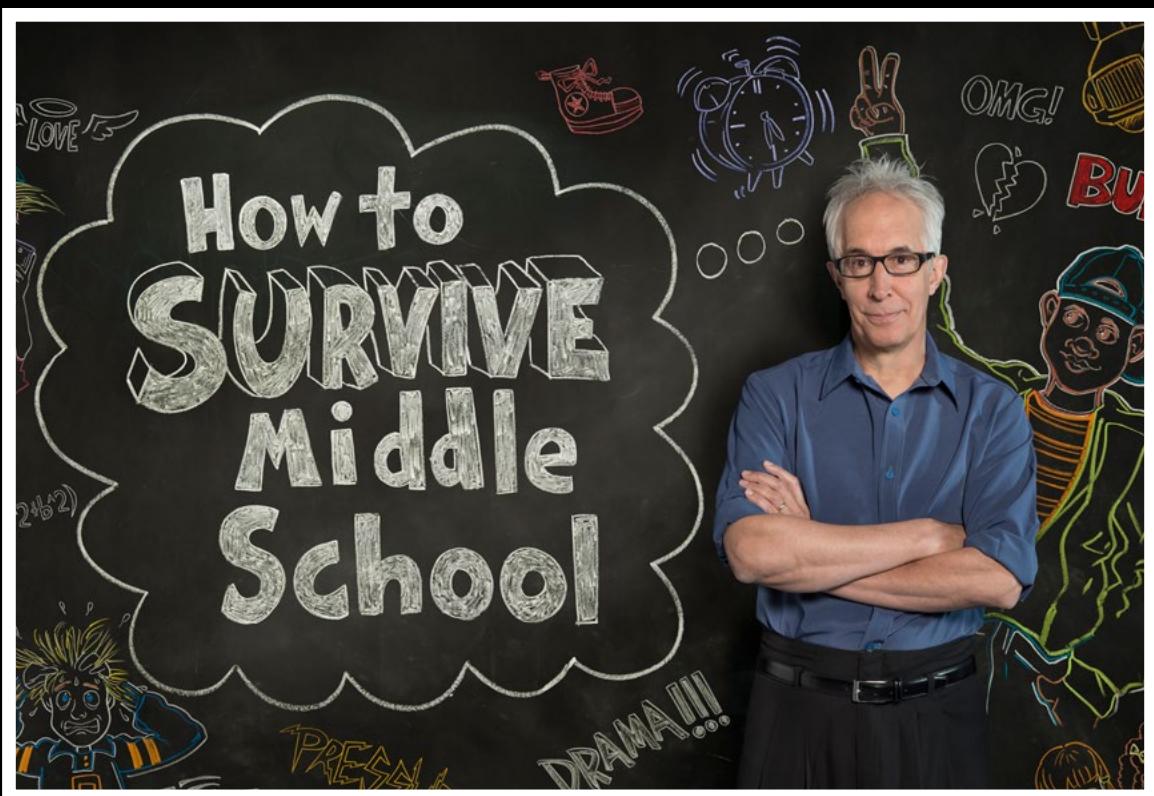


2025-2026

Discovery Series RESOURCE GUIDE



DAYTON LIVE

Your Home for Arts,
Culture & Entertainment

**Friday, Feb. 19, 2026
9:30 & 11:30 a.m.
Victoria Theatre**

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Discovery Series at Dayton Live. We are very excited to be your education partner in providing professional arts experiences to you and your students!

Comedian Robert Post barely survived Middle School. Struggling because of various learning disabilities, he found that making people laugh saved him. In this brand new multimedia performance, kids talk to kids in a compelling, funny and educational show. Dealing with real issues affecting students today including social media, testing, bullying and peer pressure, these video testimonials by kids and their advocates (along with a generous dose of Post's signature humor) is sure to resonate with school and public audiences alike.

(RobertPost.org)

The information and activities in this guide have been carefully crafted to help you and your students explore the many ways a live theatre experience can create endless learning opportunities. Grade level icons will help you determine which activities are good for your students, too. Don't forget to take advantage of the local resources listed to extend the play-going experience and make even more curricular connections for you and your students.

Thank you again, and welcome!



