

YESS INSTITUTE
presents
ROAD TO SUCCESS
the curriculum



What is the **PHILOSOPHY** behind **Road to SUCCESS?**

Students are more than test scores: YESS Institute promotes emotional intelligence and youth empowerment through supportive communities and peer leadership.

The philosophy of the *Road to Success* curriculum is to provide students the tools to nurture healthy relationships with themselves and others, and to educate, inspire, and motivate others to stand up for a social justice issue they are most passionate about. As well, students will learn how to make healthy, informed choices when confronted with marijuana, unhealthy peer influences, and their finances.

Road to Success seamlessly integrates social-emotional learning (SEL) with core academic skills and content. Lessons are aligned with Grade 10 Colorado academic standards in English/language arts, health, math, science, social studies, and visual arts.

The curriculum can be customized to meet the needs of diverse students in grades 6-12+, including English language learners, struggling readers, and gifted and talented.

SOCIAL JUSTICE + YOUTH ACTIVISM create a framework for students to cultivate empathy, compassion, and civil discourse. Topics include race, ethnicity, marginalization, gender identity, implicit bias, disability, and structural racism, among others. Lessons are designed to help us understand our own biases, preferences, and beliefs about ourselves and others so that we can build the world in which we aspire to live. As an introduction to youth activism and community organizing, *Road to Success* provides opportunities for students to educate, inspire, and motivate others to advocate for change within and beyond their communities.



VOICE + CHOICE guide the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on gratitude and metacognition. Students are challenged to define their identities, personal values and goals, who they want to be in the world, and the steps they need to take to make it happen. As well, this curriculum contains core lessons and daily rituals that reinforce emotional intelligence and positive youth development best practices.



BY THE NUMBERS

- 2+** years of instruction
- 250+** instructional hours
- 6** interdisciplinary units
- 93** individual lessons
- 19** summative project options
- 2** capstone project options

For more information, contact Carlo Kriekels, Co-Founder & Executive Director
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What MODEL was used?

Road to Success is research-informed, guided by compelling findings from several meta-analyses of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs. As well, it is based on the CASEL model for SEL, which defines 5 core competencies (domains):

1. Self Awareness
2. Self Management
3. Social Awareness
4. Relationship Skills
5. Responsible Decision Making

Each lesson contains (2) SEL domains. To best meet your needs, the curriculum provides a specialized index of individual lessons organized by domain.

UNITS

Community
Healthy Relationships
Marijuana
Wealth
The Stand Up Project
My Personal Brand



How is this curriculum accessible for both NOVICE + SEASONED educators?

Each lesson contains dialogue cues, discussion prompts, culturally responsive language, embedded literacy supports, and multiple options to customize its use with ease and flexibility.

With your guidance, student leaders are also encouraged to teach the lessons. As well, most lessons require fewer than 15 minutes to prepare.

What questions guided the SCOPE + SEQUENCE?

Who am I?

Who do I want to be in the world?

What kind of world do I want to help create?

What will it take to get there?

How will I educate, inspire, and motivate others?

Why does my voice matter?

INSTRUCTIONAL BEST PRACTICES include

- peer-led instruction
- role-play, simulations, kinesthetic games
- interactive, student-designed projects
- structured dialogue + open discussion
- independent + group research
- inclusive language + grouping structures

WHAT LIFE SKILLS ARE INCLUDED?

Students will learn how to:

- develop healthy relationships with themselves and others
- manage their time, evaluate their progress, and learn from their mistakes
- advocate for themselves and their communities
- set goals and design an action plan to accomplish them
- write a resume, apply for a job, research post-secondary options
- identify goals, wants, and needs
- save and invest for the future
- navigate situations that include marijuana use as well as other challenging behaviors



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UNIT 1

COMMUNITY

UNIT SUMMARY

Students are introduced to *Road to Success* through intensive community-building exercises.

