**Lesson One**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to introduce you to The SPARK Mentoring Pre-Teen program– an evidenced-based social-emotional learning program your child is participating in for the next 12 weeks. Your school chose our curriculum because of the faith they have in its capacity to positively impact your child/children and because of our vision, mission, and values.

**Vision**

Everyone everywhere realizes their personal potential and achieves amazing things!

**Mission**

To cultivate human potential and resiliency locally and globally through education, mentoring, and coaching centered on an understanding of the mind that SPARKs innate mental health.

**Values**

We believe that no one is broken.

We believe that we are all in it together.

We believe in honoring diversity and inclusion.

We believe in seeing the potential in everyone.

We believe in respect and compassion.

We believe that possibilities are infinite.

We believe in transparency and communication.

We believe that Love Wins!

Today in the first lesson, your pre-teen was introduced to us and the program. We had fun getting to know your kiddo through a beach ball game and creating their “All About Me” boards. Through this, we explored what we would like to achieve by the end of the school year and in our lifetimes. We really encouraged them to dream big. Ask them about the big dreams they shared today!

Thanks so much for reading! We know communication can be too much sometimes and we’ll try to find that balance between our desire to keep you informed and your very limited time. ☺

We invite you to find out more about us here: [https://SPARKcurriculum.org/](https://sparkcurriculum.org/)

Feel free to reach out to us for any reason at the email address: info@theSPARKinitiative.com.

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Two**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

We continued to get to know each other through our “All About Me” boards and began to explore how our experience of life is created. To do this, we played a game recalling times we had fun and times we were bored. We noticed how the same experience - a movie for example - provoked different feelings in us, which led us to conclude that the feelings are coming from us (specifically our thinking), and not actually the thing itself. If we think a movie is boring, we will feel bored. If we think a movie is exciting, we will feel excited. This is a very simple yet surprising idea to have pointed out since we are all raised to believe that it’s really the movie (and everything else) that is causing our feelings!

We also introduced the kiddos to the amazing gift that each one of us is born with - our SPARK. We use this term to refer to our common sense, wisdom, gut instinct, or intuition. One of the things our SPARK does is help us make good decisions. We explored times we listened to our SPARK and made a good choice and times we did not, which got us in trouble. Next time your pre-teen makes a good choice, you can note that they were listening to their SPARK!

Later, in the course, we will also explore how our SPARK helps us with creativity and learning.

If you’d like to learn more about the program or have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@theSPARKinitiative.com.

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Three**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

We picked up on the idea of making decisions and explored the Thought Chain - a tool we use to explain how thoughts create feelings, feelings can lead to behaviors, and behaviors have results or consequences. We have found that pointing out this process allows us to see how the chain can be broken when we are in a cycle that will lead to results, we do not want. For example, we can recognize how an angry feeling is coming from angry thinking and can lead to behaviors with negative consequences. We also talked about how thoughts pass and when they do, our feeling passes as well. Therefore, we can feel our feeling and break the chain by not acting on it, if we know the results will not be good for us.

As parents ourselves, we know very well that sometimes we get on the Thought Chain Highway and once we are feeling something, it can seem like there is no exit ramp from the behavior and consequence! We used this metaphor today in class with your kids. We also pointed out that our feelings can be like objects in the rear-view mirror - bigger than they appear. Just like we don’t have to react to every passing car (or huge semi-truck) that we see in the rear-view mirror, we don’t have to react to our big feelings either. They all pass. When they do, we can act in peace and clarity.

Feel free to reach out to us for any reason at info@theSPARKinitiative.com.

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Four**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today we did an experiment with clear cups of water, representing our natural state when our minds are clear. We then added Skittles, representing our thoughts, to the water to see what happens when thoughts come into our head. We saw how when we add more Skittles, the water turns more and more of that color, just like when we add more of the same thoughts to our head. In a sense, our minds become polluted. As long as we focus on the thoughts, they will continue to color our experience. On the other hand, when the Skittles begin to dissolve, this shows the thoughts passing and our mind naturally returns back to a clear state.

