



OPTIMISM

WHY OPTIMISM?

Optimism and student success are directly related. Research shows that schools have an important role to play in challenging students to be optimistic in both their academic and personal lives. Students who develop and practice optimism and resiliency and believe that they are successful are more likely to succeed.¹ Further research shows that academic optimism makes a significant contribution to student achievement, which shows that if we can help students to be optimistic, we can set them up for success.² It is also widely recognized that optimism translates into positive health outcomes for children and adults alike. Building an attitude of optimism in students benefits them academically, personally and promotes a positive school climate for everyone.

GOALS

To help your students understand what optimism means.

To help your students understand that optimism means being hopeful that you will succeed because you worked hard.

To demonstrate optimism in your classroom and help students practice optimism as individuals, in their classroom and in their school.

MATERIALS NEEDED

White board/chalkboard	Markers
Sticky notes	Paper
Chart paper	Pens/pencils

The authors of this manual recognize that you are the expert of your classroom and if you wish to add to this lesson any of your own activities or materials related to this module's theme, please feel free to do so.

¹Bernat, Frances P. (2009). Youth Resilience: Can Schools Enhance Youth Factors for Hope, Optimism, and Success? *Women & Criminal Justice*, 19(3), 251-266.

²Hoy, Wayne K., C. John Tarter, Anita Woolfolk Hoy. (2006). Academic Optimism of Schools: A Force for Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(3), 425-446.



Introduction

Ask your students if they know what optimism means. Brainstorm together a definition for the classroom, along with examples of practicing optimism. Organize these examples of optimism in terms of how to be optimistic as a(n) a) individual, b) classroom, c) school (see table below). Post this list in your classroom over the next month to help the children remember what optimism means. Here are some ways to help them define optimism and being optimistic:

For younger students

- Having a positive attitude about school
- Working hard and believing that you will succeed
- Being hopeful for success
- Encouraging others to be optimistic

For older students

- Having a positive outlook about school and home life
- Being confident that you will succeed in the future
- Taking new opportunities with a positive attitude
- Being hopeful for the best case scenario



What Optimism Looks Like

Being optimistic may include the following:

- Entering a competition or contest hoping you will do well
- Studying hard for a test and believing you will do well
- Encouraging others to be confident and hopeful
- Practice positive self-talk (may require further instruction/examples)
- Think about the most optimistic people in your life and how they act
- Spend some time listing all of the things you are grateful for
- Set goals and work hard to achieve them, being confident you will succeed
- Put a note on your phone or computer that reminds you of something you like about yourself or something you are good at
- Watch a video about being optimistic (example: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbjH9d4h6GQ)
- Smile as often as you can, your inside will start to match your outside
- Challenge yourself to find the silver lining in difficult situations
- Do an activity that makes you smile or laugh
- Surround yourself with other optimistic people
- If something goes wrong, think about how you will make changes to do better next time
- Thank an adult in your life for being a positive role model and specifically for the ways they model optimism for you
- Put a screensaver on your computer or phone with a quote you like about positivity/optimism

CHALLENGE: HOW TO TAKE OPTIMISM AS A(N)...



Individual

Work hard and be confident that you will succeed

Spend time thinking about what you are grateful for

Practice using positive self-talk

Classroom

Take on new challenges and opportunities with hope that they will go well

Encourage others to be optimistic by reminding them of what they are good at

Look forward to a special field trip or recess as a class

School

Create an "optimism wall" where students and teachers can write down positive affirmations or things they are grateful for

Hold an optimism themed assembly, celebrating all of the things that are great about your school and community, featuring student and club presentations

Quazar Video Questions

NOTE: These video clips are snapshots of the character attribute. They are not meant to be complete lessons, but simply to bring awareness of the attribute to your students.

Here are some follow-up questions and possible answers for the Quazar video to help your students further discuss and think about optimism:

Video Questions

1) How did the student in the video practice optimism?

2) When can it be difficult to practice optimism? How can we change these thoughts?

3) How can we help others to be confident they will succeed?

4) What are some things you are hopeful for in the future?

Classroom Activities

For younger students

1. Spend some time discussing and defining what a positive affirmation is. List some examples on the board of statements that are positive affirmations. Some examples include: "I have confidence in myself", "I can make the best of every situation" or "I never give up". Have students pick their favourite one or have them make up their own to be put on a sticky note. They are to put this sticky note on their desk or inside their locker/cubby to remind them to be optimistic and positive. Feel free to repeat once a week for a month or as often as you like.
2. Have students write a letter to an adult in their life, thanking them for something they do for them. This can be as simple (but important) as thanking their parent for making lunch for them every day. Have a discussion with students to remind them that one important part of being optimistic is being thankful and grateful for the good things in your life. Appreciating someone is also a great way to spread optimism and positivity. This activity will also make students think about the good things in their life, no matter how small they are.

For older students

1. Students are to think about friends and family that model optimism in their lives, as well as the ways in which they do this. They can also include positive role models in their lives. They will then write a letter to this person, thanking them for being a positive example in their lives. Students should include specific examples of optimism when possible (feel free to have a discussion about examples of optimism prior to writing the letters). Students can then mail or hand deliver letters to the people in their lives that model optimism.
2. Place students into groups of four or five, being mindful of group dynamics and social architecture.* Once students are in groups, give them a piece of chart paper and markers. Students are to list things that they are excited/hopeful for in the future. They are to categorize these things as "individual", "classroom" and "school". Some examples include: hopeful for a career path, looking forward to high school, a class trip, saving money to buy something special, a birthday coming up etc. Each group will then present their ideas to the class. This is a great way to share reasons to be optimistic with one another and build classroom community. As a teacher facilitator, make sure you create a safe space by reminding students that everyone has different hopes for the future and all of them count in this activity.

*Social architecture refers to intentional actions that create enhanced opportunities for students to have positive interactions with teachers, peers, family and the community. By placing students in groups that are intentionally planned to maximize effectiveness, teachers can create a positive climate of collaboration in their classrooms.

For more information visit <http://www.prevnet.ca/resources/bullying-prevention-facts-and-tools-for-schools>

Quotations About Optimism

These quotations can also be posted in the classroom to remind students about the importance of optimism.

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

~ Helen Keller

“Optimism is a happiness magnet. If you stay positive, good things and good people will be drawn to you.” “

~ May Lou Retton

“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who make opportunities of his difficulties.”

~ Harry Truman

“Real optimism has reason to complain but prefers to smile.”

~ William Arthur Ward

“Choose to be optimistic, it feels better.”

~ Dalai Lama





Optimism Reading List

The following books explore the theme of optimism for children of different ages and can also be used to help teach students about being an optimistic person:

Grades K-3:

- *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg
- *An Awesome Book!* by Dallas Clayton
- *I Believe in Me* by Connie Bowen
- *I Am Positive* by David Parker

Grades 3-5:

- *Unstoppable Me!* by Dr. Wayne W. Dyer
- *I Think, I am!* by Louise Hay
- *Perfect Square* by Michael Hall

Grades 6-8

- *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai
- *Loser* by Jerry Spinelli
- *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery

The authors of this manual recognize that you are the expert of your classroom and if you wish to add to this lesson any of your own activities or materials related to this module's theme, please feel free to do so.