Alexis vs. Summer Vacation

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Book Summary

The summer before high school is supposed to be a time to reinvent yourself, but fourteen-year-old Alexis isn't sure who she wants to be. When she meets Luke and Jason, she discovers she isn't the only person who hasn't figured life out. Alexis devises a plan for the three of them to "level up" by taking charge and changing their situations for the better. She soon discovers that being assertive isn't as easy as rolling the die in her fantasy role-playing game.

It is important for young adolescents to learn how to advocate for themselves and others. Speaking confidently is a critical skill to help students feel more sure of themselves. It can also invite listeners to pay more attention to what the speaker is saying. The lesson below teaches students a few foundational skills of a confident speaker.

Speaking Confidently: Body Posture and Eye Contact

After reading the book, use this mini-lesson to explore skills that will help students speak more confidently. Speaking confidently is a building-block to self-advocacy. Much of communication is nonverbal, so when speakers nonverbally convey a sense of authority and confidence, listeners are more likely to trust what they have to say.

Goal: To use body posture and eye contact as a way to encourage others to listen to what you want to say

SEL Skills Focus: Self-awareness (self-confidence, self-efficacy)

Opening:

1. Introduce the lesson to the class: "Everyone in this class has important contributions to make to our conversations. I want to make sure your ideas are heard by everyone."

Body:

1. Use Interactive Modeling to teach the skills involved.

   Describe what you will model and why.

   "I'm going to show you how to encourage classmates to take what you say seriously. Watch how I use my face and body when I share an observation about our science experiment."

   Model the behavior while students notice.

   Talk about a recent science experiment. Be sure to have an upright posture, turn and face the listeners and make eye contact with them. Ask students what they noticed about how you were speaking to them. If needed, direct students to the key aspects of how you were speaking instead of what was being said.

   Give students the opportunity to collaborate and practice.

   Over the next several days, give students multiple opportunities to practice using appropriate body language and eye contact in whole group, partner, and small group conversation. For example, have students:
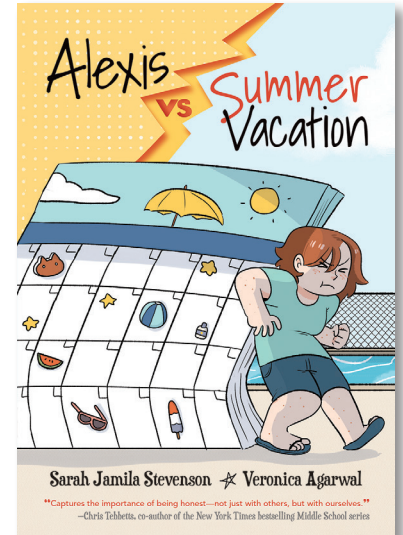
   • Share a simple piece of personal information (for example, a sport they love and why) with the class during Morning Meeting or Advisory meeting

   • Explain to a small group during math about how they solved a problem

   • Turn and talk with a partner about a book they are reading

   Reinforce their practice with immediate feedback.

   "I saw many people with bodies still, shoulders back, and using eye contact. You're really learning what confident speech looks like."

Closing:

1. Guide students to reflect frequently on how they're doing with body posture and eye contact, asking them to highlight which aspects are coming easily to them and which are still a challenge.

2. Share an anchor chart to remind students of the key aspects you modeled.

3. Use reminding language as needed. For example, "Who can remind us of how we can speak with confidence to help our partner understand us?"

Specifications:

176 pages

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This book addresses the following social and emotional learning skills:

• Shows compassion for peers who are dealing with a range of emotions

• Respects people who are different from what is typical and customary to them

• Forgives and avoids holding grudges

• Shows commitment to healthy relationships

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