They will:

- learn the fundamentals of emotional intelligence and the five SEL domains
- create a safe, trusting community
- practice leadership and group decision making
- consider their values and goals
- identify the people in their Spheres of Influence
- evaluate the relationship between implicit bias and structural racism

Students will be challenged to analyze their choices, why they make them, and how their choices impact themselves and others. Unit 1 contains multiple core lessons that establish a strong foundation for success throughout the curriculum.

KEY TERMS

Active listening	Goals
Advocate	Mentoring
Beliefs	Metacognition
Choice	Prejudice
Community	Relationships
Culture	Social Justice
Empathy	Teamwork
Emotional Intelligence	

BIG IDEAS

- What is my role in creating a safe community?
- What do I want my community to look, sound, feel like?
- How can I apply SEL to all areas of my life?
- How can I communicate more effectively?
- In what ways do we have control over how we respond to our circumstance?

THE DATA

According to a 2015 study at Columbia University, which evaluated six of the most prominent SEL interventions for grades K-12, the benefit-cost ratio is 11:1: there is an average return of \$11 for every \$1 invested in SEL programs.



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UNIT SUMMARY

Students will continue to deepen their understanding of emotional intelligence and personal identity as they analyze the relationships they have with themselves and others. Students will be challenged to confront their emotions, and will consider:

- what are their triggers and why they have them
- how their triggers impact their choices
- how to respond appropriately in diverse situations

They will evaluate who they are in their relationships, how they teach others how to treat them, and how to advocate for themselves and diffuse conflict when their boundaries are violated.

Multiple independent and group projects are also presented throughout the unit, as well as summative assessment options. Unit 2 is the core of the curriculum, housing most of the YESS Institute's core lessons.

KEY TERMS

Accountability	Gratitude
Ahimsa	Hot Button
Belief System	Negativity Bias
Bystander	Racism
Code-Switch	Self Awareness
Conflict Resolution	Trust
Cycle of Violence	Ubuntu
Empowering Belief	Upstander

BIG IDEAS

- What choices can I make when I feel triggered?
- How can we cultivate gratitude?
- What is self-love?
- How can we empower ourselves?
- What is the brain's negativity bias, and why do we have it?
- Why does the quality of our relationships depend on what we put into them?

WHAT THEY SAY

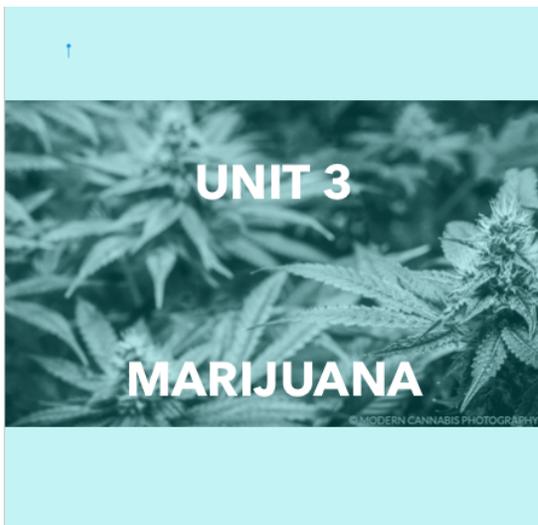
"YESS is among the most impactful, valuable, and efficient educational organizations. Offered during school hours, YESS positively impacts entire classrooms with outcome-based programming. It works, and it's scalable: mentees become mentors, proven lesson plans, and educator buy-in. I am truly inspired to have a seat at their table."

- Randy Roberts, Past President of Denver Active 2030



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UNIT SUMMARY

The objective of Unit 3 is to educate teens about the historical contexts, health and recreational risks, and medical/therapeutic benefits of marijuana to guide them toward making healthy, informed choices. Through games, small group discussions, independent research, and role playing, students will study the impacts of adolescent marijuana use on brain and body function, and social and legal consequences. They will evaluate:

- healthy alternatives to increase dopamine
- how to be an upstander to negative peer influence
- qualifying medical conditions vs. self-diagnosis

Students will be provided several resources to safely report drug use or self-harming behavior. By the end of this unit, students will empower themselves with the knowledge and skills to make choices that support their health and well-being.

