Dear Educators and Counselors,

We are pleased to present the 264th issue of YCteen, “Don’t Hate on Me.” In this issue, your students will read stories about today’s beauty standards and their impact on young women, as well as our writers’ experiences with transphobia, racism, and Islamophobia. In all of these stories, young people share how they persisted against hate and found confidence and satisfaction.

With November 14th to 20th being Transgender Awareness Week, we also have a lesson to help bring awareness to your students regarding the transgender experience, along with a tip guide in the issue itself for teachers on how to best support trans students in your classroom. If you would like more information on how to support and advocate for trans and gender-nonconforming students in your school, we recommend Trans Youth Equality Foundation (transyouthequality.org) and Trans Student Educational Resources (transstudent.org).

We have also included a series of three lessons on the theme of beauty and self-acceptance that draws ties between several stories in the issue and a poem by Dorothy Chan. These stories also make for great connections to novels or nonfiction you may read with your students, such as Toni Morrison’s classic The Bluest Eye and Sandra Cisneros’s House on Mango Street.

As always, we’d love to hear how these lessons work for you, as well as any other ways you use the stories in your work with adolescents. We hope to publish some of those practices in future Lesson Guides and, in so doing, create a community of sharing strategies and telling stories.

Sincerely,

Janelle Greco & Tim Fredrick
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ELA Literacy & Social and Emotional Learning

Accepting the Unacceptable

Story: “How I Became a Racist,” by Anonymous, p. 6

Story Summary: The writer is accepted into a new friend group at the beginning of high school only to discover their racist conversations on and off social media. Torn between wanting to fit in and his understanding that what they are saying is wrong, the writer joins in. Eventually, though, he gets fed up and leaves the group, and over the course of the next few years and into college, he learns to speak up against racism and prejudice.

Lesson Objectives and COMMON CORE Standards Connections:
Students will be able to:
- Annotate a text during the reading process in order to develop an understanding of the text’s main idea and supporting details (CCS R.1 and R.2)
- Discuss their interpretation and analysis of, as well as personal connections to, a narrative nonfiction text (CCS SL.1)
- Write in response to a text and to other students’ written responses (CCS W.4 and W.10)

Before Reading the Story (15 minutes)
This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Welcome students to the group. Tell them that before reading a story, they are going to do an activity that allows them to do some anonymous writing on a topic related to a story they’ll be reading together.

2. Introduce the Toss One, Take One activity by explaining they are going to do an activity that gathers everyone’s ideas and allows them to hear multiple perspectives.

3. Pass out pieces of scrap paper and pencils. Tell group members not to write their name on their paper. This is an anonymous activity.

4. Ask group members to write a response on their paper to this question:
   - What leads people to develop prejudices?

5. Give group members three minutes to think and then write their responses. If some group members are struggling, ask them to write about why they find it difficult to answer the prompts.

6. Write your own responses to the prompts to model the activity.

7. After group members have written their responses, tell them to crumple them into balls and toss them into the middle of the circle, or a container you have available.

8. Model for the group how you expect them to crumple and toss their responses into the center of the circle.
9. After everyone has tossed, each group member should retrieve an anonymous response and return to their seats. As an alternative, walk around the circle with the responses and have each group member blindly pick a paper ball. (If a group member happens to choose their own response, it's okay because no one will know.)

10. Go around in a circle or ask for volunteers to read aloud the response from the paper.

11. Invite group members to comment on what they heard, such as similarities, differences, or personal connections to their peers’ responses.

12. Thank group members for sharing.

**During Reading** (20 minutes)
*By practicing active reading strategies while reading aloud and discussing as a group, students build comprehension and support fluency.*

1. Introduce the story (see the story summary above).

2. Share the expectations for a group read-aloud: volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the group leader, you may stop periodically to discuss or check in on active reading by asking students to share their responses to the story.

3. Tell students they will practice an active reading strategy called **reading for a purpose**. This will help them read for a purpose and be prepared to use the text in later activities.

4. **Reading for a purpose** directions: Ask students to identify times when the story raises a question for them. When this occurs, students should write a “?” in the margin.

5. While sitting in a circle, read the story aloud together. Stop to discuss periodically, supporting peer-to-peer talk and non-judgmental listening. To do this, ask for volunteers to share what they wrote an “?” next to and why. Alternately, you can pose an open question such as “What stands out to you in this section and why?”

6. When you finish the story, ask the group to discuss their reactions to the story, including the questions it raised for them. They can turn and talk to a neighbor before you discuss as a whole group.

