blushful Hippotomus* by Chris Raschka
K-3  *Little Louie the Baby Bloomer* by Robert Kraus
K-3  *Best Friends for Frances* by Russell Hoban
K-3  *Sheila Rae, the Brave* by Kevin Henkes
K-3  *George and Martha Round and Round* by James Marshall
K-3  *Let’s Be Enemies* by Janice May Udry
K-5  *It’s Mine* by Leo Lionni
K-5  *Yo! Yes?* by Chris Raschka
K-5  *Who is the Beast?* by Keith Baker
K-5  *Big Al* by Andrew Clements
1-5  *Peach and Blue* by Sarah S. Kilborne
1-5  *How to Lose All Your Friends* by Nancy Carlson
2-5  *Jamaica Tag-along* by Juanita Havill
2-5  *Babushka Baba Yaga* by Patricia Polacco
2-5  *Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco
2-5  *Mrs. Mack* by Patricia Polacco
3-5  *My Buddy* by Audry Osofsky
3-5  *The Gates of the Wind* by Kathryn Lasky
3-5  *The Rooster Gift* by Pam Conrad
K-2  The Blushful Hippotomus by Chris Raschka
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