

GPS ~ Lesson 1

“Great Problem Solving”

Overview

Main Points:

1. Introduce the counselor. The students need a chance to get to know you before they will listen or share with you. This is needed even if you have been working in the same school previously. This introduction renews the acquaintance as well as introducing you to any new students. Determine what personal areas you feel comfortable sharing with the students to help build your relationship with the students. One thing you may want to do is to tell the students how old you are. If this doesn't bother you, you will find that they immediately assume that you must be best friends since they know how old you are. Do not share anything that you are uncomfortable with the students knowing.

2. The importance of making careful decisions. Students often are unaware that decisions are made. They see decisions as something that just happens that they have no control over. This lesson is to introduce the idea that we are responsible for our choices.

3. Introduce the idea of a GPS as a guide in decisions. This prepares the students for future lessons based on the GPS (Great Problem Solving) as a decision making plan.

From COMPASS to GPS:

Do you remember last year when we talked about COMPASS? (This is when the counselor briefly reviews each letter in COMPASS.)

This year we want to update our decision-making problem solving lesson. We actually had a problem. Some counselors thought COMPASS had too many letters for the students to remember. All the counselors gave their ideas. We came up with a new plan to solve that problem. I will show you the new lesson and you can help with the “See If It Works” part.

Lots of people use a GPS now instead of a compass when they want to know where they are. Has anyone ever seen a GPS before? (Yes, when we rented a car on our trip...the lady on the GPS told us where to turn.) (Yes. My dad has one when he goes camping with the scouts.)

Great! A GPS stands for Global Positioning System. It tells you where you are in the world. There are lots of ways to solve problems now with newer technology. A compass can point north, but a GPS can tell you exactly where you are. It is a better way to find your way.

-2-

Of course, like the compass we are not using a real GPS to find our way when we have to make a decision. We are using the letters from GPS to remind us what to do when we have a problem to solve or a decision to make. That is why we called this lesson “The Great Problem Solver.”

G P S ~ Decision-Making Steps

The G in our new GPS stands for

Get calm, and then focus.

Just like the “C” in COMPASS, when we need to make a choice, we need to calm down. We need to focus our mind on our breathing and relax our bodies. This way our mind is free to focus on the problem. Lots of times people are so upset they do not know what the problem is. If you focus on your body to relax and then focus on the problem, you will know which direction you need to go to solve that particular problem.

Next is the P

Plan with self and others.

Once you know what the problem is, you need to plan ways to meet your goal of solving the problem. List as many ways you can think of that the problem could be solved. *Take a moment here to review the problem in the story you read last week. Have the children brainstorm all possible solutions to the problem.* Example: What was Winnie the Witch’s problem? She needed to see her cat, so she would not step on it. Her goal was to keep her cat safe.

What is a good plan to keep her cat safe? Who has another idea? How about another? The more people we hear with ideas, the better. After you come up with all of your ideas and all of your support system’s ideas, it is good to rank them as to which ones you think are the best. When we plan in our own mind and then with others (seek wise people or my support system) we can come up with something that may work.

The last letter is S

Solve or start again.

Go over what the problem was and what you did to solve it. What worked well? Which things would you never do again? Decide what you might do a little differently the next time this kind of problem happens.

Book: Pancakes for Breakfast by Tomie dePaola

Show the book on overhead. After each page call on a different child to tell what is happening. Stop when you come to a problem. She has no eggs. “G” get focused...focus on your body (breathe deeply, relax your shoulders) focus on the problem. “P” what is her plan to fix it? What are all the alternatives? (go to store, borrow from friend, go to henhouse, use powdered eggs, use a different recipe, have a different breakfast, go to IHOP, etc.) Ask for help to think of ideas. She could call her mom or a friend. She got the eggs from her chickens. That worked. Keep reading until the next problem. No milk...Go through the GPS steps again and use lots of ideas to solve the problem. Continue solving problems until the end of the book. Notice the neighbors now have a problem.

Alternate Books:

Every book in the library has a main character, a problem, and a solution. Any book can be used for GPS.

Use your favorite new book each year with this lesson. There are 4,500 new titles every year.

Amos Camps Out by Susan Seligson (out of print)

Smudge the Little Lost Lamb by James Herriot

Activities:

1. Use a talking frame (picture frame with a tape recorder in it), put a cut out of a Map Quest map where the photo would go. Audiotape a message using an upset voice and pretend it is a GPS. Tell the children that the GPS lady is always calm. People can think better to solve a problem when they are calm. Let the children practice recording directions in the recorder in a calm voice.

2. Treasure hunt using the 3 letters GPS. Start with a clue you give the child. It says Look for GPS by walking to the flag (at the flag find the G) make each letter out of a different color die cut. On the back of G it reads “Go to the teachers desk.” At the desk they find P. On the back of P it reads, “Go to the teacher’s desk.” At the desk they find P. On the back of P it reads, “Go to the class sink.” At the sink they find S. On the back of S it reads, “You found us all. What does GPS stand for?” You can have the helpers give them directions or a wise person who already knows where the letters are can help.

3. Have the students write the letter GPS down the left side of the paper. Give them one minute to write what each letter means. Without giving the answers, have the students stand who think they have all of the letters right. Now have them work in groups. Do the activity again the same number of times. Now have the students stand who have gotten all of the letters. More students will stand. When we ask for help from others and get their ideas, we all benefit.

4. Role play scenes from favorite stories. Brainstorm ideas:
Honey jar stuck on a nose... put jar in freezer, rub peanut butter on it, etc.
Bad wolf breathing on your house... go in basement, call his mother.
Princess pricked her finger on a spinning wheel... Tetanus shot.

Additional Ideas and Activities:

1. Obtain a floor plan/map of the school. Place compass markings on the map and make a classroom set. Distribute the maps to the students and help them orient the map to the north. Help the students locate their classroom on the map. Ask the students questions which they can answer by referring to the map. Some examples are:

Which direction do you go to get to the Library, lunchroom, office, etc.
Where would you be if you left your room and went North, South,
East, etc.
Older classes could use Northeast, Southwest, etc.

2. Have students put their heads down and close their eyes. Hide an object in the room. Have the students raise their heads and give them directions to find the object. The first person there wins. **Be sure to stress no running, pushing, climbing, etc.**

3. Clear space in the room and blind fold one student. Then place 3 or 4 objects on the floor in the cleared space as “mousetraps” (there are plastic mousetraps available if desired). Orient the blind student. Select a “guide” to verbally direct the blind student through the traps using compass directions (right and left may also be used) to the goal.

4. Read Arthur Lost and Found by Marc Brown. Discuss the steps used in the story to solve the problem:

What was seen in the story?
What else could have been done?

Discuss why it is important to make decisions carefully.

We can get lost.
We end up in trouble.
We don't get where or when we wanted in life.

Conclusion:

Have the students use GPS for their next problem. Use GPS while reading a book this week. Brainstorm all of the possible solutions to the main character's problem in the book you get from the library this week.