The Education & Engagement Team

Curriculum Connection

Grades 5-9

You will find these icons listed in the resource guide next to the activities that indicate curricular connections. Teachers and parents are encouraged to adapt all of the activities included in an appropriate way for your students' age and abilities. **HOW TO SURVIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL** fulfills the following Ohio State Standards and Benchmarks for 5th through 9th grades:



Learning Standards Related to HOW TO SURVIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL

SEL: A1.2.b, A1.3.b, A1.1.c, A1.2.c, A1.3.c, A1.1d, A1.3.d; A2.1.c, A2.2.c, A2.1.d, A2.2.d; A3. 1.b, A3. 2.b, A3. 3.b, A3. 1.c, A3. 3.c, A3. 1.d, A3. 3.d; B1. 1.c, B1. 1.d, B2. 1.b, B2. 2.b, B2. 1.c, B2. 2.c, B3. 1.b, B3. 1.c; C1. 1.b, C1. 2.b, C1. 1.c, C1. 2.c, C1. 3.d, C2. 1.b; D1. 1.b, D1. 3.b, D2. 1.b, D2. 2.b, D2. 3.b, D2. 1.c, D2. 2.c, D2. 3.c, D2. 1.d, D2. 3.d; E2. 1.b, E2. 2.b, E2. 3.b, E2. 1.c, E2. 2.d

HEALTH: S2.1.8, S2.2.8, S2.3.8, S2.7.8, S2.8.8, S2.9.9, S4.1.8, S4.2.8, S4.6.8

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Pre-Show Conversation Starters



Get excited for your trip to the Victoria Theatre by checking out this video!

- 1 Pickle Jean, our Audience Etiquette Monitor, helped us learn about BRAVO. Do you remember what each letter stands for?
- 2 Based on this video, what are some ways you can be the best audience member you can be?
- 3 How can you as an audience member help the performers onstage do the best job they can for you?
- 4 Is this your first visit to a theatre? If so, what are you most looking forward to?

About Robert Post

Robert Post has had a successful comedy career for over forty years. He has appeared on the Today Show doing his unique tango in his red long johns. He has also had an Emmy winning PBS special called "Robert Post—In Performance." The majority of his time is spent touring with his educational programs on topics such as social media, testing, bullying, and peer pressure. He was inspired to help students due to his childhood experience of having various learning disabilities and teachers calling attention to his behavior in class. While inspiring students to talk about tough issues that arise during their middle school years he also works teaching master classes, workshops, and directs ballets, operas, and school programs. He also runs a video series called Posts from the Road about all the people he meets and the culture they present while he travels for his career. To learn more about Robert and his comical antics, please visit <http://robertpost.org/>.



About the Show

HOW TO SURVIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL is a show that gives students a chance to use their voice to communicate their feelings about how rough it can be growing up. The themes of the show include bullying prevention, how to be positive on the internet, and everyday student pressures. The show is structured into 9 parts, and is a mix of video presentations, discussion, and performance. Post will share his experiences in middle school, stories from middle schoolers, and some of his own work. The hope is that students will leave with the knowledge that despite their differences, each of them is unique, has powerful qualities, and with a sense of hope and possibility.

Discussion Questions

Begin a conversation with your students about the show with the following prompts:

- ▶ *What are some things you are liking about middle school?*
- ▶ *What have been challenges you've had to get used to about middle school? What are activities you do when you're stressed or worried?*
- ▶ *How do you view bullying? What counts as bullying? What does it look like?*
- ▶ *What are some things someone could find stressful about middle school?*

Mindful Warm Ups

To get us all in the same mindset, we're going to start with a couple activities centered around how we feel feelings and see/express emotions.

Teachers: Ask your students what it looks like, silently, when they are – happy, sad, scared, confused, angry, (etc). As they show the emotion using their faces and body language, have them look around the room to see which peers might have similar responses. Feel free to use the emotions chart below. Then, by either making a list or chart, write down similar responses to see how everyone connects. Encourage them to put any awkwardness aside – this might feel a bit silly, but encourage them to **feel silly together!**

Discussion/Active prompts to get started:



- ▶ How might feeling happy look when you are taking a walk outside, or visiting an amazing location for the first time? Walk around the room and try to feel that emotion.
- ▶ How might feeling scared look when you are on a roller coaster? In a new place? Trying something new?
- ▶ Can you feel two emotions at the same time? What might that look or feel like to you?
- ▶ When identifying similarities amongst one another – is it okay to not (insert body language, ex. raised eyebrows) when you're feeling (insert emotion, ex. confused)? Sometimes our faces and bodies do different things to express the same emotion, **and that's okay!**

Feelings Forecast

Special thank you to Artserveatorey for inspiring this resource.

