

# Alexis vs. Summer Vacation

By Sarah Jamila Stevenson and Veronica Agarwal

## Book Summary

The summer before high school is supposed to be a time to reinvent yourself, but fourteen-year-old Alexis isn't sure who she wants to be. When she meets Luke and Jason, she discovers she isn't the only person who hasn't figured life out. Alexis devises a plan for the three of them to "level up" by taking charge and changing their situations for the better. She soon discovers that being assertive isn't as easy as rolling the die in her fantasy role-playing game. Alexis must learn to navigate how to be a good friend and speak up for herself or risk failing at the game called life.

It is important for young adolescents to learn how to advocate for themselves and others. Speaking confidently is a critical skill to help students feel more sure of themselves. It can also invite listeners to pay more attention to what the speaker is saying. The lesson below teaches students a few foundational skills of a confident speaker.

## Speaking Confidently: Body Posture and Eye Contact

**After students have read the book, use this mini-lesson to explore skills that will help students speak more confidently. Speaking confidently is a building block to self-advocacy. Much of communication is nonverbal, so when speakers nonverbally convey a sense of authority and confidence, listeners are more likely to trust what they have to say.**

Goal: To use body posture and eye contact as a way to encourage others to listen

SEL Skills Focus: Self-awareness (self-confidence, self-efficacy)

### Opening:

1. Introduce the lesson to the class: *Everyone in this class has important contributions to make to our conversations. I want to make sure your ideas are heard by everyone.*

### Body:

1. Use Interactive Modeling to teach the skills involved.

#### Describe what you will model and why.

*I'm going to show you how to encourage your classmates to take what you say seriously. Watch how I use my face and body when I share an observation about our science experiment.*

#### Model the behavior while students notice.

Talk about a recent science experiment. Be sure to have an upright posture, and look directly into the camera on your device so that the viewers know you are making eye contact with them from a distance. Ask students what they noticed about how you spoke to them. If needed, direct students to the key aspects of how you were speaking instead of what was being said.

#### Give students the opportunity to collaborate and practice.

Over the next several days, give students multiple opportunities to practice using appropriate body language and eye contact in partner, small-group, and whole-group conversations. (Many online platforms offer breakout rooms so that small groups can meet and then come back for whole-class learning) For example, have students:

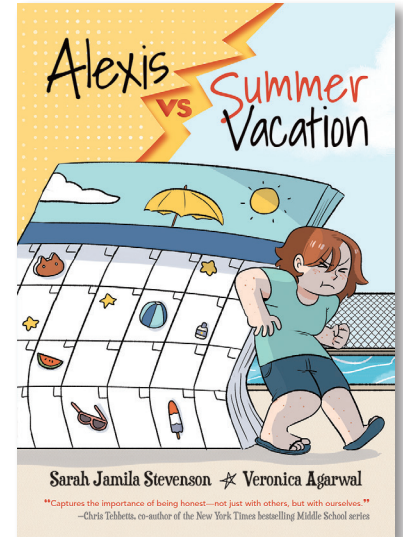
- Share a simple piece of personal information with the class during Morning Meeting or Advisory (for example, a sport they love and why)
- Explain to a small group during math how they solved a problem
- Turn and talk with a partner about a book they are reading

#### Reinforce their practice with immediate feedback.

*I saw many people with their bodies still, their shoulders back, and using eye contact. You're really learning what confident speech looks like when you are online.*

### Closing:

1. Guide students to reflect frequently on how they are doing with body posture and eye contact, asking them to highlight which aspects are coming easily to them and which are still a challenge.
2. Share an anchor chart to remind students of the key aspects you modeled.  
Use reminding language as needed (for example, *Who can remind us of how we can speak with confidence to help our partner understand us?*).



### Specifications:

176 pages

6" x 8.5"

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Color

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### This book addresses the following social and emotional learning skills:

- Shows compassion for peers who are dealing with a range of emotions
- Respects people who are different from what is typical and customary to them
- Forgives and avoids holding grudges
- Shows commitment to healthy relationships