

October/Month Zero Year 1

WEEK 1

- 1.** This school year, our class will be taking about 15 minutes each morning to discuss a variety of topics. Some of these topics will be easy to answer and others will make you think deeply. These discussions are going to help us explore our own thoughts and feelings, get to know our class, practice our skills for discussion and respectful debate, as well as several other skills that are crucial for purposeful living. We will talk more about these skills later this month, but this week we will start by going over classroom norms for our discussions and engaging in some get-to-know-you questions to warm us up for our Morning Classroom Conversation topics for this school year. Let's discuss some questions I have for you about our MCCs and feel free to ask any of your own questions as well!
 - a.** Why do you think having regular classroom discussions in ___ grade is important?
 - b.** How do conversations help you live a purposeful life at school?
 - c.** What might be some challenges we will face as a class with these discussions? How can we address these challenges together?
 - d.** What kinds of questions are you anticipating?
- 2.** Yesterday, we discussed a little bit about what our morning will be like with the Morning Classroom Conversations. This month, we will be starting off by going over classroom norms and practicing our conversations within the classroom with some get-to-know you questions. Today, we will start by discussing some rules and expectations for these discussions (the norms below are suggestions that can be adjusted to fit your classroom, added to your existing norms, etc.):
 - a.** Wait to share your thoughts or answers until it is your turn to speak.
 - b.** Respect others turn to talk by listening quietly and keeping your answers to a reasonable length.
 - c.** Be accepting to others' thoughts and ideas—you may share your disagreements thoughtfully and respectfully, when appropriate and/or if time permits.
 - d.** Use respectful and school-appropriate language.
 - e.** If you have something to share and did not get to, you may share it with me after class, write it down for our MCC box or submit an MCC Google form.
- 3.** Having "norms" lets everyone know what is expected/unexpected during MCCs, and how we can proceed in a way that allows everyone to be heard. In order to practice, today we are going to play a game of this or that. I want you to put your thumb up/down based on the option that you prefer and after we all signal for that item, we can take turns telling why we picked what we did. We will have a chance to share after each item.

- (put your thumb up if you prefer...) Winter or (your thumb down if you prefer...) summer
 - Beach or mountains
 - iPhone or Android
4. One thing you don't know about me is...
 5. What is the easiest way for someone else to make you smile?

WEEK 2

1. This week we are going to practice a few more conversation starters. We will try to do one every day, as a practice for the structure of our MCC. Today we are going to do another round of this or that. I want you to put your thumb up if you prefer ... and thumb down if you prefer...
 - a. Dogs or cats
 - b. Sunrise or sunset
 - c. Ice cream or cookies
2. Have you ever accidentally fallen asleep in a public place? Where and why?
3. If you could give \$100 to charity, which one would you choose? Why?
4. What do you think is the best way to show people that you care about them?
5. If you could start a restaurant based around one main ingredient, one meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner) or one food group, what would it be? Why?

WEEK 3

1. Now that we have had a chance to practice with some informal conversation starters, the next couple of weeks will introduce you to some of the skills and virtues that our MCCs will target. We will discuss a different one each day. You will have an opportunity to learn about these areas and consider how they support the development of a "Better you." This week, we will review important virtues that make us better people. Virtues are part of our character. We will focus on these:
 - (1) **Optimistic Future Mindedness;**
 - (2) **Compassionate Forgiveness and Gratitude;**
 - (3) **Responsible Diligence;**
 - (4) **Helpful Generosity;** and
 - (5) **Constructive Creativity**
 For instance, let's talk about **Optimistic Future Mindedness** thumbs up or thumbs down—or just hold up your fist if you are not sure—for this statement: It's better to see the glass as half empty than half full. Why? [Be sure to communicate the fact that people who see the glass as half full are usually happier and more successful.] That's why **Optimistic Future Mindedness**—and all of the virtues we will discuss—are virtues. They are good things to have as part of your character. Maybe not for every single thing and situation, but definitely most of the time.