How are YOU feeling right now? Happy, excited, nervous? More than one emotion? That's okay too! Use the next page to draw a weather forecast of your feelings at this moment.

How might the weather look if you are full of excitement?

How might the weather look if you are very nervous? How would you walk through the elements? How might the weather feel on your skin? There is no right or wrong way to express or draw these feelings, **do your best!**



Feelings Forecast



I am feeling _____

I am feeling _____

Mental Health = Physical Health

Our brains deserve as much care as our bodies! Check out some of the following mindful activities on this page and the next to use whenever you need to clear your mind or reset your day. These are great for all ages!

Take 5/Mountain Breathing

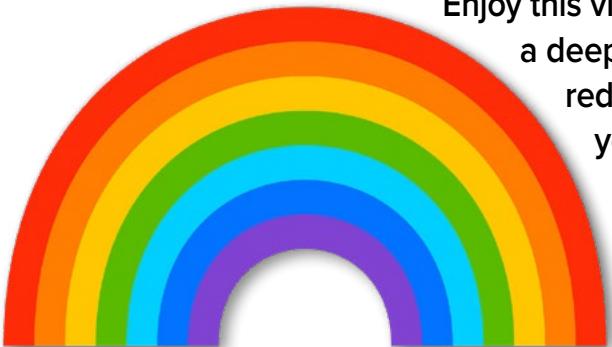
Raise your non-dominant hand, and slowly trace it with a finger from the other hand. Start with your thumb. Move the tracing finger up your thumb as you breathe in, then move the tracing finger down the other side as you breathe out. Go slowly, giving each finger the same amount of time. Do the same for all five fingers, moving at an even pace. When you're done, you will have taken five slow, evenly paced breaths.



Calming Countdown

You'll use each of your 5 senses to make yourself more mindful. Start wherever you are. First, notice 5 things that you can see in that space. Then find 4 things you can feel. Next, listen for 3 things you can hear and notice 2 things you can smell. Last, focus on 1 thing you can taste. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...

Rainbow Grounding



Enjoy this visual-and colorful-way to practice mindfulness. Start by taking a deep breath and looking around for an item around you that is red. Think about what the item is, what it does, how it may feel if you touch it or where it came from. Then take another breath and move on to the next color in the rainbow and repeat. If you can't find an object of one of the colors, move on to the next color. The colors of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This mindfulness technique can relieve stress and boost body awareness. Breathe in and tighten a group of muscles in one area of your body (like your hands) and hold it for at least 3 to 5 seconds, then relax the muscles as you breathe out. Do the same for your arms, legs, shoulders, eyes, mouth, stomach and feet giving each body part the same amount of time to tighten and release. Notice how you feel every time you release the tension in a specific muscle group. For some kids it might be helpful to pretend to help them tense their muscles; for example, pretending they are squeezing a stress ball with their hands or pressing their foot in sand.

Thanks to Dayton Children's Hospital and the On Our Sleeves Movement

Emotions Haiku

Poetry and writing are great ways to express and process strong feelings and emotions. Try to think of a specific middle school moment, (or specific recent moment), where you felt extreme excitement, disappointment, sadness, or another emotion. Now, see if you can turn this memory into art by writing a Haiku poem.

In order to write a Haiku you must follow these rules:

- 1 Follow the line and syllable structure of a Haiku. They follow a strict form: three lines, with a 5-7-5 syllable structure. ***They don't need to rhyme!***
- 2 Focus on one singular moment in time.
- 3 Describe the subject with sensory details and provide concrete images and descriptions.
- 4 ***Optional*** - end with a surprising last line.