**After Reading the Story** (15 minutes)
*During this post-reading activity, students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.*

1. Introduce the **Silent Conversation** activity by explaining to the group that they will do an activity where they learn more about each other and find ways to connect.
2. Review the directions with the group. Tell them:
   - “Everyone will sit with a partner.”
   - “You will write independently in response to a prompt. Try to end with a question.”
   - “Then you will exchange papers and respond to your partner’s writing by answering their questions, sharing your own ideas, and by posing a new question.”
   - “You will pass notes back and forth to build a silent, written conversation with your partner.”

3. Have group members find a partner and sit beside each other.

4. Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils.

5. Read the prompt aloud (or write it where students can see):
   - What factors impacted the writer’s racist behavior?
   - What prompts the writer to change his ways and how does he go about changing?

6. Have everyone quietly write for one or two minutes. Then, ask partners to pass their notes and respond to each other’s writing. Move around the room to quietly check in with group members and offer support.

7. Continue this process by directing partners to finish writing and pass their notes about every two minutes. Remind them to include questions that engage their partner and contribute to the conversation.

8. After about 10 minutes of silent conversation, ask group members to finish their last thoughts on paper. Then ask them to share with the whole group some of the highlights from their silent conversation. They can share points of agreement or disagreement, new ideas, or questions.

9. Thank students for being thoughtful members of the group and working to make connections to the writer’s story, reflect on their own lives, and share with one another.
ELA Literacy & Social and Emotional Learning

What’s In a Name?

Story: “My Name is Mason Martinez,” by Mason Martinez, p. 3

Story Summary: Amidst growing questions from family, friends, and teachers, Mason is struggling with their gender identity. Their journey to find a name that better fits this identity leads Mason on a path of self-reflection that eventually brings about fulfilling results.

Lesson Objectives and Standards Connections:

Students will be able to:
- Annotate a text during the reading process in order to develop an understanding of the text’s main idea and supporting details (CCS R.1 and R.2)
- Discuss their interpretation and analysis of, as well as personal connections to, a narrative nonfiction text (CCS SL.1)
- Write in response to a text and to other students’ written responses (CCS W.4 and W.10)

Before Reading the Story (15 minutes)

This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Welcome students to the group. Introduce the lesson by telling them you will be reading a true story by a teen who is struggling with their gender identity and who tries to find a name to fit that identity.

2. After welcoming the group, ask students (or post on the board) the question, “What does your name mean to you?”

3. Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils. Give students three to five minutes to write down responses on paper independently.

4. After time is up, explain to the group that they will be doing a Pair Share. Ask them to turn to a person next to them and take turns sharing their responses to the question.

5. Each member of the pair should take about a minute to share. Cue partners to switch roles after the first minute. Use a timer or wait until the hum of conversation dies down before re-gaining students’ attention.

6. Call on each pair to share one name that they discussed. Record their ideas on chart paper or a white board. Continue asking for volunteers.

7. Lead a discussion by asking group members the following question:
   - “How does it feel to be called the wrong name or have your name be forgotten?”

8. Thank students for sharing.
During Reading (20 minutes)

By practicing active reading strategies while reading aloud and discussing as a group, students build comprehension and support fluency.

1. Introduce the story (see the story summary above).

2. Share the expectations for a group read-aloud: volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the group leader, you may stop periodically to discuss or check in on active reading by asking students to share their responses to the story.

3. Tell students they will practice an active reading strategy called reading for a purpose. This will help them read for a purpose and be prepared to use the text in later activities.

4. **Reading for a purpose** directions: Ask students to identify times when the story raises a question for them. When this occurs, students should write a “?” in the margin.

5. While sitting in a circle, read the story aloud together. Stop to discuss periodically, supporting peer-to-peer talk and non-judgmental listening. To do this, ask for volunteers to share what they wrote an “?” next to and why. Alternately, you can pose an open-ended question such as “What stands out to you in this section and why?” Additionally, during the reading, pause or wait until the end to ask students the following:
   a. “How did being called the wrong name affect Mason?”
   b. “What would you have done to support Mason during this time?”

6. When you finish the story, ask the group to discuss their reactions to the story, including the questions it raised for them. They can turn and talk to a neighbor before you discuss as a whole group.

After Reading the Story (15 minutes)

During this post-reading activity, students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.

1. Introduce the **Dear Teen Writer** activity by explaining to the group that they will write a letter to Mason that shares some of their reactions to their story.

