

SCHOLAR SERIES

BY DR. VICTOR RIOS

TOOLS FOR STUDENT PROSPERITY



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“I have always believed that youth who face adversity have the promise to transform their lives, to turn their struggles into their strengths, and to **accomplish the unbelievable.**”

Dr. Victor Rios

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TOOLS FOR STUDENT PROSPERITY

At Scholar System, we don't simply want students to succeed, we want them to **prosper**.

Throughout this series of lessons, we emphasize and nurture the traits that will empower students to grow to their full potential. These are listed at the beginning of each lesson.

PERSEVERANCE

Never give up on your dreams and goals. Keep going when things are challenging. Bounce back from setbacks stronger than before. Learn lessons from your mistakes.

REFLECTION

Take the time to look back at where you came from and the growth you've made. Learn and grow from setbacks.

OPTIMISM

Maintain a positive attitude even in difficult times. Project a hopeful future for yourself.

STRENGTH

You are strong, both physically and mentally. You got this!

PASSION

Pursue what you love with dedication and enthusiasm.

EMPATHY

Understand and support others with kindness and compassion. Realize there is more than one perspective out there.

RESOURCEFULNESS

Find creative solutions to problems and think outside the box. Use your gifts.



TEACHER NOTES

Safety First

Throughout this unit, students are asked to reflect on their own life experiences and connect with their struggles. Be aware that many of your students may be living through trauma and it is critical to handle these assignments with compassion and sensitivity. No student should be made to feel they have to share something personal in order to get a good grade.

Be explicit about this with students before and during the unit!

"Only share what feels right for you. It's important to respect your boundaries and not feel pressured to reveal more than you're comfortable with. Should one of our lessons bring you to a place where you feel the need to speak someone, please tell me!"



While sharing your personal stories can be helpful, it's essential to focus on taking care of your emotional well-being. Also, remember that as your peers share their experiences, approach sensitive topics with kindness, understanding, and thoughtfulness."

Model Vulnerability

We strongly encourage you to complete and model all activities using stories from your own life experiences. Whenever possible, complete examples of the worksheets and activities ahead of time to use as a model for students, and as a way to connect with your class and demonstrate that at any age we all struggle to reflect, change, and grow.

Connection Before Content

In order for students to be receptive to content, they first need to feel connected: to you, to each other, and to the classroom. The first lesson is devoted almost entirely to building relationships, and each following lesson features a teambuilding activity.

Community Circles

We frequently use Community Circles in this unit. This process creates a safe and inclusive environment where students can share their thoughts and feelings, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect. They encourage open communication, enhance listening skills, and build trust among participants, promoting a supportive school community.

Note that you will need an item to use as a “talking piece” for these circles.

Community Circle Agreements

- Speak from the heart and listen with respect.
- Confidentiality is key—what's shared in the circle stays in the circle.
- One person speaks at a time, using a talking piece to signify whose turn it is to speak.
- Show empathy and understanding, even if you disagree.

Tips for Facilitators

- Create a welcoming atmosphere where all students feel comfortable sharing.
- Encourage participation but respect those who choose to pass.
- Use open-ended questions to stimulate discussion and reflection.
- Model active listening and positive feedback to guide the group.

Brain Breaks

Most lessons, especially ones with more sitting, feature a quick Brain Break to recharge students. However, take a quick Brain Breaks anytime students need it.

In the **Teacher Blacklines**, there is a bonus Speed Dating activity that is great for a quick reset! **To access blacklines and other tools visit: drvictorrios.com/scholar-series**

Lesson Timing

Lessons are written to be 60 minutes in total and are appropriate for middle and high school students. In some cases, multiple versions of activity sheets are provided for differentiation.

Most all lessons feature an EXTENSION activity. These activities are meant for longer class sessions (90 minutes) and also for older students.

Materials and Preparation

Some lessons require advanced preparation. Prep is listed underneath each lesson At-a-Glance.

Master Materials List

Standard School supplies needed:

- Pencils, markers, colored pencils, pens
- Scissors
- Sticky notes/Post-It notes
- Index cards
- Glue sticks, tape, staples, or other adhesive
- Paper - different sizes (8.5x11, 9x12, 11x17, etc.), and different types (notebook, printer, etc.)

Additional materials needed:

- LESSON 1: Prizes for Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament
- LESSON 4: Beads or paper clips (for Paper Airplane activity), Dice
- LESSON 5: Materials for Vision Boards (magazines, fun art supplies, etc.)
- LESSON 7: Poster/chart paper
- LESSON 8: Prizes for Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament, Dice
- LESSON 10: Envelopes (1 per student), Paper plates (1 per student)
- LESSON 11: Timer, Construction Paper

Community Circle Check In

Ask students to share a time when they felt angry. Use the 2 Minute Share format and these prompts:

- Recently I got angry because...
- So I...
- And when I think about it now I feel...

About Anger

Use the emotions and situations students shared to point out that anger feels differently to different people. How do people respond and react when they are angry? (What's the difference between responding and reacting?)