KEY TERMS

Addiction	Neurotransmitter
Cannabis	Peer Influence
Consequence	Prefrontal Cortex
Dopamine	Self Discipline
Edible	Stress
Endocannabinoid	Unhealthy Risk
Healthy Risk	War on Drugs
Mandatory Minimum	

BIG IDEAS

- How does marijuana impact the brain and body?
- What can we learn about marijuana by studying historical global trends, laws, and usage?
- What are the risks associated with edibles, dabbing, hot boxing, vaping, and smoking marijuana?
- What is the difference between THC and CBD?
- How do I stay true to my personal values and make healthy choices when faced with peer pressure?
- How have communities of color been impacted by the War on Drugs?

THE DATA

According to a 2017 study published in the journal *Child Development*, which assessed 97,000+ K-12 students up to a period of 18 years post-intervention, students scored an average of 13% higher on academic performance indicators than those who did not receive SEL interventions. As well, students enrolled in SEL programs reported significantly less emotional distress and substance abuse.

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UNIT 4

WEALTH

UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, students will learn the basic principles of financial literacy. They will:

- identify their needs, wants, and life goals
- create systems to help them budget time and money
- apply cost-benefit analyses for healthy financial choices
- evaluate why having good credit is a social justice issue

As well, students will investigate their post-secondary options and will participate in several simulations designed to help students visualize their futures both with and without post-secondary education.

Students will explore the relationship between their values, emotions, and how they spend their money. Marginalization, income inequality, and access to resources will be discussed, as well as how to expand their definition of wealth beyond financial terms to include happiness, joy and freedom.

KEY TERMS

Average	Living Wage
Budget	Minimum Wage
Career	Monthly Expense
Cost of Living	Opportunity Cost
Credit	Resources
Debt	Vocation
Economic Inequality	

BIG IDEAS

- As a teen, why should I start saving and investing?
- How can I match my values and goals with a rewarding vocation or career?
- What are my post-secondary options?
- What are the qualities employers look for in job candidates?
- How can I deal with roadblocks when they get in the way of my goals?
- What is the relationship between income and level of education?

WHAT THEY SAY

"Joining YESS Institute was one of the best things that happened to me during high school. (My enemies became) my friends and most importantly I realized that there were also other people with the same family and life issues like me, and sometimes some students had it even worse. I didn't feel like an outsider anymore."
- Lincoln High School student

UNIT 5

THE STAND UP PROJECT

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UNIT SUMMARY

In this summative unit, students will design a capstone project that integrates what they learned about themselves, their world, and how to speak their truth. They will identify a social justice issue they are most passionate about to create a project that educates, inspires, and motivates others in their communities to advocate for their cause. They will:

- reflect on their growth throughout the year
- evaluate the most powerful lessons, concepts, and topics
- identify how to improve, and share what they have to offer the world
- identify issues that impact their communities

This project is the culmination of the skills and content they learned throughout Units 1-4, and integrates social justice education best-practice pedagogy.

KEY TERMS

Anti-Semitism	Gentrification
Climate Change	Oppression
Empower	Privilege
Indigenous	Refugee
Inequality	Social Justice
Islamophobia	Voting Rights
Intersectionality	
Human Trafficking	

BIG IDEAS

- What do I stand for?
- Who do I want to be in the world?
- How do I manage time to stay on schedule?
- Why is it important to collaborate with others whose ideas may be different than mine?
- How have I grown this year, and how can I improve?
- Why should I speak my truth and motivate others to speak theirs?
- What is the relationship between SEL and social justice?

THE DATA

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Education Association (NEA), among other leading agencies, believes it is *“essential that educators and school leaders receive the tools, training, and support they need to build curricula with substantive exploration of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, and to provide students with meaningful opportunities to build their capacities for compassion, empathy, and acceptance.”*
- AERA Statement on the Charleston Shootings and Racism in America, (2015).

