Mini Lesson by Timothy Tetz, 6th Grade Teacher, Gordon Russell Middle School

Story: “Too Perfect” By Trudy Ludwig

Rationale for selecting lesson:
In the United States, academics are important. In the United States, often times we focus intensely on grades and test scores while compromising the individual’s overall well being (emotionally, mentally, and physically).

Learning Targets:
• I can identify how to be myself; work to my potential, not to perfection.
• I can apply the information from the story “Too Perfect” to my school, home, and relationships.

Time needed to execute:
• 45 minutes

Tasks for facilitation:
• Share the vocabulary words from the text
• Read the story
• Go through the reflection questions/talking points using any/all of the strategies listed below:
  o Turn and talk with your neighbor
  o Small group discussion and share-out
  o Partner role play

Key Vocabulary Words to share w/ learners:
• Perfectionism: what one thinks he/she must do
• Excellence: what he/she can do
Summary of story “Too Perfect”:
• Maisie thinks Kayla is perfect.
• Kayla is pretty and thin.
• Kayla has cool clothes.
• Kayla gets good grades.
• Kayla’s a star on the soccer field.
• But is Kayla happy?
• The more Maisie gets to know Kayla, the more she begins to question whether being perfect is really so wonderful.

Which of the 3 morals resonates most with you? Circle it.

Moral #1:
Society perpetuates a relentless and destructive drive for perfection but an alternative option is the freedom that comes from accepting one’s self.

Moral #2:
Perfectionism isn’t a disease to be conquered rather a self-esteem in need of healing.

Moral #3:
“It is better to live your own destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else’s life with perfection.”
- Ancient Indian yogic text paraphrased by Elizabeth Gilbert, author of Eat, Pray, Love

Character analysis:
Kayla seems to the world to be... circle one.
* Arrogant         * Single-minded       * Angry (at times)

We learned that she is profoundly... circle one.
* sad             * anxious          * discouraged

Below are 6 qualities found in Maisie that do not need to be measured or graded on performance. Circle the one that you most relate to?
* Perceptive       * Engaged           * Thoughtful
* Compassionate   * Feeling           * Brave
After reading the story

Orally or in writing, answer the following discussion prompts(s):

1. When Kayla kicked the ball and missed the goal, was she right to blame Ana, her teammate? Why or why not?

2. Have you ever wanted to trade places with someone else? Why?

3. Do you think everyone has something they don't like about themselves? Explain.

4. Do you think TV shows, movies, and magazines also tell us about how girls and boys should look? Do most people look that way in real life?

5. Does being rich, smart, pretty, or handsome make a person happy? Why or why not?

Orally or in writing, answer the following statements:

1. The fear of imperfection is overwhelming. It leads, defensively, to chronic pressure to perform and to blame others who might appear to interfere with that performance.

2. Research consistently demonstrates that perfectionism can be a fellow traveler to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and disturbances in intimacy.

3. The pursuit of excellence, which can certainly involve high motivation, strenuous effort, and critical self-reflection, parts company with perfectionism when the underlying motivations are understood.

4. Perfectionists believe themselves to be conditionally acceptable.

5. A winner-take-all, you’re-either-first-or-you’re-nothing perspective and a hypercompetitive attitude lead naturally to the conclusion that you are either perfect or you are basically worthless.

6. We are quick to say what we don’t like and to offer critiques. But we are not practiced in the art of encouragement, or of simply staying what we like or appreciate about someone.
**Rank yourself from the list of coping strategies:**
A. Good at it.
B. Room for improvement.
C. Not an option.

___ 1. Accept your mistakes.  
*Invest energy in being good at things you like to do without the conviction that only perfect will suffice. And experience the relief that this attitude will bring.*

___ 2. Turn away from perfection and strive toward excellence.  
*This creates healthier & more reasonable standards that achieve a more balanced life.*

___ 3. Being kind and less critical of myself and others.  
*Nobody is perfect.*

___ 4. Allow for mistakes;  
*They’re an important part of the learning process.*

___ 5. Take pleasure in what I’m doing.  
*Enjoy the journey, not just the destination.*

___ 6. Don’t overcommit myself.  
Allow for some personal downtime.

___ 7. When I feel overwhelmed, take a break and do something else.

___ 8. Focus on my strengths & celebrate my accomplishments.

___ 9. Take a risk by trying something new; just for the fun of it.

___ 10. If I get stuck, I’m not afraid to ask for help.
**Recommended Readings:**

