

## The Imagine Project: Elementary Lesson Plan Grades 2-6

(Grade 6 may want to use the journal for teens)

Below is a sample lesson plan for Grades 2-6 to be used with the Kids Journal. Grades 2-3 teachers may want to use the journal that goes along with *Byron the Caterpillar Who Loved to Imagine* book. Grade 6 may want to use the teen journal and lesson plan. The Imagine Project can be done in a variety of ways from 1 to 2 hours, to any number of days, even weekly. Schools have also taken an entire day dedicated to The Imagine Project. Research on expressive writing recommends that students should free write 3-4 times with 1-7 day intervals. You can begin using the 7-step standardized tool and then just have the students write their Imagine stories in the free writing times after if you'd like (with or without the 7-steps). You are free to use the project however it fits best into your classroom, school, or organization. If you are not comfortable leading the program, I am happy to come in and lead it for you. Please contact me with any questions at [Dianne@theimagineproject.com](mailto:Dianne@theimagineproject.com). Thank you.

### Objective

Affective awareness with writing and reading skills. These lessons are designed to foster student reflection and encourage hopeful thinking! If your school bases their curriculum on Common Core standards, this lesson plan meets speaking, listening, reading and writing core standards. Below are suggestions for lessons related to each section of the journal. Use these to scaffold and support the introduction of each section in the *Imagine Journal for Kids™*. These are just a foundation for you, feel free to be creative and take them even further.

### Time

Lessons can be done in 20-30 minute daily sections, or you can do more sections together and it becomes a 60-90 lesson. Completing the journal process can take anywhere from 1 day to 1 month. It can be extended even longer and repeated throughout the year. Once the students understand the process, teachers can use the Imagine Journal as a tool for kids who are struggling with an emotional challenge in their lives.

### Materials:

1. Printed version of the Imagine Journal For Kids
2. Teacher-created tools such as a Gratitude Tree or Gratitude Bucket (kids place a leaf on a classroom tree each day, on which is written something they are grateful for in their lives)

3. Sample writings/drawings from using the journal previously. It's powerful for the teacher to write their own story with the kids, showing them examples of their own personal resilience and grit.
4. The Grit Game! (see page 5)
5. Pencils, colored pencils or pens

## **Lesson:**

### **Step 1: CELEBRATE**

This section is important for resourcing kids, reminding them about what they can be proud of and what is going right in their lives. You can begin by reading the suggested books below or have the students do a simple task. After the task is complete, compliment student's efforts, behavior, and/or attitude (over exaggerate this, so it is obvious).

- Ask, "How did you feel when I was complimenting you?"
- Talk more about what they are proud of and/or feel good about in their lives. They can even act out some happy things in their lives. **Examples:**
  - The goal I made at soccer
  - How hard I work
  - My family
  - My new badge from Boy Scouts
  - My reading
  - My dog or cat

Allow students more time to draw a picture or write something more after they've heard others' ideas. You can also use this time to practice a writing structure or allow for free write/draw.

#### ***Pride/Celebrate Read-Aloud Ideas:***

- Howay for Wodney Wat, by Helen Lester
- Chrysanthemum, by Kevin Henkes
- Ruby Bridges, by Robert Coles

### **Step 2: REFLECT**

Talk about how difficult things happen in life sometimes. They happen to everyone (you can give some examples of things that have happened to you, like moving or friends changing) but, no matter what, we can make it through these things. Writing and talking about the hard times is a good way to make us feel better.

#### **Examples:**

- Moving
- Losing a pet
- Parents getting a divorce

- Being bullied
  - Losing a friend
- Reflect Read-Aloud Ideas (can be used in the Imagine step as well):
- Big Al, by Andrew Clements
  - Thank You Mr. Falker, by Patricia Polacco
  - My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother, by Patricia Polacco
  - Cinderella

Have students go to page 2 of their journal and write or draw something that has been difficult in their life. Some students can't come up with anything or just can't write it down. One-on-one help will be encouraging, and/or they can always write about someone else they know or someone in history that has been through a difficult time.

### **Step 3: IMAGINE**

Begin by defining and talking about resilience and grit. Give them examples of people in history that have overcome difficult times, such as Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, or Malala Yousafzai. Introduce The Grit Game! (see below). Do it once or twice with them, to show them what grit feels like.