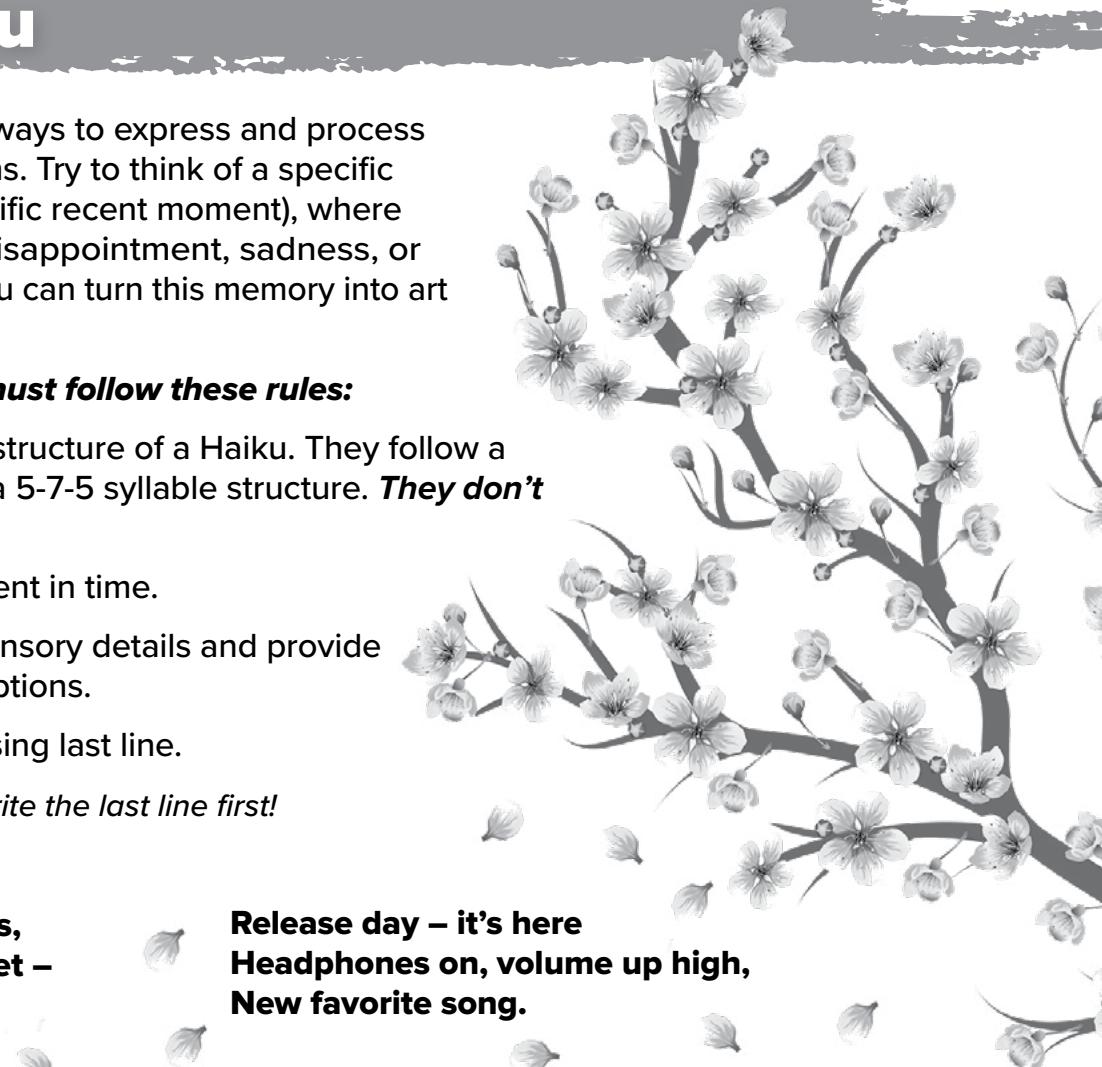
Tip: Some folks find it easier to write the last line first!

Here are a couple examples:

**Sunshine peeks through clouds,
Crunching leaves under our feet –
Crisp autumn morning.**

**Release day – it's here
Headphones on, volume up high,
New favorite song.**

Now it's your turn! Focus on one, but write as many as you wish.



Lessons & Activities from Robert Post

LESSON ACTIVITY 1: Fitting In

The following two lessons and activities are adapted from RobertPost.org and contributors to the study guide from the show. Please use them with your students of various ages at your discretion.

