

# Have Students Create Their End-of-Year Legacy Now

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## Social and Emotional Learning



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Ask your students to imagine themselves at an assembly in June. All of their classmates, teachers, staff, even parents are there. Every student is called up to the podium at the center of the stage, and the principal reads a statement of what they accomplished in the past year.

Here's a question for your students: What would you want the principal to say?

Inviting students to write their end-of-year legacy at the start of the school year is one of the most powerful and efficient social-emotional and character development (SECD) interventions you can do for students, grades 5-12. First, you get to teach them about the concept of "legacy," and "reputation." You get to introduce them to the idea of being a person of character and deciding what kind of character they would like to have. Second, you start a conversation about character and accomplishment in the classroom, as kids can share their legacy statements and then you can raise the question, how can you support each other in accomplishing these important goals?

Next, you can review the legacy statements at the end of each grading period, which can lead to a discussion, using these questions:

- How are you doing in working toward your legacy?
- What can help you make (more, better) progress in the next marking period?

You can repeat this process throughout the school year. You can even integrate progress toward, and even selection of, the legacy into students' writing assignments. You can discuss the legacy of historical figures, as well as scientists, artists, poets, writers, people in current events, and ancestors.

Children who get into severe behavioral problems will be easier to support than they otherwise would be. You can help steer them back toward their legacies. It will also be helpful to discuss their legacies when kids are sent to detention or suspension. Conversations with them can be directed with the question, "How can we help to get you back on track?"

Of course, at the end of the year, you may have to find a way to celebrate the accomplishment of many legacies, and help students think about how to continue developing their positive legacies in the following year. But at that point, the success you (and the students) will have experienced will make this extra work quite worthwhile. Establishing and working toward legacies is an SECD strategy that, aligned with researched-based best practices, can be a valuable part of your back-to-school plans.

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