Now it's time to have the kids write Imagine statements around their difficult experience. This helps them express any emotion they might still be feeling about the difficult time. Once they write it down (as an expressive writing tool) they are able to let go of their feelings and dream of new possibilities in the future. Read examples from the journal or previous students.

#### **Examples:**

- Imagine... coming home from school and finding out your dog is sick.
- Imagine... your parents telling you that you are moving.
- Imagine... only getting to see your dad on the weekends.
- Imagine... your big brother leaves for college and you can only talk with him on the phone.
- Imagine... a friend is being mean to you.

There are many stories in the book, *The Imagine Project: Empowering Kids to Rise Above Drama, Trauma, and Stress* (Yampa Valley Publishing, 2018) if you'd like to read the kids more stories or refer to the videos on the Read Stories page on [www.theimagineproject.org](http://www.theimagineproject.org).

Have the students open to page 3 and begin writing their own Imagine stories. Give them a good 15-20 minutes to do this. Grammar and sentence structure can come later if you are comfortable with waiting. Have them begin by speaking from their heart. If someone doesn't have anything to write about, you can suggest to them they write about someone they know {friends or family}, a celebrity or even someone in history that has overcome obstacles.

If you feel comfortable with kids sharing, this is a powerful time for kids to stand up and read their Imagine statements to the class. It's very healing for the reader to make these statements out loud, and it's powerful for the other kids to hear someone else has gone through something challenging and made it through. Have the other children say a positive word or statement to the child reading about how they felt or what they saw when they heard the student's story; i.e., brave, courage, etc.

Another great time to play The Grit Game! (See below. You can even play it before, during and after they write their Imagines.) You can also play with balloons or a fun game you like to lighten up the room a bit.

**\*\*Transitioning the students from negative to positive:** After writing and reading their stories, the students will feel a bit down and the room will feel heavy. Sometimes the kids have a hard time transitioning to the positive. This is a great exercise to get them thinking positively.

On the top of the board write *Your Story*. Just below to the left draw a box. Ask them some words that describe how they feel after writing their stories: sad, angry, guilty, shame, etc. Write those words in the box. Explain that their stories are like anchors keeping them in those negative feelings (you can draw an anchor below the negative box). Once they've said as many words as you feel is adequate, put an X over the box and say, "We don't want these stories anymore!"

On the right side of the first box (under *Your Story*) draw another box. In this box ask the kids, "If you don't want these negative emotions, what do you want instead?" Put positive feelings, etc. in the box on the right: happy, joy, brave, success, etc. Then draw a picture of balloons above or to the side of the box on the right. Tell the students, "If you want to spend more time in the positive box you have to have something to strive for, a dream you want do so badly you will navigate the ups and downs in life."

The lesson is about showing the kids they have to have a dream to work towards. If you have a copy of the book, *The Imagine Project: Stories of Courage, Hope and Love* you can give them examples of what some of those in the book wanted in life: Education, family, to be the best at something, helping others, etc. If they focus on their dreams they will spend more time in the positive box. If they focus on their story, they will spend more time in the negative box.

#### **Step 4: DREAM/GOALS**

Now that kids have talked about things that they are proud of and challenged with, they get the opportunity to dream about new possibilities in their lives. Begin by talking about the more typical things kids dream about; i.e., going to college, having a family, being a famous athlete. Next you can expand on bigger ideas for kids to think about—a more global contribution to the world.

Questions for kids: “If you would change anything in your life, what would it be?” “How do you think you could make a difference in the world?” “If you ruled the world, what would you do differently?”

Examples of answers:

- Finding a cure for diabetes (actually said by a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader)
- Giving water to people in other countries who don’t have clean water
- Feeding hungry children

Have the students go to page 6 in the journal and write or draw their Imagine dreams. Class discussion before or after is recommended. Suggest having each child come up with at least one more global idea as well as their own. Make a class list or circle map of ideas.