We also discussed the common experience of emotions quickly changing throughout the day, depending upon where our minds are focused. Perhaps most importantly, we emphasized that all feelings are natural and ok, just part of the rainbow of the human experience. We find that kids (and adults) find it a welcomed relief to know that regardless of what they are feeling, nothing is wrong with them.

As always, feel free to reach out to us for any reason at info@theSPARKinitiative.com

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Five**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

We picked up on the concept of our SPARK, introduced a couple of weeks ago. Through role-play, we explored that really cool phenomenon of when the answer to a question or mystery just pops into our head - like where you left your keys or that really important thing you needed to do today. That’s our SPARK talking to us, helping us navigate life.

Our SPARK gives us in the moment wisdom and information, tailored precisely to our needs at that time. Utilizing a light bulb and paper balls, we did an activity to show how we tend to cover up our SPARK with lots of unhelpful thinking. Our SPARK is still there, it just appears dimmer because of all the thinking we have covering it up. When we take a break and let the mental clutter pass, our SPARK shines bright again and gives us those a-ha moments!

At the end of the lesson, we wrote down all the things that our SPARK could help us do like study for an exam, decide whether or not to do or say something, or ask for help. Ask your kiddo what they wrote!

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Six**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today, we explored creativity and how things come into the world. We used the metaphor of seeds and plants to understand how our SPARK plants an idea in our head. If we nurture it, like a seed is nurtured with sun and water, it will grow into a new creation! This is how all human inventions have come into the world. We learned that we ALL have the capacity to receive and nurture ideas. Sometimes we don’t nurture the idea and instead nurture the thoughts that stop the idea - thoughts like I’m not creative or good enough to do that. Then, instead of a new creation being born, the idea seedling withers away. Thankfully, our SPARK is giving us new ideas all the time without any effort on our part, so our creative potential is literally endless.

Finally, we planted a real seed and, on the pot, wrote something we wanted to create. We discussed what we would have to do to make the seed (and our idea) grow. Ask your kiddo what creation they are nurturing and how they are going to bring it into the world. Maybe you can help! We also discussed how it’s ok to change our minds and start nurturing a new idea, we all have an endless supply.

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

# Lesson Seven

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today, we explored the idea of self-confidence. The kids looked through magazines and chose pictures of people they thought looked confident. We then discussed how there is no such thing as a confidence, prototype, it is just our own perceptions of people, conditioned by societal norms.

We then played the game Rolling with Confidence, where we explored how self-confidence is our natural state. We only, do not feel it, when it’s covered up by our thinking about how others view us. We talked about how this can be really hard because of how we are raised to believe our confidence is dependent upon others or how we are doing in life. However, when we can see that is just part of the noise in our mind, we can let it pass through and our natural, radiant, confident self, shines through.

To bring the point home, we talked about times when the kids were “in the zone” just doing something they loved with no thoughts of others or themselves.

They made collages to describe themselves in these moments, their true, natural, confident selves. Ask your kid what words they chose!

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Eight**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today we tackled the topic of stress and anxiety. Through different activities, the kids were able to see that feelings of stress and anxiety, come from stressful and anxious thoughts in our minds, rather than any particular situation. For example, singing in front of people is stressful for some and fun for others. The same experience can also be different for us, depending on our thinking. It could be fun to sing in front of friends but stressful in front of strangers. We watched this video to see the effect it has on us when we are carrying our anxious thoughts around - they appear to get heavier and heavier. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idV2vTytp9k.>

We also talked about how we can’t control the duration that stressful thinking stays with us. However, there is something powerful about knowing it is coming from our own minds that makes it less potent, less ominous, and less like something we need to pay a lot of attention to.

Using balloons, we demonstrate how the more air we gave them, the bigger they got. Just like our anxious thought - the more attention we give, the bigger they get. Ask your kid about their stress balloon!