Background: “What can I do – what can I be – to fit in?” Whether they articulate it or not, this question makes itself felt, day after day, in the lives of many middle school kids. At school, home – and online – they often carry the burden of needing to be liked and feeling that they have to do what others want. All of this takes place when their brains are still developing to withstand the daily barrage of gossip and criticism. Robert’s show and this activity is designed to help give students the confidence to shed the armor they often bear and understand they are not alone.



***Teachers - adapt this instruction script to best meet the needs of you and your students.**

“Today, we will be talking about a common challenge middle school students share – *fitting in*. Often, students think they are the only ones feeling like they don’t belong or feel a certain way.

Please clear off your desks and take out a writing utensil and paper – number your paper 1-10. I’m going to read 10 statements. After I read each statement, place a check next to the number if you have

ever felt similarly while in [middle] school. This will be confidential; don’t put your name on your paper. At the end of the 10 statements, I will collect them and be the only one to see your paper. Once collected, I’ll tally responses. While we won’t know which of the 10 statements each person marked, we get a better idea whether you are alone in feeling this way.”

After the activity: After the students marked the number of statements they identify with, please collect the papers. To help students feel safe, walk around and collect them from each student. Then, create a chart on the board that best showcases the results to your class. This can be a list of 1-10 with tallies, or a total number of checkmarks from the class.

Statements:

- ▶ **Sometimes, I feel like I don’t fit in anywhere.**
- ▶ **Sometimes, I feel like no one gets me.**
- ▶ **I have been bullied through social media.**
- ▶ **I wish I had more friends.**
- ▶ **I wish people knew the real me.**
- ▶ **I feel like I have to pretend to fit in.**
- ▶ **Some of my classes are hard.**
- ▶ **I have been made fun of for how I look.**
- ▶ **I am scared/nervous to go to high school.**
- ▶ **I have felt angry/been upset when someone made fun of me at school.**



Debrief with students about their reactions to the data. Ask them which questions they feel middle school students tend to think are hard to answer - be careful making statements that ask a particular student what they marked. As conversations take place, remind them that they aren’t alone. The goal is for students to share their feelings with a trusted adult. <https://robertpost.org/how-to-survive-middle-school/>

Lessons & Activities from Robert Post *continued*

LESSON ACTIVITY 2: Bullying

BACKGROUND: The secondary goal of Robert's show is to open dialogue. It's revealing and helpful, for example, to watch the final video of Robert's show, when former middle school bullies, now in high school, admit that it was fear which drove them. They knew what they were doing was wrong, and they feel guilty about it now, but at the time they were terrified of being outcasts themselves.



Instructions

***Teachers - adapt this instruction script to best meet the needs of you and your students.**

Bullying is “unwanted, aggressive behavior, (verbal or physical), that involves a real or perceived power imbalance” (StopBullying.gov) It’s important to understand the definition of a bully and examples of specific behaviors. Sometimes, we use other words to define behavior and actions towards others like ‘teasing’ or ‘joking’, but the bottom line is that it’s unwanted and can still be bullying.

TEACHERS: On a board, draw three columns with the titles Verbal Bullying, Social Bullying, Physical Bullying. Ask students to take turns listing specific examples in each of the columns that they would define as a form of bullying. Here are some examples if needed:



Verbal

teasing, name-calling, inappropriate comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm



Social

leaving someone out on purpose, telling other students not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, embarrassing someone in public or on social media



Physical

hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone’s things, making mean or rude hand gestures

<https://robertpost.org/how-to-survive-middle-school/>

Lessons & Activities from Robert Post *continued*

LESSON ACTIVITY 2: Bullying *continued*

WE ALL PLAY A ROLE

It is hard to imagine, but everyone plays a role when bullying occurs. Some roles are easier to identify than others. Do you recognize any of these roles listed below?

The BULLY

All of us know what this role means, whether we are the bully or not. Too often, those who have been bullied become bullies themselves. Have you played this role?

Common Ways That People Act as Bullies

- ▶ Shoving, punching, pushing or other ways of hurting people physically.
- ▶ Leaving someone out of your group on purpose.
- ▶ Ganging up on others. This can be done without words- like staring.
- ▶ Verbal teasing or being mean using words. The most common way is to spread rumors.
- ▶ Cyber-bullying: when kids (or adults) bully others using texting, email or other technology. Some of the most common examples include sending hurtful messages, and posting pictures or untrue messages social networking sites.