2. Tell the group that if they want, it’ll be possible to mail in their letters to the Youth Communication office and to potentially get published in an upcoming issue in our “Letter to the Editor” section.

3. Write the **Dear Teen Writer** guidelines on the board or read them to the class:
   - Begin with the greeting “Dear Mason,”
   - Describe what you learned about gender identity and the importance of names from their story.
   - Share any personal reactions or connections you had with their story.
   - Describe the strategies that you think helped Mason get through this time, and how those strategies could help you as well.
   - Ask Mason a question or two based on their story.
   - End with a closing: “Sincerely, (Your Name)”

4. Thank students for being thoughtful members of the group and working to make connections to Mason’s story, reflect on their own lives, and share with one another.
Before Reading the Story (10 minutes)

This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Before the group starts, post two signs on opposite ends of your space. One should read “agree” and the other “disagree.”

2. After welcoming the group, tell them that they will be doing an activity that allows them to move around while learning more about what they and their peers think about a topic.

3. While the group is still seated, review the directions for the Opinion Continuum. Tell them:
   - “On either end of the room, there are signs that read ‘agree’ and ‘disagree.’”
   - “I will read a statement and you will decide whether it’s true for you (agree) or not (disagree). Then you will move somewhere in between the two signs that reflects your opinion. If you’re unsure, you should stand somewhere in the middle.”
   - “Once everyone has moved, I will invite volunteers to share why they chose to stand where they are.”
4. Clear a space and ask group members to stand somewhere between the two signs.

5. Read the first statement and ask group members to move to a spot between the two signs that reflects their opinion:
   - “My family and I have different opinions about what makes someone beautiful.”

6. Once all group members have moved in response to the statement, ask them to notice where other group members are standing. (You can support minority positions by moving closer to someone who is alone at one end of the continuum.)

7. Ask at least one group member standing on either end of the continuum to share why they are standing where they are. Tell group members they may change their position if they are influenced by another group member’s opinion.

8. After each question, have everyone return to the middle.

9. Repeat for each statement:
   - “People should be allowed to do whatever they want to their bodies to make themselves more beautiful (for example, plastic surgery).”
   - “My family criticizes me for how I look or dress.”
   - “There’s something about my physical appearance that I would like to change.”

10. Have everyone return to their seats and thank group members for sharing their opinions.

**During Reading (20 minutes)**

*Students will read a story by one of our youth writers that discusses the impact a family’s opinion has on her self-esteem. Your students will use in-text annotation to read actively.*

1. Introduce the story (see the story summary above).

2. Before reading, write the following quote from the story on the board, leaving a lot of space above and below each line: “Yuh have beautiful, fair skin and yuh nah unda-stan’ how special it is! If yuh get darker, yuh guh lose yuh beauty. No more runnin’ outside, hide yuh skin!”

3. Ask for a volunteer to read the quote out loud. If no one volunteers or no one is able to read it, read it for the class.

4. Ask students what they notice about the spelling of certain words and why they think the writer would spell the words the way she did. (Answers should cover the topic of accent and dialect and representing the way people speak accurately.)

5. Tell students that in the story they are about to read, there is a lot of *phonetic* spelling in the dialogue because the writer is trying to get across how her Indo-Guyanese family speaks. Decide as a group how you want to handle helping each other read the dialogue (options include: the group helps each other; the group waits for who’s reading to ask for help before helping; the group lets the teacher help).
6. Share the expectations for a group read-aloud: volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the group leader, you may stop periodically to discuss or check in on active reading by asking students to share their responses to the story.

7. Tell students they will practice an active reading strategy called **reading for a purpose**. This will help them read for a purpose and be prepared to use the text in later activities.

8. **Reading for a purpose** directions: Ask students to read for moments in the text when the writer states something they agree or disagree with. When they agree with something they should write a “+” in the margin. When they disagree, they should write a “-” in the margin.

9. While sitting in a circle, read the story aloud together. Stop to discuss periodically, supporting peer-to-peer talk and non-judgmental listening. To do this, ask for volunteers to share what they wrote a “+” or “-” next to and why. Alternately, you can pose an open question such as “What stands out to you in this section and why?”

10. When you finish the story, ask the group to discuss their reactions to the story, including the questions it raised for them. They can turn and talk to a neighbor before you discuss as a whole group.

