

## SEL Spotlight K-8

**Lesson Title:** *Heather's Story*

**Grade Level:** Elementary and Middle School

**Main Character:** Heather

**SEL Competencies:** Social Awareness, Self-management

### Introduction

Even though most students her age are sighted, Heather believes that the assumptions people make about her and others who are visually impaired is a greater difficulty. Despite what some might term as a disability Heather focuses on living a normal life just like most any other teen.

### Activity 1

Watch the video: *Heather's Story*

Watch additional support video featuring Emmy Werner

Watch additional support video featuring Mark Vrbka

### Activity 2

If you are working with a team each person should take time to reflect individually before discussing with a partner or the group.

Heather says that the most difficult thing, “is the stereotypes that some people give to blind people, that they can’t do this that they can’t do this-that’s probably the hardest thing to get around”. Think about some students you know. How would you expect them to react if a student who is differently abled were to join the classroom? What would be needed to prepare a class of non-disabled students to be accepting of a new differently abled student?

Heather clearly knows that she is different from many other students, but she does not want to focus on how she is different. Why is this a healthy attitude to have? Would a student like Heather fit into your classroom? Why or why not?

### Activity 3

Watch the videos of Mark Vrbka and Emmy Werner again.

Both of these experts discuss the importance of struggle in learning. Not only is it okay to have difficulty, but that many people learn and thrive because of struggles. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Think about the students that you work with. Whether visual impairment or not, all educators work with students who have disabilities and or significant challenges to academic progress (some students may receive formal services, others may not). Are students always expected to get an answer right the first time? Do you believe that it is important for your professional practice to find ways for students to struggle and potentially fail as a way to learn? If so, what are the things that you do that work? Why are these activities successful? What is a fair way to assess student struggle?

#### **Activity 4**

Consider your school context.

Assess your school's programming, both curricular and extracurricular, regarding the level of inclusivity for students who are differently abled. Do students with various disabilities have reasonable opportunities to participate in activities? Cite examples of successes and areas for improvement.

Does your school culture encourage students to learn from failures or difficult situations?

If one is needed, develop an action plan for making improvements on any concerns that you have.