Here are some additional facts about anger to share and discuss. Use the slide deck of the Anger Spectrum to support this discussion.

- Anger is a complex emotion, but it's also natural and necessary
- Anger signals when something is wrong and can motivate us to address problems.
- Anger can be **constructive** when expressed healthily and **destructive** when mismanaged. Anger can lead to positive change when expressed healthily and cause harm when mismanaged.

THE ANGER SPECTRUM



Share with students that how we think determines how we feel and how we behave.

WHY WE ACT



Managing Anger in a Healthy Way

Explain that a *trigger* is an event, situation, or person that provokes a strong emotional response, often linked to past experiences or unresolved emotions. Share that recognizing these triggers is the first step in managing emotional responses and preventing conflicts. Discuss common triggers, such as feeling disrespected, unfair treatment, or loss of control.

Have students picture a recent time when they were angry and complete the plant diagram as you progress through explaining the process (and the analogy).

1. **What was the trigger?** Near the watering can, have students write the trigger(s) for their anger.
2. **How did you respond?** In the leaves, have students write their responses. This space is for what others saw, as well as for how they interpreted those actions.
3. **How does it affect others?** Around the plant, write how these responses affected others.
4. **How do you really feel, under the surface?** Guide students to understand that while we reacted to being angry, we rarely feel just one emotion. What were the root causes? caused us to feel angry? We can feel lonely, sad, left out, misunderstood, disrespected, etc. Write those emotions near the roots.
5. **What do those feelings mean you need? What will help you return to calm?** In the water around the bottom, have students identify what they really need to help those below-the-surface feelings. For example, if they felt misunderstood, they might need time to explain themselves.

Tree of Life

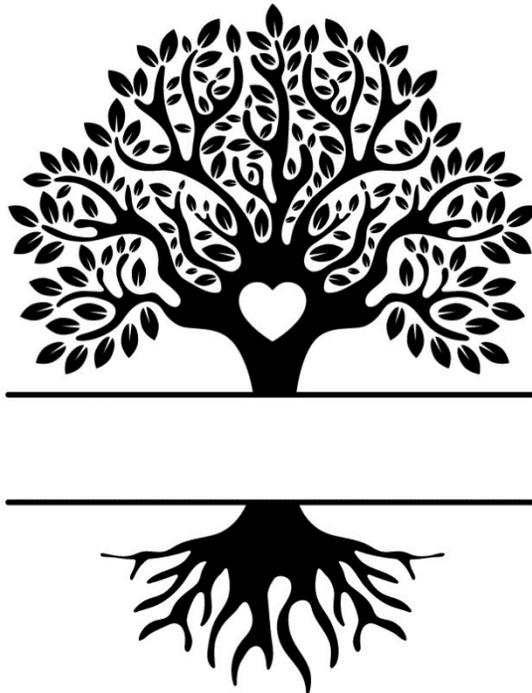
In the future I will...

“ ”

A lesson learned
from my family

How I will help my family
and community

3 words to describe me



My Scholar Style

My Conflict Style

My Values

A mistake I made

2 strategies that
work for me when
things are rough

and from that I learned

My Mini-Keynote

Your mini-keynote will have 3 parts:

1. My story
2. Something you learned from our time together and what's changed about you because of it
3. Your future

These questions will help you plan out your keynote.

These are the most important questions, because they will guide your whole keynote. Keep these answers short.

At the end of my keynote, I want the audience to know and remember	At the end of my keynote, I want the audience to feel

Part 1: My Story

The goal is for the audience to know a little about what makes you, you. You may choose to tell about an important moment in your life, a mistake you made, or a lesson you learned.

Write the most important parts of what you want to tell here:

Part 2: Something Your Learned

Look back at the Tree of Life to help you with this part. What's something that stuck with you from our time together?

How did what you wrote about change you? Remember, it doesn't have to be a big change! It might have changed your thinking, or how you feel, or maybe there's a little voice in your head sometimes that reminds you of this lesson.

Write about what's changed about you and give one example:

Part 3: My Future

Project your future for the audience! Tell about what you see yourself doing in five years from now, ten years from now, and beyond. Tell about your dream job and how you will make the world a better place.

The Conclusion

You can choose to end your keynote however you like. If you're stuck, you can share the quote from your Tree of Life and explain what it means to you.



Perseverance

Reflection

Optimism

Strength

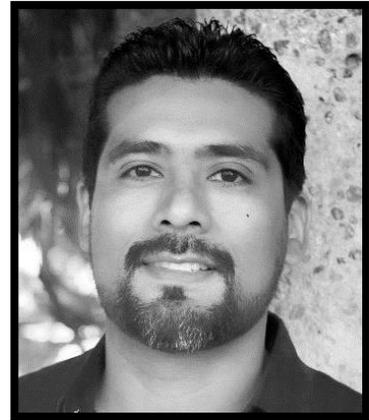
Passion

Empathy

Resourcefulness

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Victor Rios is Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley in 2005. Dr. Rios has worked with local school districts for decades to develop programs aimed at improving the quality of interactions between authority figures and youths. Using his personal experience of living on the streets, dropping out of school, and being incarcerated as a juvenile—along with his research findings—he has developed interventions for marginalized students aimed at promoting personal transformation and civic engagement that have been implemented across the country.



