

## Lesson 9

# General Beadle: Focus!



# I. General Beadle: Focus!

## II. Brief Description of the South Dakota Feature

One of the true banes of modern existence is the seemingly constant level of interruptions in life. As we have adopted new technologies—the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, internet, social media, and the smartphone—we have culled great benefits from each but always at some amount of countervailing loss. The smartphone, combined with social media notifications, has become a source for almost constant interruption and distraction from all other aspects of life. This is true for parents, who admit their time with their children is being disrupted by such notifications, and young people as well, including students who are spending much less time with their friends. There is something highly demanding, even seductive, in that little ding or buzz that takes our attention from our current undertaking even when we don't go to the chiming message but especially when we do.

People sometimes believe they are great multi-taskers. But the research says otherwise. Each and every one of those messages causes the user to remove their attention from what they are doing and attend to the smartphone or social media app. It requires time to move to that topic, time to attend to it, and time to return to the original work. When the messages are coming in at the levels they are now reaching for students, the instructional day is often completely and constantly disrupted. No one can effectively multi-task in the current social media environment.

You, as the teacher or counselor, may wish to address that issue in this lesson, or you may wish to pursue a more general approach—the need for focus. Currently, the many distractions in the lives of young people are taking their focus away from school; away from the need to graduate; away from the need to spend time in in-person, healthy relationships (friendships) with others ; in participation in their community. The answer to this problem is to focus (no, not obsess) on the most important priorities in life, to go after those first and foremost, and not allow distractions from them to hurt their life chances, their family and friend relationships, and their mental health.

## III. Lesson Plan Steps:

### A. Anticipatory Set

Provide the students with the following anecdote:

“Today’s story begins with the Civil War. That is a bit odd because South Dakota didn’t even exist yet during the Civil War. A few people left the Dakota Territory to go fight in the war—on the Union side—but there just weren’t that many people in the state at the time who had much to do with the war.

That doesn’t mean, though, that some important South Dakotans didn’t fight in the war. A significant number of veterans from the war who came from other parts of the country moved to our area and South Dakota after the war.

One example was Major Israel Greene. He was a Marine who fought for the Confederacy. He even captured John Brown at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia during Brown’s attempt to foment a rebellion among the enslaved. That attempt was one of the final causes of the war. Greene moved to South Dakota after the war, where he farmed and raised a family. He is buried in Mitchell’s cemetery.

But a much more renowned Civil War veteran is William Henry Harrison Beadle. (Hold up his picture.) We’ll start today’s lesson by reading some material on General Beadle.”

## B. Objective and Purpose

Objective: The students will be able to provide a thumbnail sketch of the life of General Beadle.

The students will be able to state General Beadle's claim to fame: Savior of the School Lands.

The students will be able to describe the financial impact of General Beadle's work to save the school lands.

The students will be able to explain the importance of focus on General Beadle's successful saving of the school lands in South Dakota and several other states.

Purpose: The students will be able to describe the importance of focus in life and give examples of critical accomplishments and issues that require focus. They will also be able to identify sources of distraction that take away from focus and make goal attainment more difficult.

## C. Resources to be Accessed

1. Lesson 9 Reading: "General Beadle: Focus!" (see below)
2. "The Autobiography of William Beadle"

## D. Modeling

"Ok, any questions about the reading before we begin our discussion?"

As you read, General Beadle really prioritized saving the school lands in South Dakota once he could see the problem of their loss, while he was surveying the Dakota Territory. He included the issue in all of his many speeches around the state and actually wrote that part, Section VIII, of our state's Constitution, once it was ready for statehood. It became the #1 focus of his professional life and everything else in his work took a backseat to it.

Staying focused on a goal, on something you want to achieve is an incredibly important part of being successful. (Provide a personal anecdote or a story of someone you know in your school who had to prioritize their spending or the time commitment or their efforts in order to make it happen. Be sure students understand the sacrifices they had to make to do so—driving an old, run-down car; spending time away from family; working hard or studying when they would have rather been spending time with friends.) Nobody can do everything and so you have to pick and choose. You have to decide what is most important and if it is important enough, to put everything else or many things aside as you pursue it.