**After Reading the Story** (15 minutes)

*During this post-reading activity, students will write to the young woman who wrote the story, making connections and giving advice.*

1. Introduce this activity by saying to the group:
   - “Now that we’ve read the story, we’re going to write a letter to Melissa giving her advice based on our personal experiences.”
   - “Your goal is to communicate your ideas and responses to the story.”
   - “There are no right or wrong answers, just your ideas and how the story spoke to you.”

2. Read the Dear Teen Writer guidelines aloud from the chart paper you’ve prepared:
   - **Greeting:** “Dear Melissa, I just read your story, ‘The Color of Beauty.’”
   - What were some details of her experiences that resonated or stuck out to you?
   - What were some connections you made with Melissa’s experiences?
   - What sort of advice would you give her on dealing with the different messages about beauty she gets from her family?
   - **Closing:** “Sincerely, (Your Name)”

3. Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils.

4. Give group members about ten minutes to write their letters. Move around the room offering encouragement and support.

5. When about ten minutes are up, tell group members to finish their last thought and put their pencils down.
6. Explain to the group that they are now going to do a Pair Share. Tell them to turn to the person next to them and take turns sharing the parts of their letters that they feel comfortable sharing.

7. Each member of the pair should take about a minute to share. Cue partners to switch roles after the first minute. Use a timer or wait until the hum of conversation dies down before closing the activity.

8. Time permitting, lead a discussion by asking group members to comment on what they heard, such as similarities, differences, or personal connections to their peers’ responses. They can also discuss points they agree or disagree with, new ideas they’ve been given, and questions they still have.

9. Thank group members for sharing.

DAY TWO:

Before Reading the Story (10 minutes)
This activity will activate students’ background knowledge.

1. Welcome students to the group. Tell them that before reading a story, they are going to do an activity that allows them to do some anonymous writing on a topic related to a story they’ll be reading together.

2. Introduce the Toss One, Take One activity by explaining they are going to do an activity that gathers everyone’s ideas and allows them to hear multiple perspectives.

3. Pass out pieces of scrap paper and pencils. Tell group members not to write their name on their paper. This is an anonymous activity.

4. Ask group members to finish the follow statement on their paper:
   - Beauty is . . .

5. Give group members three minutes to think and then write their responses. If some group members are struggling, ask them to write about why they find it difficult to answer the prompts.

6. Write your own responses to the prompts to model the activity.

7. After group members have written their responses, tell them to crumple them into balls and toss them into the middle of the circle, or a container you have available.

8. Model for the group how you expect them to crumple and toss their responses into the center of the circle.

9. After everyone has tossed, each group member should retrieve an anonymous response and return to their seats. As an alternative, walk around the circle with the responses and have each group member blindly pick a paper ball. (If a group member happens to choose their own response, it’s okay because no one will know.)

10. Go around in a circle or ask for volunteers to read aloud the response from the paper.
11. Invite group members to comment on what they heard, such as similarities, differences, or personal connections to their peers’ responses.

12. Thank group members for sharing.

**During Reading** (20 minutes)

*Students will be put into groups to read a story by one of our youth writers that discusses how beauty standards impacted them. Your students will use in-text annotation to read actively.*

1. Put students into two, four, or six groups, depending on the size of your group. (Groups should wind up having 4 to 6 students in them.)

2. Assign each group one of the following stories:
   - “Curly and Proud” by Angelina Nelson
   - “Fat and Beautiful” by A.C.

3. Share the expectations for the small group read-aloud: volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like, it is okay for group members to skip, and because there are several groups reading at the same time, they should be mindful of their volume.

4. **Reading for a purpose** directions: Ask students to identify what stands out for them in the text, or when they have a reaction to something in it. When this occurs, students should write an “*” in the margin.

5. As groups read, circulate around the room and listen in on the reading and remind students to annotate the text as they read.

6. When they finish the story, ask the group to discuss their reactions to the story, including where they marked an “*” and any connections they make to their own life.

**After Reading the Story** (15 minutes)

*During this post reading activity, students will consider how the writers of the stories they read overcame negative messages about beauty using discussion and a graphic organizer.*

1. Introduce the activity by saying to the students:
   - “Now that you’ve read the stories, you are going to think about what helped the writers overcome negative messages about the way they look.”

2. Pass out the “Table Talk” graphic organizer (see p. 16 of Lesson Guide).

3. Give the group about ten minutes to talk about and take notes on the questions on the organizer.

4. After all the groups have finished filling out the graphic organizer, have each group tell what their story was about and share their responses to one of the questions.

5. Time permitting, lead a discussion by asking students their connections to the stories they read (in this lesson and in the previous lesson) and reflect on how society’s messages about beauty has/has not impacted them.
6. Thank group members for sharing.

