



Video Vignette Companion Guide

Wings for Kids

An Introduction

Soar with Wings, a program from Wings for Kids and Discovery Education, introduces students to the key pillars of social and emotional intelligence: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Skills. These pillars—or core competencies—are woven through Soar with Wings' digital classroom resources as students are introduced to key social and emotional skills in a variety of creative and interactive ways. They are also at the core of the [Words to Live By](#): a pledge that acts as the foundation for Wings for Kids and serves as a compass to help children and adults navigate life.

As classes explore and apply Soar with Wings' resources, children will develop their social and emotional skills. They will learn how to better understand their emotions, manage their behavior, and navigate interactions with others. They will also learn how to set and achieve goals, overcome obstacles, and develop healthy relationships. By using resources that incorporate academics *and* fun, students will build the social and emotional skills needed to succeed in school, be prepared for the workforce, and become positive and healthy members of society.

Educator Highlight

No two classrooms are alike, and Soar with Wings can be integrated into all classroom environments. When educators use the Soar with Wings resources, children are introduced to social and emotional learning in a way that creates a community in which each child is valued *and* given the tools to become the best version of themselves. This can be accomplished no matter where or how your class is held.

In this professional learning video, you'll meet Peter Panico, a fifth-grade teacher in Charlotte, NC who teaches in a Title 1 school with a high population of English language learners. While the needs of Peter's students are diverse, he says they are all hungry for knowledge and excited to learn.

To foster his students' love of learning, Peter centers his classroom on two main themes. Each theme contributes to his class's academic, social, and emotional growth by incorporating resources from the curriculum and Soar with Wings:

- **Theme 1:** A strong focus on relationships, which encourages students to learn through interactions with peers and adults
- **Theme 2:** Student-centered learning, which encourages students to take ownership of their own learning



A Closer Look

The goal of the following sections is to help you better understand how Peter approaches these themes in his classroom so you can reflect on your own approach to social and emotional learning and development. The insights and questions below will challenge you to consider how to incorporate these themes and resources from Soar with Wings into your own classroom culture.

Theme 1: Relationships

The strong focus on relationships in Peter's classroom supports the core competencies of relationship skills and social awareness, which are expressed in the following Words to Live By verses:

*I understand others are unique.
I want to learn more about everyone I meet.
I want to step into their shoes
and see what they are going through.
I am a friend. I support and trust.
Working together is a must.
Kind and caring I will be.
I listen to you. You listen to me.*

The first verse, focusing on social awareness, refers to one's ability to empathize with others. The second verse, focusing on relationship skills, encompasses the skills needed to navigate social situations as well as establish and maintain healthy relationships. Skills vital to healthy relationships and social awareness include the ability to communicate clearly, cooperate, collaborate, actively listen, navigate conflict, problem solve, offer help, and act as a leader.

Research shows that empathetic students are more cooperative in class, more engaged in school, kinder to their classmates, and have better relationships with their teachers. Students who are given opportunities to participate in cooperative learning—that is, learning where they must cooperate and collaborate with their peers—are more likely to report acting in helpful and kind ways towards their classmates. In addition, students who are taught social skills through classroom lessons tend to have stronger interpersonal skills and show greater enjoyment in learning.¹

Real-Life Connections

Peter fosters empathy and social and relationship skills in his classroom in a variety of ways, including the following:

- **Morning Meeting:** Every day begins with a morning meeting, which gives all students a purposeful chance to interact and share with one another. This daily tradition helps build a caring and safe classroom environment by giving students a safe space to interact, learn about each other, and build empathy and trust.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Peter explains that his students frequently participate in hands-on, project-based learning. During this type of explorative learning, students collaborate to work on a variety of assignments. As they work together on projects they are passionate about, they learn how to communicate and develop pride both in their work and for the peers with whom they're collaborating.



- Teachable Moments: Throughout the day, Peter explains, he stops and helps his students work on their collaboration abilities and relationship skills as needed. He may ask a student to think about the way he or she just addressed a peer, encourage a student to rephrase the way something was said, or ask a student to excuse him or herself to take a quick break. Responding to situations as they occur provides students with quick and relevant in-the-moment instruction and opportunities for reflection.

Reflect

Now that you've seen how Peter builds relationships in his classroom, take a moment to reflect on relationship building in your own classroom:

- What opportunities do students have to communicate and collaborate with their peers in structured and unstructured classroom settings?
- What opportunities do students have to build a relationship with you?
- During what parts of the school day could you provide additional opportunities for peer-to-peer relationship building? Student-to-teacher?
- Do you explicitly teach relationship skills? How could you integrate mini-lessons into your daily classroom routine, lessons, and activities? How could you model relationship skills throughout the school day?
- What challenges do your students face in regard to their relationships with others? What challenges do you face as you teach about, model, and build relationships in your classroom?