UNIT 6

MY PERSONAL BRAND

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UNIT SUMMARY

In this optional capstone project, students will learn more about marketing and branding to create their own Personal Brand Toolkit. They will integrate what they learned about themselves during the year (including their values and goals, the most important lessons they've learned, and how they define success) to craft their own:

- personal mission and vision statements
- unique selling proposition
- brand story
- logo
- business cards

The objective is for students to reflect on who they want to be in the world and to take concrete steps to get there. This project is designed to help students feel more polished, professional, and positive about their future.

KEY TERMS

Branding
Credible
Marketing
Mission Statement
Organization
Personal Brand
Reliable
Vision Statement

BIG IDEAS

- What is marketing, and what is branding?
- How do brands create an emotional bond with the consumer? Why does this matter?
- How do I add value to other people's lives, and what do people associate with me?
- What is a personal brand?
- Why should I create my own personal brand toolkit?
- How do I stand out among the competition?
- Who am I, and what do I stand for?

WHAT THEY SAY

"YESS has impacted my life in so many different ways. When I first joined YESS I was so shy, I wouldn't talk to anyone. But as these three years have passed by not only have I gotten more confident, but I am also helping my mentee share out and be more social. She is starting to be more open to teachers and to other students. I have never been so proud! One day I hope that YESS impacts her as much as it has impacted me."

- Shaw Heights Middle School student

A WALK IN MY SHOES



OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will learn about empathy as they write stories about people who wear different shoes. The goal of this lesson is to encourage students to imagine another person's life, their struggles, their victories, and how it might feel to be this person.



BIG IDEAS

What is empathy?
What does it mean to "walk in someone else's shoes?"



OBJECTIVES

Students will define empathy and examine what it looks like in their own lives
Students will evaluate what it means to walk in someone else's shoes



TIME

50 minutes



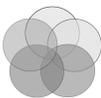
MATERIALS

- 5-7 single shoes, different sizes, styles (heels, sneakers, clogs, etc.)
- A *Walk in My Shoes* handout, (1) sample copy and (3) blank copies per student



STANDARDS

- English 1.2:** Effectively operating in small groups to accomplish a goal requires active listening
English 3.1: Literary or narrative genres feature a variety of stylistic devices to engage or entertain an audience
Health 3.1: Analyze the interrelationship of physical, mental, emotional, and social health
Health 3.3: Advocate to improve or maintain positive mental and emotional health for self / others



SEL DOMAINS

1. Self Awareness 3. Social Awareness



PREPARATION

IF THESE SHOES COULD TALK

Gather 5-7 different shoes, different sizes, styles (heels, sneakers, clogs, etc.)

Make copies of *A Walk in My Shoes* handout, (1) example copy and (3) blank copies per student



SOCIAL JUSTICE LINK

Explain the relationship between empathy and activism.



KEY TERMS

Empathy: the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

Ethnicity: shared cultural, historical, national heritage

Gender Identity: how a person labels oneself, such as man, woman, trans, nonbinary, cis/trans, genderqueer, etc.

Occupation: a person's job or profession



SCAFFOLD

Invite students to design a photojournalism project or write a full story based on the closing activity "If your shoes could talk, what would they say?" Where have your shoes been? What have the shoes seen? You can then ask students to share their stories and images with their classmates.

Take pictures of each shoe and invite students to write a more thorough story using additional specific, concrete details. They may type this story and then attach it to the picture. You may also display their final version in a public/commons areas or they may include this in their final portfolio.



NOTES

Students will rotate to (3) different stations, so they may not be able to write about each shoe. Feel free to modify as needed.

Remind students about cisgender, transgender, non binary, gender nonconforming, etc.



5 min

WARMUP

Ask students to define empathy. What does this have to do with 'walking in someone else's shoes?' Discuss. (Possible topics: *imagining wearing someone else's shoes helps us understand that person, what their life might be like, etc.*)



35 min

IF THESE SHOES COULD TALK

Unite students into small groups, keeping student pairs together if possible. Distribute *A Walk in My Shoes* handout, and place each shoe at a different station. Say, **"In small groups, you will rotate to (3) different stations, studying the shoe and imagining to whom each shoe belongs. You will create a 'persona': the person's name, gender, age, occupation, and personal story. You will have about (10) minutes at each station to write a brief story, and when we finish we will share aloud as a class. What questions do you have?"**

Begin, circulating the room for engagement and comprehension. (At each station, encourage students to pick up the shoe, study it, imagine where that shoe has been, and who wore it. The goal is for students to imagine someone else's life.)