The BYSTANDER

The bystander in a bullying situation is someone who is observing the bullying taking place and does nothing to stop or prevent it. Have you played this role?

The Reasoning of The Bystander

- ▶ “I’m friends with the bully.”
- ▶ “That person can take care of themselves.”
- ▶ “They must have deserved it.”
- ▶ “If I say something, I might become a victim!”
- ▶ “I don’t like that person anyway.”



The BULLIED

The Bullied may not always show the physical scars of an altercation, but the internal pain can be overwhelming. Have you played this role?

What Can You Do If You or Someone You Know Is Bullied?

- ▶ Don’t ignore the situation.
- ▶ Always tell an adult you trust.
- ▶ Keep in mind that no one deserves to be bullied.
- ▶ Never fight back, but let the bully know you are not an easy target.
- ▶ Stand up to the bully if you feel “safe enough.”
- ▶ Do not respond directly to the bully’s teasing.

The ALLY or UPSTANDER

The Ally takes on multiple roles such as resister, defender and witness. These different kinds of “allies” might be played by a friend, a family member or even a complete stranger. Have you played this role?

Characteristics of The Ally or Upstander

- ▶ Empathetic to the victim in a bullying situation.
- ▶ Intervenes in a bullying situation.
- ▶ Listens and is a friend to a victim.
- ▶ Displays the courage to move from Bystander to Ally or Upstander.
- ▶ Reports the bullying to an adult or authority figure.

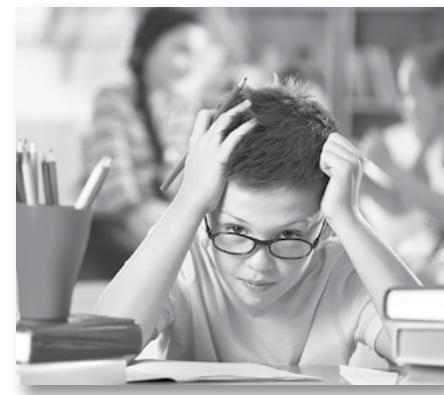
After the activity: If applicable, share your school or district’s stance and policy on bullying. Discuss how your classroom can best be of service to that policy. Remember - So, if you “see something, say something” to a trusted adult.

Lessons & Activities from Robert Post *continued*

LESSON ACTIVITY 3: Pressure & Anxiety

BACKGROUND: For middle school aged kids, pressure comes from all sides. In school, there are more serious academic demands, freedoms, and responsibilities. There's also the ever-present social tension of forming friendships, fitting in, and handling peer pressure both in person and online.

It's not surprising that kids feel anxious! Often their instinct is to mask this vulnerability and push helpers away. Robert's show, coupled with follow-up activities, seeks to break down these barriers, encouraging the students to open themselves up while supporting teachers and trusted adults in their efforts to show care and offer help.



<https://robertpost.org/how-to-survive-middle-school/>

CREATE A GAME PLAN

1 Recognize It!

Sometimes, I feel anxious when...

My body feels like this when I feel anxious:

Here are the feelings and emotions I have:

2 How To Deal With Anxiety and Pressure

When I feel this way, these are the people I can talk to:

When I feel anxious, these are ways I can help my body become calm:

When I feel anxious, these are ways I can help my mind find balance:

When I feel anxious, this is what my trusted adults can do to help me feel calm:

3 Challenge It!

When I feel anxious, is there an action I can take to help the source of my anxiety go away (*like studying if I am concerned about my grades*)?

If so, what can I do to make this action easier to accomplish? Some ideas could include breaking large tasks into smaller, achievable goals or creating a peaceful environment where it's easier to get work done.

Sometimes, anxiety tricks us into believing things that are not true. Write down a few things that ARE true that can help you feel calm when anxiety tries to trick you. *Some examples could include, "One bad grade doesn't mean I'm not smart," or "I have friends who care about me and enjoy spending time with me."*

Lessons & Activities from Robert Post *continued*

LESSON ACTIVITY 4: The View From High School

BACKGROUND: This is an enormously valuable part of Robert's show because of the reassurance it offers, and teachers can build on it to open up conversation and keep dialogue going. All of the high school students whom Robert interviewed had fresh memories of middle school; they could deeply relate to what middle school kids are going through. And every single one pointed out that life got much better in high school. High school students begin to become more comfortable with who they really are, and so the anxieties about superficial things like clothes fade. It's easier to find like-minded people and build firm friendships. People feel less "different," because differences are more accepted and seem less threatening. Even the bullies have lost their power, either because they too have grown and changed or because others simply don't have time for them.