Resources

The following Soar with Wings resources can be used to support you and your students as you integrate relationship building into your classroom:

- Words to Live By [Pledge](#)
- Soar with Wings [Digital Lesson Bundles](#), especially *Time to Create* and *Becoming My Best Me*
- [Virtual Field Trip](#): Bringing SEL to Life: Skills for the Classroom and Beyond
- [Professional Learning Video](#), especially Segment 6: Relationship Skills
- Family Activity: [In Your Shoes](#)

Looking Forward

While your classroom may look a little different this year, building relationships is more important now than ever. Once you have reflected on relationship building and reviewed the resources that Soar with Wings has to offer, brainstorm how to make the following changes in your classroom—whether it's virtual, in-person, or a hybrid.

- What is one small change you can make now that will provide an additional opportunity for students to communicate and collaborate with each other and/or you?
- What is one change you can implement to help your students actively listen to one another? Identify a change that you can introduce and practice over the next month.



- What is one larger change that you will work toward implementing in your classroom that will help students navigate conflict and/or problem solve? Consider how you can gradually implement this change within your current class structure, as well as how you may shift it if your classroom setup changes in the future.

Theme 2: Student-Centered Learning

In a student-centered classroom like Peter's, the focus is on the students as they take an active role in their learning. Some ways in which educators can facilitate student-centered learning include promoting student engagement, having students take ownership for what they learn through cooperative learning groups, following a project-based curriculum, and encouraging learning communities through group activities like literature circles, clubs, and group shares.² When students are engaged, work together, and take responsibility for what they learn, they are more motivated to be autonomous, solve problems, and ultimately continue learning.

This student-centered approach to learning connects to the entire [Words to Live By](#) and each of the core competencies. In order for true student-centered learning to occur, students must have skills related to self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Real-Life Connections

Peter encourages student-centered learning in his classroom by paying careful attention to how each of his students learns best. From there, he creates a variety of authentic experiences—such as kinesthetic, hands-on, and tactile learning opportunities; music; project-based learning; and makerspaces—that will resonate with his class and meet the needs of his students. By offering many learning opportunities, Peter acknowledges “reaching as many types of learners as I possibly can in a fun and enjoyable environment where the students are taking ownership of their learning.” Peter’s classroom therefore shifts from a place where students simply receive knowledge to a place where students are able to choose *how* they will explore and apply the content. This results in a class full of learners who are passionate about learning and can lead with their own identity.

Reflect

There are many ways to turn your classroom into a student-centered learning environment. Now that you’ve seen how Peter applies this theme in his classroom, take a moment to reflect on student-centered learning in your own classroom, whether it is virtual or in-person:

- What opportunities already exist for students to lead their own learning? Think about *what* the students learn, as well as *how* they learn and the ways in which they can *apply* what they have learned. How could you increase, or expand upon, these opportunities?
- What opportunities exist for students with diverse interests and abilities to be engaged in their learning? How could you increase the diversity of these opportunities to make them both challenging and culturally responsive?
- A student-centered classroom is a community. How and when do students have a chance to interact and work with others throughout the school day? How can you increase these opportunities?



- A student-centered classroom allows students to share in the decision-making. Do your students have a say in classroom expectations, what they study, or their assessments? How could you change your classroom structure so students have a prominent voice?
- What challenges do your students face in regard to taking ownership of their learning? What challenges do you face in giving students this ownership?

Resources

The following Soar with Wings resources can be used to support student-centered learning:

- Words to Live By [Pledge](#)
- Soar with Wings [Digital Lesson Bundles](#), especially *Act It Out* and *Read All About It*
- [Virtual Field Trip](#): Bringing SEL to Life: Skills for the Classroom and Beyond
- [What is Wings for Kids? video](#), especially the SEL Teachable Moment Opportunities portion

Looking Forward

Making changes that shift your classroom toward student-centered learning should be a gradual process. Once you have reflected on your own approach to student-centered learning and looked through the resources that Soar with Wings has to offer, challenge yourself to consider the following:

- What is one small change you can make now to help all students be more engaged in their learning? Consider whether your classroom is currently meeting virtually or in-person and how this may affect the change you will make.
- What is one change that you can implement to help students become more independent? Try to think of a change that you can introduce and practice over the next month.
- What is one larger change that you will work toward that will enable students to collaborate with their peers while you act more as a facilitator and less as an instructor? Consider how you can gradually implement this change within your current class structure, as well as how you may shift it if your classroom setup changes in the future.