Optional Homework Assignment: Have the students read the story their group did not read.

**DAY THREE:**

**Before Reading the Poem** (10 minutes)
*This activity will give activate students’ background knowledge.*

1. Welcome students to the group. Introduce the lesson by telling them they will be reading a poem about beauty standards.

2. Introduce the **Freewrite** or **Quick Draw** activity by reminding students that it is an opportunity to freely express their thoughts on paper without worrying about spelling, grammar, or anything else. Students will have about four minutes to write or draw in response to the prompt. The goal is to express their thoughts freely without worrying about writing conventions. The expectation is that everyone writes or draws, without stopping, for the full time.

3. Freewrite prompt: “Write or draw your responses to one or both of the following statements:
   - The physical feature I’m most proud of is . . .
   - Other people make me feel ___________ about my physical appearance when they _______________________. ”

4. After students have completed the freewrite or quick draw, transition to a pair share. Students should select a partner or turn to the person next to them.

5. Facing each other and practicing active listening, partners each take a turn sharing parts of their responses that they feel comfortable sharing. The listener should not respond, but should actively listen to the speaker. You can use a timer or wait until the hum of conversation dies down before closing the activity.

6. Thank students for sharing.

**During Reading** (15 minutes)
*Students will read a poem that is thematically similar to the stories read in the previous lessons. Your students will use in-text annotation to read actively.*

1. Hand out copies of the poem “Triple Sonnet for my Aggressive Forehead” by Dorothy Chan, found on [poets.org](http://poets.org).

2. Share the expectations for a group read-aloud: volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the group leader, you may stop periodically to ask students to share their responses to the poem.

3. Read the poem aloud together. Consider asking these open-ended questions during or after the read aloud:
   - What’s standing out to you in the poem?
• How is what the poet is writing about similar to the stories from the young women we read yesterday and the day before?
• What advice would you give the poet if you were her friend?

4. Thank the group for reading and sharing.

After Reading the Poem (20 minutes)

During this post reading activity, students will respond through poetry to the theme of beauty as discussed in this and previous lessons.

1. Introduce this activity by saying to the group:
   • “Now that we’ve read the story, we’re going to do a poetry-writing activity about beauty.”
   • “This is a chance to express your thoughts and feelings without worrying about spelling and grammar.”
   • “There is no right and wrong way to write a poem, just your own ideas.”
   • “If you don’t know what to write or get stuck, just keep your pencil to paper and keep writing the last word you thought of over and over until a new idea comes.”

2. Read the prompts aloud from the chart paper you’ve prepared. Students may choose one or both of the prompts as time and interest allow.
   • “Write a poem of your own celebrating a physical characteristic of yourself that others criticize.”
   • “Take one of the YCteen stories we’ve read the past couple of days and create a found poem (by cutting out words and lines from the story and arranging them into a poem that has a similar theme to the story) or an erasure poem (by blacking out “unwanted” words or lines from the story, leaving behind a poem that has a similar theme to the story).”

3. Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils. For students who are creating found or erasure poems, photocopies of the stories would preserve the magazine, if needed.

4. Give group members about 15 minutes to write. Move around the room offering encouragement and support.

5. When 15 minutes are up, tell group members to finish their last thought and put their pencils down.

6. Explain to the group that they are now going to do a Pair Share. Tell them to turn to the person next to them and take turns sharing parts of their responses that they feel comfortable sharing.

7. Each member of the pair should take about a minute to share. Cue partners to switch roles after the first minute. Use a timer or wait until the hum of conversation dies down before refocusing the group.
8. Lead a discussion by asking group members to describe some of the highlights of their conversations. They can share connections they made with their partners’ writing, new ideas that their partner gave them, or questions they still have about the topic.

9. Thank group members for sharing and listening.

NOTES:
**TABLE TALK: BEAUTY STANDARDS AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE**

**Directions:** In your group, select a time keeper, facilitator, a first speaker, and a recorder. Then begin discussing the questions below.