**Dream Read-Aloud Ideas:**

- If Kids Ruled the World, by Linda Bailey
- Dream Big, by Deloris Jordan
- Dream Catcher, by Ryan Adkins
- Sofia’s Dream, by Land Wilson

**Step 5: I AM, I CAN, I WILL**

It’s time to anchor the students Imagine dreams into their awareness. Have the kids transform their imagine dreams they wrote in step 4 into I statements. When they have done this, have each student read one set out loud. Make sure they say it like they mean it. Tell the rest of the class to clap when they believe the student reading! This is a great way to get the students believing in themselves and each other.

**Examples:**

*I am smart enough to get good grades!*

*I can study harder at school!*

*I will get better grades in class!*

**Fun Exercise:** This is a fun exercise to show the students how their mind/thinking affects what they can do in life. Have them stand up and while facing forward hold their right arm up and out to the side. While twisting back have them reach their arm back as far as they can twist and have them remember a mark on the wall that showed them how far they went. Bring their arm back to their side. Now have them close their eyes and visualize doing the same thing but in their minds they can move their arm a foot further than before. Now have them open their eyes and have them twist back again—if they follow directions they will always be able to move their arm a foot further!! A true example of how the mind dictates what’s possible.

**Step 6: DO!**

Discuss how accomplishing our dreams requires our working every day toward them. Give examples for kids to understand steps they need to do to reach their

dreams. Create a class list/circle board of examples—speaking them out loud gets kids excited about new possibilities and working toward their dreams.

**Examples:**

- Study every day
- Practice hard
- Read more
- Save your money, have a lemonade stand to raise money for others

Have students go to page 7 in the journal and write or draw 3 things they need to do to make their dreams happen. Class sharing is recommended, getting kids thoughtful and excited about new possibilities.

**Do! Read-Aloud Ideas:**

- Fall Harvests, by Martha E. H. Rustad
- Little Kunoichi The Ninja Girl, by Sanae Ishida
- The Little Engine That Could, by Watty Piper
- The Carrot Seed, by Ruth Knaus

**Step 7: 30 DAY IMAGINE, GRATITUDE, AND KINDNESS CHALLENGE**

A great deal has been researched and written about the importance of setting intentions and goals on a daily basis. Use this step to promote daily goal setting and imagining new possibilities in a student's life.

Research also shows that gratitude is directly related to happiness. Teaching kids daily gratitude is an important part of finding a positive perspective and developing resilience. Post/Display words Gratitude/Grateful: have a student read them, and ask them to define.

Encouraging daily acts of kindness is also a great way to create more compassion in the world. Challenge the kids to write down 3 things they are grateful for and do one act of kindness every day for 30 days.

Read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein: "What was the boy grateful for?" "What was the tree grateful for?" Discuss gratitude, making sure the kids understand its meaning.

**Gratitude Read-Aloud Ideas:**

- Today I am Grateful, by Lorraine Miller
- The Blessings Jar, by Colleen Coble
- Gratitude Soup, by Olivia Rosewood
- The Thankful Book, by Todd Parr

Have students draw/write what they are grateful/thankful for in life. Have them speak these out loud. Create a class poster/list/circle map of student ideas. Create a gratitude tree in the classroom to use daily.

### **The Grit Game!**

The Grit Game! is based on the research and work of Jane McGonigal. There are four areas of life every person needs to embrace daily to create resilience and grit: physical, mental, emotional and social connection. Here is a game you can do with the kids to keep them moving, teach them resilience techniques, and have fun!

1. Physical movement: Jump up and down, a couple of jumping jacks, or if they are sitting have them raise their arms and make a fist a few times or clap 10 times.
2. Mental stimulation: Have students snap their fingers while counting backwards from a number.
3. Emotional: Show photos of baby animals. Have them say, “Aw” loudly when you put each photo on the screen so they have fun and really connect with their hearts.
4. Social: Have the kids shake someone’s hand (demonstrate) while looking into the other person’s eyes—do this for 6 seconds.

Kids love The Grit Game!

I hope you enjoy using The Imagine Project Kids Journal. This document is continually updated and expanded, and we welcome any ideas, suggestions, and/or feedback. Feel free to contact Dianne at [Dianne@theimagineproject.com](mailto:Dianne@theimagineproject.com). Thank you!

\*Thank you to Sam Alexander and Amy Ford for their help creating this document.

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