Using the testimony of these high school students, teachers can help their kids in middle school see that things will indeed get better. Life in high school means more freedom to choose classes, more choices about extracurricular activities, stronger bonds of friendship, and above all a greater sense of being comfortable in one's own skin. This part of the program offers middle school students an authentic, compelling, and optimistic look at their own future – a future that lies very close.

***Teachers - adapt this instruction script to best meet the needs of you and your students.**



INSTRUCTIONS: "Sometimes, it's hard to look in the future to see that things can get better. When we are faced with immediate challenges, it sometimes feels difficult to see how experiences can make us better with the proper vision. Having a clear vision of the future can be an extremely important motivator to yourself and help clarify the things and goals that are important to you. Today, you will be creating your own **Vision Board** - a graphic with pictures that represent what goals you want to accomplish, how you want to feel, and what you hope to experience when you are in high school. Having a Vision Board can be a powerful way to display your goals and keep a clear view of choices you will need to make."

Depending on how much time you want to allocate to this activity, it can be done in 30 minutes or over the course of weeks. You can ask students to bring in or have magazines in which they cut out pictures. Make sure to preview the magazines for suitable pictures. Then, you just need glue, poster board, markers, and scissors.

You can also have students create their posters digitally by creating a collage from photos on the internet. While it is appropriate to do this activity online, the power of the Vision Board is to have a printed display to put in their homes. If students cannot print their completed board, we recommend using magazines or encouraging them to use their school art supplies.

Keep in mind the goal is not to create a poster for their life, job, or dream vacation. This is a short term vision, and it should help to express their feelings, attitudes, hopes, and dreams of their high school experience to make connections with the next stage in their lives.

<https://robertpost.org/how-to-survive-middle-school/>



Dear Dayton Live

Thanks for coming today! We would love to hear about your experience at the show. Use the lines and boxes below to write and/or draw about your trip.

Dear Dayton Live,

My favorite part of the show was _____

I really loved when _____

I wish that _____

Thank you for _____

My favorite part of the show was

I really loved when

I wish that

Thank you for

Email your surveys to
discovery@daytonlive.org

or mail to: Dayton Live
Attn. Discovery
138 N. Main Street
Dayton, OH 45402

Resources for Students and Adults

Resources for Students

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Create Your Best Future – written by Amy Newmark & Dr. Milton Boniuk. Simon & Schuster, 2015.

Stuntboy, In The Meantime - written by Jason Reynolds, illustrated by Raul the Third. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2021.

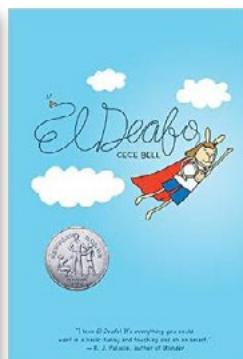
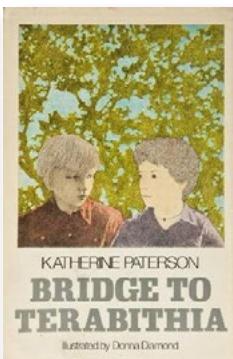
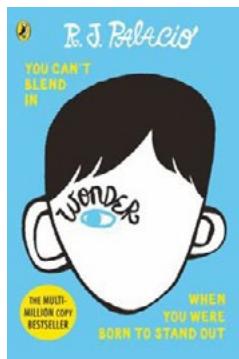
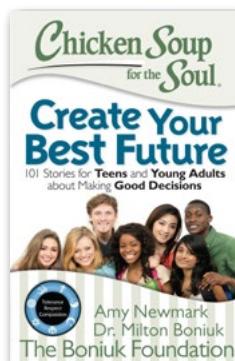
Jennifer Chan is Not Alone - written by Tae Keller. Yearling, 2023.

Wonder – written by R.J. Palacio. Random House Children's Books, 2012.