- **Timekeeper:** make sure all questions are properly discussed in the time given.
- **Facilitator:** make sure everyone has a chance to contribute ideas to each question.
- **Recorder:** jot down notes that capture some of the key ideas that come up for your group on the note-taking document below.
- **First speaker:** choose the first question for the group to discuss and set the tone by being the first to share an idea.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Who or what sends negative messages to the writer about what is “beautiful”?</th>
<th>What impact do these negative messages have on the writer’s thoughts and behavior?</th>
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<th>What happened to help the writer feel better about herself?</th>
<th>What is the writer’s attitude now about what it means to beautiful?</th>
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Open-ended questions you can use with any story in YCteen:

1. What main problem or challenge did the writer face?
2. What choices did the teen have in trying to deal with the problem?
3. Which way of dealing with the problem was most effective for the teen? Why?
4. What strengths, skills, or resources did the teen use to address the challenge?
5. If you were in the writer's shoes what would you have done?
6. What could adults have done better to help this teen?
7. What have you learned from reading this story that you didn't know before?
8. What connections from your own life, the world, or other text you have read, can you make to this story? This reminds me of…. (text-to-self, text-to-world, text-to-text)
9. What surprised you in this story?

Do you have a different view of this issue, or see a different way of dealing with it, after reading this story? Why or why not?
Do you love to write personal stories and want to be a voice for teens? Apply for our spring writing internship, which begins in February. YCteen is an award-winning, teen-written magazine that’s read by thousands of teens in print and online. YCteen articles have been republished on the New York Times Learning Network and in the Huffington Post. Writers are guided and supported by a professional editor as they learn memoir-writing and journalism skills.

REQUIREMENTS:

- You must be between the ages of 15 and 20
- You must live in New York City and commit to working a minimum of two days a week, two hours a day for three months at our midtown Manhattan office. (Our office is open to writers from 1-6 p.m. Monday through Thursday.)

Apply now at bit.ly/ycteenapply
DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 1, 2019

While we want to take as many writers as possible, we have a limited capacity, so apply right away.

Questions? Contact YCteen editor Holly St. Lifer at 212-279-0708 ext. 116 or hstlifer@youthcomm.org

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Student-Centered Conversations

Supporting youth who have:
Been in Foster Care
 Experienced Homelessness
 Had Juvenile Justice Contact

Engage your hardest-to-reach students

Let’s talk about how we can support your community’s needs.

Contact Betsy Cohen: bcohen@youthcomm.org
FREE WEBINAR

College and Career Readiness
Strategies to Support Students’ Social and Emotional (SEL) Skills

In this one-hour interactive webinar, participants will learn strategies for how to use teen-written stories to help students develop the social and emotional learning (SEL) skills necessary for secondary school completion, college enrollment, and success in the workplace.

Learn about Youth Communication’s unique story-based approach. Our true stories by teens inspire meaningful discussion around life’s challenges and how youth can make positive changes in their lives.

Interactive: Webinar participants will practice activities centered on teen-written stories and identify the SEL and career readiness skills (such as communication, goal-setting, and problem-solving) demonstrated by teen writers.

Teen Voice: Xavier Alvarez, the teen author of “Even When I Was Homeless I Stayed in School,” will talk about how adults provided the support he needed to excel and graduate from high school. We will also share resources to help participants support youth in college and career readiness.

This webinar is ideal for high school educators, college and career counselors, and other professionals at settings such as vocational and technical schools.

Registration is free.

SAVE THE DATES

Gender Awareness

Thursday
February 27
12 p.m. or 3 p.m. EST

Social and Emotional Learning

Thursday
May 2
12 p.m. or 3 p.m. EST

To register: youthcomm.org/webinars
Enter online: bit.ly/yctcontest

Do you have a strong feeling about an article you read in this issue of YCteen? We’d like to hear about it.

YCteen is written by a staff of teen writers who work in our New York City newsroom. But writing is a form of conversation, and we want you to join in.

We invite you to submit a letter to the writer, responding to their story. This is an opportunity to express your opinion or present your own point of view on a story you’ve read.

Start your letter with “Dear [writer’s name]” and reference the article by the title. End it with “Sincerely” and your name, address, high school, and age.

CONTEST RULES:

- You must be between the ages of 14 and 19.
- Letters should be no more than 300 words.
- If you win, your letter will be published on our website and in our print issue. Tell us if you want it to be printed anonymously—but you should still type in your full name and complete address so we know where to mail your check if you win.
- Current YCteen or Represent writers may not enter the letter contest.
- Letters may be edited by Youth Communication editors for brevity and clarity. All entries become property of Youth Communication.

Here are some prompts to inspire you:

- What stood out to you about the story you chose?
- Can you relate to what the writer experienced? How is your own experience similar, or different?
- If you disagree with the writer, explain why. How might you might have handled the situation?
- Did the story change your opinion or influence your actions?
- Are there aspects that the writer has not considered?