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Nine**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today, we started with exploring the concept of state of mind by explaining people in different scenarios and having the kids identify their state of mind including people who were bored, frustrated, angry, peaceful, etc. Once the kids had the idea that we are always experiencing a state of mind and you can identify someone’s state of mind, we experimented with wearing different colored sunglasses which represented different states of mind (yellow = calm, blue = anxious, red = angry). We took turns acting out how the same scenario looked, according to which glasses we were wearing. For example, you are running late for school and you still have homework to do. How does this look if you are wearing the red glasses vs. the yellow glasses?

We had lots of fun noticing and acting out the different ways we communicate and react, depending on our state of mind in the moment. We discussed how state of mind changes naturally, both in ourselves and others. Knowing this, we can communicate and react better with others.

To reinforce this at home, ask your kids which color glasses or state of mind they are in when doing something.

Wishing you a great week and hope to see you next week.

Warmly,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Ten**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today in the SPARK class, we explored diversity, particularly the diversity of thoughts and opinions that we all have.

We did this by seeing American kids’ reactions to trying different snacks and candies from around the world. After watching this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQOP9i-u5zI&feature=youtu.be&list=PLWf9mugYBAAHywMB4nQ3tD_xM2ytt7vTe>,

we discussed how our preferences are different and based on thoughts and experiences. Our different thoughts about the snacks and candies aren’t right or wrong, just simply our opinions or thoughts. We then had lots of fun doing blindfolded taste tests, noting how our thoughts about liking or disliking something can change. We realized that if we think we aren’t going to like something and then like it (or vice versa), the preference is actually coming from our thinking about the food, rather than the food itself.

Finally, we played a game where we got in a circle and placed an object in the middle of our circle. We then took turns describing it. The object looked different to each of us depending upon our position in the circle. That led us to discuss how this is the case with everything in life, we are seeing it from our own position or reality, while others see it from their reality. When we know about separate realities, we can really appreciate the differences we have and not feel compelled to impose our reality on others.

When we are in disagreements with our own kids, we find we are much more effective when we remember the concept of separate realities!

Have a great week,

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Eleven**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

As we are coming to the end of our program, today we had fun playing a trivia game to review everything that we have learned. Through this game, we were able to see how much learning had taken place, and are really excited about your kids’ ability to thrive in life, utilizing this new knowledge. We also had the class take a survey as part of our ongoing improvement efforts.

Finally, we revisited our ‘All About Me’ boards from the first lesson. We looked back and reflected on our goals for the year and our lifetime in a new light, with a new understanding that what is holding us back from achieving them (if anything) is made of thought. We had a deep discussion about our inherent capacity to reach our potential when we are in touch with our own SPARK. We also talked about how we change our goals as we become more aligned with our SPARK.

Ask your kids about their goals and dream again - do you notice a difference in how achievable they seem?

Next week is the 12th lesson and the last week of our curriculum. We will be holding a simple graduation ceremony for the kids and would be delighted to see you there. Please join us at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Wishing you a great week and hoping to see you next time.

The SPARK Team

**Lesson Twelve**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today was the last week of our core curriculum with your students. We were delighted to see some of you at the graduation ceremony today and share with you the wonderful achievements of the kids.

We were also grateful for those of you who filled out our surveys, which will help us continue to improve the impact that we are having. For those who haven’t filled out the short, five-question survey and would like to help us in this endeavor, please find a link to the survey here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

We really enjoyed getting to know your wonderful children over these last weeks.

Wishing you well in your critical role in raising your little, amazing humans. We’re always here if you have questions or want to get in touch for any reason.

Warmly,

The SPARK Team

**Leadership Module: Healthy Relationships**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today we focused on the key concepts required to navigate healthy relationships - respect for diverse opinions, separate realities, and effective communication in times of conflict. First, we all looked at the same picture and came up with different stories about it. We were surprised to realize how many different versions or realities were possible, given the same picture.

We then acted out three different skits with different relationships (friends, parent/child, and teacher/student) which demonstrated what happens when we are expecting people to live our reality, not their own. We then talked about how it’s not necessary for everyone to know about separate realities to navigate disagreements when we know, we can be better communicators, friends, children, and students. This will inspire others to be better as well.