2. Today, we are going to talk about **Compassionate Forgiveness and Gratitude**. Think of a time that you forgave someone using compassion. What do you think is the difference between forgiving someone with compassion, and without compassion? Are you grateful that the forgiveness happened? Why or why not? Reflecting on your past can be a very helpful way to choose gratitude and to be forgiving. Take a moment to think about people you are grateful for. (Virtue: Compassionate Gratitude and Forgiveness)
3. **Responsible Diligence** means using careful and persistent effort to take on your duty within a situation. Being a responsible person will support your development into the best version of yourself. Why do you think this is true? What responsibilities do you take on now that you hope to keep doing throughout your life? How is responsible diligence like a promise you make to yourself? (Virtue: Responsible Diligence)
4. Let's talk about **Helpful Generosity**. At times, individuals are more focused on their "selfies" than others. What does generosity mean to you? What do you do to help others? Think about small things, everyday things, in particular? How do these actions make you feel? [Be sure to discuss that when people give willingly and perform charitable acts, our bodies release several "happiness chemicals" including oxytocin to our brains. In other words, we feel good when we are able to see others feel good.]
5. Our last virtue for this week is **Constructive Creativity**, which means using your imagination in a purposeful way. When you hear the word creativity, your immediate thought might go to creativity within artistic work. Are there other ways to be creative? For instance, how might creativity impact your ability to form/sustain friendships? Who are people that you consider to be **constructively creative**? What is it about them that makes you give them that label? (Virtue: Constructive Creativity)

Wrap up of Week 3: Great job with our first set of MCC key concepts this week. Next week, we will introduce the skills we need to act on the virtues and positive purpose.

WEEK 4

1. Last week, we took some time to discuss a few different virtues that can help better ourselves. Who wants to remind the class in their own words what a virtue is? Who remembers the virtues we covered? This week, we will be discussing skills that will help us act on these virtues. These skills are **Communication, Empathy, Emotional Regulation, and Social Problem Solving**. We will also be discussing another virtue that can apply to everything we do, **Positive Purpose**. For those who experienced MCCs last year, can anyone recall what these skills mean or what positive purpose means? Let's start with that. **Positive Purpose** incorporates all of our other virtues, as well as all of the skills we will be discussing this week. It is so important for adolescents to develop a sense of purpose, or a deeper meaning of how each of you can make the world—your community, your family, your school, and yourself—better and to be able to communicate that clearly to others. That's the reason you want to act with virtues and use your skills. One way to do that, is to think about yourself and how you want to be a better communicator of your purpose. Imagine at the end of the school year, the Principal

will call you up to the front of the auditorium, with all the other students there, and tell everyone what **Positive Purpose** for yourself that you have accomplished. What would you want the Principal to say? If we address areas in which we hope to improve, we are more likely to develop a better version of ourselves. What is an area that you are working on to become the best version of yourself? What is the first step you can take to making these improvements?

2. Today, we have a discussion topic that builds on communication, which we talked about yesterday: **Empathy**. Who can define **empathy** for me in their own words (empathy is the understanding and sharing of another's feelings, often accompanied by a desire to help them)? How is **empathy** different from sympathy? How can **empathy** improve how we communicate?
3. Another skill that is important to be able to act on our virtues is **Emotional Regulation**. This refers to the ability to be aware of and handle our strong emotions so that they don't take over our actions. We all experience a wide range of emotions, sometimes feeling several at one time. Give an example of a time you felt a powerful emotion and you were able to maintain control over it. How did you do it? Did you find a better way to express those feelings? [Be sure to label these as examples of different ways to regulate emotions—like breathing, counting, leaving the situation, distracting oneself, etc.]
4. Today we will be discussing our final skill, **Social Problem Solving**. Social situations can be complicated at times. It's helpful to have a strategy for thinking it through and trying to solve it. What are some common problems you experience in social situations with friends and family? What are some strategies that you and/or your family/friends have used to solve a social problem? Were there other skills used for these strategies (communication, empathy, emotional regulation)? If so, which ones?
5. Everyone did a great job contributing to some very positive conversations this month, while reviewing a lot of important terms in the process! Throughout the rest of the school year, there will be a range of skills and virtues that we will work on during our MCCs. Additionally, we will have a monthly theme to help us maintain some consistency within our conversations (feel free to show a visual like Table 2.1 in Chapter 2, if you find it helpful).