

Chapter 2 Background

The **Merging Two Worlds** (*M2W*) curriculum, Chapter 2, continues the concept of self-assessment as a means to increase self-awareness, and self-awareness as an important skill for the student's successful reintegration into the community.

The student's observation and evaluation of himself, requires that he observe and evaluate his circumstances as well. This encourages the student to look with appreciation, beyond himself, toward his connections with his world and to look at life through a wide-angle lens, even from other points of view.

AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 2 CONTENTS / Decisions

1. Some of the topics and skills include:

- All Chapter 2 lessons include the topics: Self-talk, self-awareness, Stop and Think, resiliency, decision-making and planning.
- Topics also included are: Values, goals, choices, consequences, communication, other points of view, responsibility, critical reasoning, and priorities.

2. Self Talk

Self-Talk Litany

- To stop and think is the most important skill taught in the *M2W* curriculum. Developmentally, adolescent thinking and decision making are impulsive and non-reflective. Impulsive decisions and behavior frequently get our students into trouble.
- Each lesson in Chapter 2, practices the Self Talk litany.

The Concept of the Self-talk litany

- Self-talk is what a person says to himself. Research, experience and common sense indicate that metacognition, including self-talk, affects behavior.
 - The student is taught a prompt or a litany, "Before your choice, hear your voice say, Stop and Think, VGC." V recalls the student's values, G the goals, C the choices and consequences. (See Lesson Backgrounds.) This stop sign is used as a visual cue to think, "Stop and think, VGC."
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- The litany reminds the student to refrain from acting and gives him a chance to assess what's going on.
 - VGC reminds the student of whom he says he is and wants to be. It prompts the questions: What are my values? What are my goals? What are my choices? What consequences do I want to live and want others to live?

- These questions prompt the decision making pattern shown on the worksheet, *Make a Decision* (Lesson 2).

The Implementation of the Self-talk litany

- The student should always say the litany aloud. The teacher models the litany, orally. To become an automatic response, it must be “over learned.” To accomplish this, the litany must be practiced repeatedly over a long period of time. It doesn’t happen quickly, although it may seem easy at first. It’s not enough to teach the words and procedure only during the lesson. To be successful, the student must be required to say the litany as often as possible, until he’s comfortable with it.
- Furthermore, because the teacher plays a critical role as a model in the classroom, it’s essential that the teacher use the litany too. It’s likely that the teacher uses a variation of the litany or some other self-talk that they’ve developed that works for them. However, it’s important that the teacher models the “Stop and Think” litany for the students so as to avoid confusion.
- When a student or the group recites the litany without teacher prompts, they’ve reached the first step in making the litany an automatic part of their self-talk.