Bridge to Terabithia – written by Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Donna Diamond. Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1977

El Deafo – written & illustrated by Cece Bell. Amulet Book, 2014

Stop Bullying – <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>



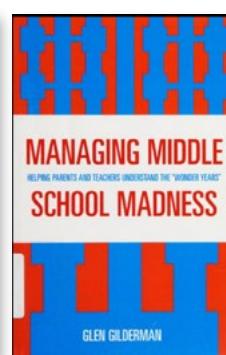
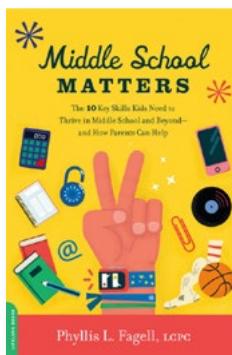
Resources for Parents & Educators

Middle School Matters: The 10 Key Skills Kids Need to Thrive in Middle School... – written by Phyllis L. Fagell. Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2019

Managing Middle School Madness: Helping Parents and Teachers Understand the 'Wonder Years' – written by Glen Gilderman, Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2007

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) - <https://casel.org/systemic-implementation/sel-with-families-care-givers/>

Student Behavior Interventions – <https://www.crisis-prevention.com/Our-Programs>



Local Resources



The ON OUR SLEEVES® Movement

For Children's Mental Health

On Our Sleeves – The movement for children's mental health. Dayton Children's has partnered with On Our Sleeves to provide resources for schools and families to promote mental health being a vital part of every child's life - <https://childrensdayton.org/onoursleeves/>

Brought To You By

DAYTON LIVE

138 North Main Street Dayton, OH 45402

DAYTON LIVE DISCOVERY

The Education and Engagement programs of Dayton Live are made possible through the support and commitment of the following sponsors and donors whose generosity have opened the door of live theatre to the students of the Miami Valley:

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DAYTON LIVE CREATIVE ACADEMY

Interested in learning more about theatre?!

The Dayton Live Creative Academy offers a variety of professionally curated performing arts experiences for all ages. From classes for beginners, and summer camps for the adventurous, to Broadway after-school intensives for the curious, there are year-round activities for everyone in the family. Join us for fun, for adventure, and to develop your own creativity. This is performing arts education for **EVERYONE!**

EDUCATION AND BROADWAY PROGRAMS

Broadway Camps and Intensives

Broadway Master Classes

Background on Broadway

Bagels & Broadway

<https://www.daytonlive.org/education>

Dayton Live is an ACE Qualified Education Service Provider! Find out more about ACE funds: <https://education.ohio.gov/ohioace>

Students Respond to How to Survive Middle School



“Your tricks were very cool and clever! You’re also a very funny person. The videos and your words made me feel happy. A lot of people have been bullied or failed but there is someone who is there for them. ”

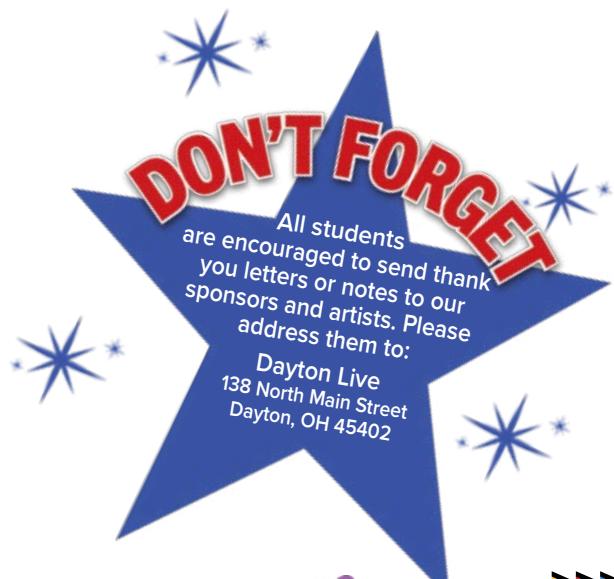
6th grade, Innes Middle School

“Thank you so much for showing me how to survive middle school. I feel like I can find a way to come out of my shell and find success. You gave me a memory I will never forget. I’m so grateful I went to the play. ”

7th grade, Dominion Middle School

“Your show was outstanding and really entertained me. I have gotten a lot of inspiration from you because this year of middle school has been really hard for me. But because of what I saw it inspired me so much.

Thank you! ” 8th Grade, Columbus Adventist Academy



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