We hope that this lesson will not only help your child navigate the times when relationships get difficult but also be an inspiration for others to be their best selves.

Wishing you a great week!

The SPARK Team

**Leadership Module: Community**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today was about understanding what community means, the value of it, and how we can contribute to it. We feel this lesson is important because according to research done by the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care and the SDM, a feeling of connectedness within the community was a protective factor in reducing the risk of anxiety, depression, disruptive behavior, dropout, and substance abuse.

**In the lesson today, we watched a video with examples of kids listening to their intuition (their SPARK) to come up with ways to positively give back to their community. We loved seeing the class’ own SPARK come alive with their own community service projects. Some of the ideas included:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**We hope your child will continue to feel inspired to serve and connect with their community. Any way that you can support them in doing this will be a win, win, win (for your kids, you, and the community). ☺**

Wishing you a great week!

Until next time,

The SPARK Team

**Leadership Module: Using your SPARK to be a Good Role Model**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today in SPARK, we learned about what it means to be a positive role model, especially among our peers. We talked about how being a role model does not necessarily mean taking big action or being famous but rather being a good example for those you are around every day. Using very common scenarios for Middle School students, your child began to appreciate their own capacity to teach and help their peers, using their SPARK. For example, a group of kids are playing, and a younger sibling wants to play but the group doesn’t want to include him. In this and other scenarios, your child used their SPARK to positively influence the behavior of their peers.

Finally, your pre-teen identified some of their strengths that their peers could learn from. We then played a game where your child got to practice utilizing their strength to teach and help their peers.

We hope this lesson builds your pre-teen’s confidence to be a role model - our world sure needs them!

Wishing you a great week.

The SPARK Team

**Leadership Module - Bullying, Inside Out**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to share with you what your pre-teen explored today in the SPARK program.

Today in SPARK we talked about the root cause of bullying and how we can deal with it. Our discussion brought out how bullying is the result of being caught up in angry, frustrated, or insecure thoughts. We reviewed the Thought Chain presented earlier in the course to see how we can stop ourselves from acting out angry or insecure thoughts. We guided the class to recognize that even though we may really want to act on our angry feelings in the moment if we listen deep down to our SPARK, we will know it’s not the right choice.

We also talked about victims of bullying by going back to the concept we learned earlier regarding the dimming of our SPARK. We talked about how when we are hurt, it can feel like our SPARK - our inner strength and confidence is destroyed - but in reality, our SPARK is indestructible, no one can touch it, not even bullies. We ended the class by making anti-bullying posters to solidify the concepts we discussed. Ask your child to see their take on how to deal with bullies.

We hope this lesson and its concepts will help our kids to not engage in harmful behavior in the first place and to know that if they are bullied, there is something unbreakable and untouchable inside of them, waiting to be uncovered.

Feel free to reach out to us for any reason at info@theSPARKinitiative.com.

As always, we welcome any and all feedback.

Warmly,

The SPARK Team

**Life Skills Module: Academic Stress to Academic Success**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In our SPARK Life Skills Module today, we explored the role of thought in creating academic anxiety and how understanding and releasing that, leads to academic success. To this, we played a racing game where some kids were carrying no backpack and others were carrying heavy backpacks filled with books. Each kid had the opportunity to race with and without the backpack. The winners varied but what was always true, is that it was easier to race without the backpack on. We talked about how we always have the potential to race or do anything faster and easier without all of our thinking weighing us down. In particular, schoolwork, if we are carrying around lots of thinking about how hard it is, it can weigh us down and make it harder. Once we realize we don’t have to believe our thinking about schoolwork, it will naturally pass on its own and we can finish with more ease.

We then reflected individually on our own mental backpacks that weigh us down. Through this exercise, we hope that your kid can recognize the unhelpful thoughts that they have no obligation to pay attention to. The next time that you see them lost in unhelpful thinking causing their academic stress, remind them they can take off their mental backpack and have an easier time finishing their work!

As always, we welcome any and all feedback.

Warmly,

The SPARK Team