3. The decision making process.

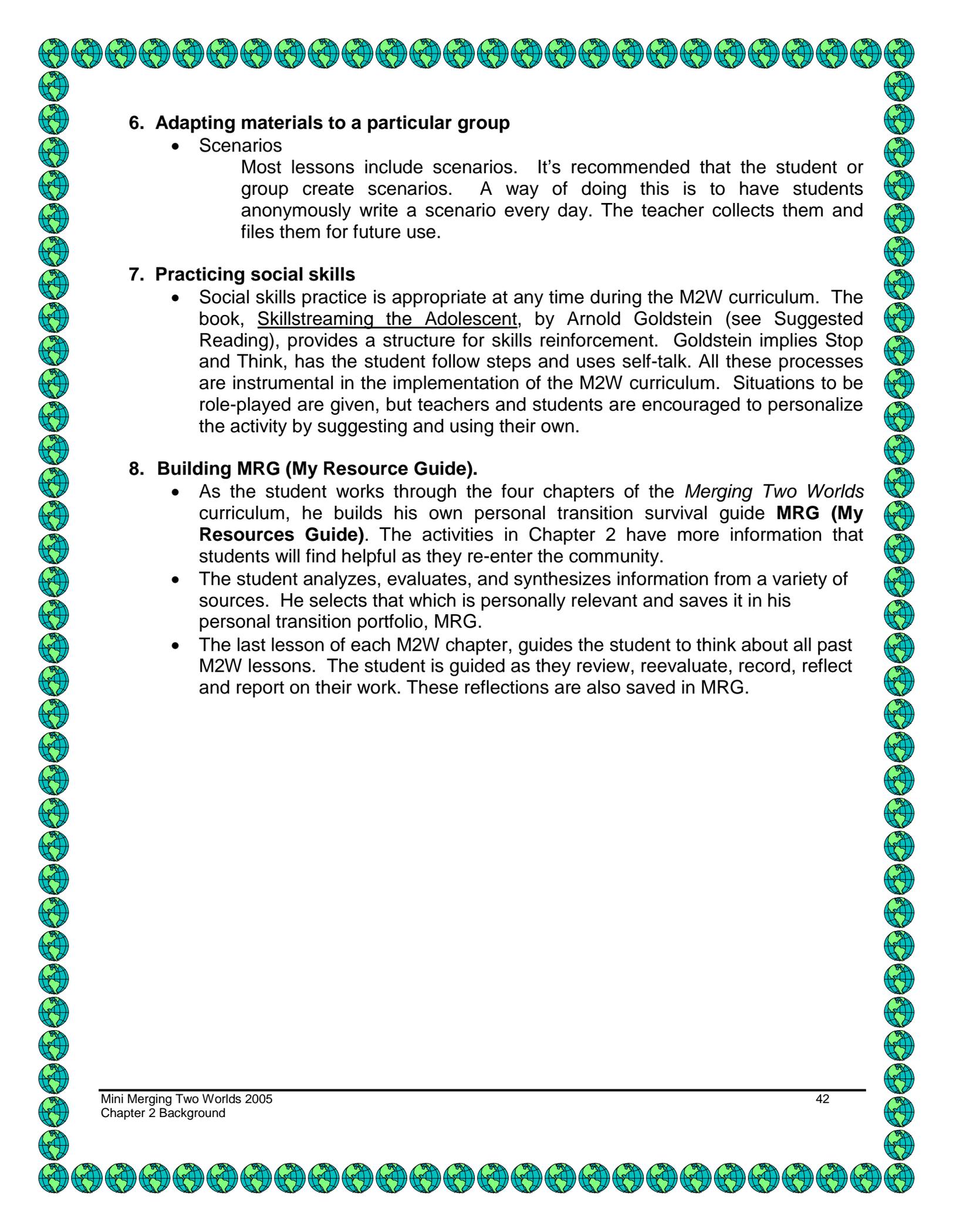
- Lesson 2 introduces the 3-Step Decide with Pride decision making process:
Step 1 Self-talk
Step 2 Gather Information
Step 3 Decide with Pride.
- Chapter 2 uses the template, or advanced organizer, *Make a Decision* (Lesson 2) to guide the student’s decision-making process. Each lesson includes information, activities and skills needed to recognize personal values, to set goals, to consider choices and consequences, then to make a reasoned decision.

4. The Nine Life Areas (Lesson 3)

- In Lesson 3, the student divides his life into Nine Life Areas:
Leisure, Spiritual, Health/Wellness,
Learning, Career, Financial,
Family, Relationships, Community
- He sets personal long and short-term goals for each Area.

5. A Career Plan

- In M2W Chapter 1, students started their *My Life Plan* and *Career Plan*. At the end of each chapter, the student is directed to reevaluate and add to the two plans.

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6. Adapting materials to a particular group

- Scenarios

Most lessons include scenarios. It's recommended that the student or group create scenarios. A way of doing this is to have students anonymously write a scenario every day. The teacher collects them and files them for future use.

7. Practicing social skills

- Social skills practice is appropriate at any time during the M2W curriculum. The book, Skillstreaming the Adolescent, by Arnold Goldstein (see Suggested Reading), provides a structure for skills reinforcement. Goldstein implies Stop and Think, has the student follow steps and uses self-talk. All these processes are instrumental in the implementation of the M2W curriculum. Situations to be role-played are given, but teachers and students are encouraged to personalize the activity by suggesting and using their own.

8. Building MRG (My Resource Guide).

- As the student works through the four chapters of the *Merging Two Worlds* curriculum, he builds his own personal transition survival guide **MRG (My Resources Guide)**. The activities in Chapter 2 have more information that students will find helpful as they re-enter the community.
- The student analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes information from a variety of sources. He selects that which is personally relevant and saves it in his personal transition portfolio, MRG.
- The last lesson of each M2W chapter, guides the student to think about all past M2W lessons. The student is guided as they review, reevaluate, record, reflect and report on their work. These reflections are also saved in MRG.