Reconvene. Discuss. **"What did you learn about empathy while studying another person's shoes? What stories do our shoes have to tell about who we are, where we've been, our struggles, and victories?"**



5 min

CLOSING

If your shoes could talk, what would they say? Where have they been? What have they seen? What do you wish other people would experience if they walked in your shoes?



5 min

ASSESSMENT

Participation / Discussion
A Walk in My Shoes activity



A WALK IN MY SHOES

Name:

Directions: For each shoe, write a brief story about the person who wore it. Be creative, and think about peoples' lives that may differ from yours (age, gender identity, ethnicity, etc.). The first has been done for you as an example.

Shoe Description:

- blue/ white gym shoe
- sole is worn through
- mismatched laces

Name:

Mohamed Fahel

Age:

16

Gender Identity:

Cisgender Male

Ethnicity, Religion, and / or Nationality:

Muslim, Syrian

Occupation:

Student
Works at a gas station on
weekends

Background Information:

Lived in a small village, fled to the United States as a refugee at age 13; takes care of brothers and sisters while going to school full time

Story: I left Syria three years ago. Well actually, I was forced to leave, or my family and I would have been either starved or killed. I look after my brothers and sisters after school, when my parents are still at work. It's hard to manage my schoolwork and chores at home, but I am grateful to be in the country so I will do anything it takes to succeed. My family does not have much money, but we appreciate everything we have. Life is not about comparing myself to other people. I believe life is about being hopeful and happy with what we do have.

For more information, contact Carlo Kriekels, Co-Founder & Executive Director
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Shoe Description:

Name:

Age:

Gender Identity:

**Ethnicity, Religion,
and / or Nationality:**

Occupation:

Background Information:

Story:

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SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT MODEL



We build inclusive learning communities to support students on their Road to Success.



WHAT IS YESS?

YESS (Youth Empowerment Support Services) helps disengaged, disconnected, and underperforming youth in grades 6-12 stay in school, graduate, and prepare for post-secondary success.

We provide students with intensive support in a daily, credited class for an entire academic year. Community is at the heart of what we do, including mentoring, academic support, post-secondary guidance, and social emotional learning.

WHY INTEGRATE YESS INTO YOUR SCHOOL?

Peer groups directly influence adolescent behavior. YESS provides students with a safe, structured, and supportive inclusive learning community within their school to help them stay engaged. Our model connects struggling youth with their more successful peers from the same cultural zip code who have overcome similar obstacles to support them on their own road to success. Three pillars of YESS include:

Inclusive Communities: YESS reflects the values of the communities we serve. Voice and choice are at the core of our work: with the guidance of the YESS Program Manager, peer leaders help facilitate our powerful *Road to Success* curriculum.

Peer Leadership: Our YESS School Engagement model provides a leadership pipeline for primarily youth of color to positively impact school culture, and to engage within and beyond their school communities.

Post-Secondary Success: Our YESS Post-Secondary Success Navigators help youth identify their most beneficial post-secondary education and career pathways, support them during their transition from high school, and provide additional resources and support during their post-secondary path.

WHY PEER MENTORING?

Our School Engagement Model demonstrated the following successes during the 2017-18 school year:

MENTEES:

Average **6 fewer absent days**

75% increase earned credits

54% increase GPA

64% demonstrate positive changes in social-emotional learning

MENTORS:

100% college acceptance rate among those who applied

100% active post-secondary plan:

88% College

10% Trade School

2% Armed Forces

\$3.2 million awarded in scholarships

WHAT THEY SAY

"YESS is a cornerstone for the important prevention and intervention work at any school. Their academic and social-emotional support for the students most in need ... is critical for the goals of college and career readiness for ALL."

- Nicole Veltzé,
Assistant Superintendent for
Secondary Education,
Denver Public Schools

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