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Activity: Character Development Project

Materials: *Dangerous Minds (My Posse Don't Do Homework)* novel, SGM Character Map, SGM Complete Episode Map, CHARACTERistics Poster, and Various Magazines

Used With: Language Learning Disabled students in grades 8 through 12

Goal: Have students create a fictional character and create an episode that included that character. The focus was to address the critical thinking skills of “characters” and how they impact the actions and reactions of characters within stories and real life.

At the completion of reading the novel, *Dangerous Minds*, a true story written by Louanne Johnson, former Marine, turned teacher, I had my students engage in a project I referred to as a Character Development Project. The novel is written in journal/diary form, and chronicles her interactions with California inner city school students as she inspires them to learn and thrive amid the many challenges they face in their daily lives.

We discussed and talked about the “characteristics” of the students highlighted within the novel. We used the CHARACTERistics Poster as a springboard for discussion about “what makes up” a character. I asked the students to cut various facial features out of magazines, and create a mosaic character.

Next, I asked the students to use the SGM Character Map to develop and create a fictional character that could have been a student of Louanne Johnsons’, but not included in the novel. I then had the students use the SGM Complete Episode Map to develop an episode that included the character they created, with our end goal being the creation of another chapter/journal entry included in the novel.

We used the complete episode maps to begin the writing process, and through editing and revising, our final product was a formal, published, written narrative at the episode level that included the original mosaic picture they had created.

This was a worthwhile activity and was enjoyed by all of my students.