Dr. Rios is the author of six books, including: *My Teacher Believes in Me: The Educator's Guide to At-Promise Students* (2019), *Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D.* (2011), and *Human Targets: Schools, Police, and the Criminalization of Latino Youth* (2017).

Dr. Rios has been featured in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, TED Talks, the Oprah Winfrey Network, *Primer Impacto*, and National Public Radio. He has had the honor of meeting President Obama and advising his administration on gun violence and policing. His TED Talk, "Help for kids the education system ignores," has garnered over 1.4 million views. He is also the subject of the documentary film *The Pushouts*.

Audrey Lee is an expert in curriculum development and design, professional learning, and educational technology. She holds an MA from the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Education and taught public school for seven years before serving as the Director of Curriculum and Educational Technology for a TK-12 San Francisco Bay Area School District for twelve years. While there, Ms. Lee created, designed and facilitated a successful, district-wide Professional Development model adopted throughout the county bridging the Common Core State Standards with blended learning for teachers, administration, classified staff, families, and students. Ms. Lee has also held senior executive positions at private education companies in the Bay Area. Her established expertise includes curriculum development, standards-based instruction, culturally responsive pedagogy, equity, and change leadership.



Audrey Lee is also a fiction author. Her debut psychological thriller, *The Mechanics of Memory*, will be released August 2024.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She specializes in child and adolescent development. She received her K-8 Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and MA from the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to receiving her Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara, Dr. Mireles-Rios was a middle school teacher in Berkeley Unified School District for numerous years. Dr. Mireles-Rios's research examines the educational expectations of Latina/o students and the connection to parent and teacher support. She studies Latina/o adolescents' perceptions of teacher support; the role of maternal expectations on education communication; and student trajectories into higher education. She looks at the inequalities in educational outcomes to understand the processes that can potentially increase Latina/o high school student college enrollment and retention rates. Dr. Mireles-Rios also studies teacher well-being and the role of administrators in developing teacher self-efficacy.

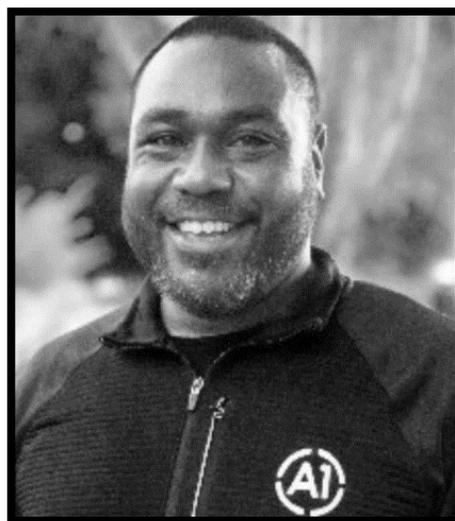


Samantha Groess is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley. She is currently a high school English teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area. Mrs. Groess has taught at the middle and high school levels for over two decades and also spent years as an instructional coach for TK-12 teachers and administrators. She continues to share her expertise by serving as a mentor to preservice teachers, and also contributed the article Unconditional Belief to the original From Risk to Promise, providing concrete, strategies for educators to project belief onto students and reminding them to treat every day as a new day. Mrs. Groess has created, facilitated, and delivered professional learning on educational technology and standards-based instruction to educators across California. Recently, Mrs. Groess was named Teacher of the Year for her school district.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Love Jefferson is a Los Angeles native whose athletic ability led him to be awarded an athletic scholarship to Washington State University. As a first generation college student, Love earned himself a higher education, Pac 10 Championship, Rose Bowl appearance, and went off to have a taste of the NFL starting his journey with the Chicago Bears. For over 15 years, his passion and true position has been in the field of building individuals and building teams through personal growth learning experiences and workshops. Love has, and currently works with organizations such as YouthBuild USA, California Conservation Corp, SpaceX, Netflix, Snap Inc., a number of California Law Enforcement departments and a wide range of non-profit organizations. His training focus is geared towards supporting young professionals, educators and parents looking to increase self-worth, sense of belonging, and self-belief in achieving success. He is a husband and father to 3 children with a message rooted in Safety, Support, and Sense of Belonging – “Look for it, or create it.”



Dr. Natalie Mejia is a Mexican-American raised in Northeast Los Angeles. She has dedicated over a decade of service to influence the landscape and trajectory of underserved students and families across the country. Her vision is anchored in the belief that all students deserve to access a culturally and linguistically sustaining education that loves them. Dr. Mejia has coached, evaluated, and trained 300+ educators across multiple grade levels, content areas, and school models all over the nation.