So, this person (the one you just told them about) and General Beadle have something in common. They focused on something they wanted to get done and through that focus were successful."

## E. Checking for Understanding/Guided Practice

"Here's what I need you to do next. Take out a sheet of paper and:

1. Make a list of some things in your life that you'd like to achieve.
2. Select the most important one. That is your focus.
3. Now list the things you need to commit to in order to achieve it.
4. OK, here's the tougher part: List the things you must put aside, the things you won't be achieving or enjoying in order to have enough time and energy and resources to focus on your priority.

Begin now."

Circulate around the room to ensure students are actually engaging in the activity. Respond to questions. When students express that “this is hard,” agree. It is hard, but most important things are hard. Nobody cares when you accomplish something easy.

Call the class back together after sufficient time has been allowed for the task. Then either ask for volunteers to share their priority, as well as steps 3 and 4 or have them partner up and share it back and forth with their partner. Correct incorrect efforts in this task and reinforce correct ones.

### F. Independent Practice

“Ok, now another task. I’m going to give you a likely priority for you now or in the future: high school graduation. It would be my fervent hope that everyone in this classroom graduates from (name of your high school). In your mind, think of some steps you are going to have to take to make that happen. What are some things you may have to not do, to set aside, to make that happen?”

### G. Student-Led Closure

“Now, turn to your partner. In that last exercise, on high school graduation, find out from your partner what you agreed on in terms of what you had to do in order to graduate. ”

Wait time.

“Were there some from your partner that surprised you? Which ones? Share those.”

Wait time.

“Now do the same with some things that you might need to set aside in order to graduate. What do you agree on? What ideas didn’t you list that they did?”

Wait time.

### H. Standards Addressed

SD Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College, Career, and Life-Ready Competencies for Every Student:

- B-LS 2. Creative approach to learning, tasks, and problem-solving.
- B-LS 7. Long- and short-term academic, career, and social-emotional goals.
- B-SMS 5. Perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals.
- B-SMS 6. Ability to identify and overcome barriers.
- B-SS 5. Ethical decision-making and social responsibility.
- B-SS 8. Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary.

Social Studies:

- 4.SS.3.B. The student explains the major historical events and cultural features of the Roman Empire, including under the rule of Octavian Caesar, the Julio-Claudian dynasty, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Justinian. (Content here is actually a bit before this era in the Roman Empire but provides critical background for it.)
- 5.SS.9.G. The student explains the Homestead Act of 1862 and the settlement of the west, especially by European immigrants and former slaves.

5.SS.9.L The student explains the role of the railroad, bonanza farming, the Black Hills gold rush, and open-range ranching on South Dakota history.

5.SS.9.M The student explains the events and figures that led to statehood for South Dakota.

6.SS.5.A. The student explains the social and political organization of the Roman Republic and the influence of its governing principles and institutions, including the rule of law, separation of powers, ideas of civic duty, and representative government.

7.SS.13.D The student tells the stories and explains the effects of major military events, figures, and common soldiers from the Civil War.

9-12.WH.3.D. The student explains the causes, warfare, strategy, outcomes and effects of the Punic Wars, including the battles of Cannae and Zama and the roles of Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal, and Scipio Africanus.

English/Language Arts:

4&5.RF.4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

6-8/9-10. RH.2 Determine the central ideas of information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.



# General Beadle

## Focus!

The American Civil War was America's most traumatic conflict. Over 620,000 American soldiers and sailors died in the 4-year conflict, more than in any other of our country's wars. In fact, as many soldiers died in that war as have been killed in all the rest of our nation's wars put together.

More than 3 million fought in the war. That means a lot of soldiers and a lot of sailors, a lot of privates and a lot of officers, generals even. One of those generals was a man named William Henry Harrison Beadle. That General was not a native South Dakotan. He was born in a log cabin in Indiana. As a young man, he decided farming, his father's occupation, was not for him, and he graduated from the University of Michigan as a civil engineer in 1861. But at the same time, the Civil War had begun, and Beadle answered President Lincoln's call for volunteers. He was enrolled in the Union Army as a first lieutenant. Through military study, a fighting spirit, and gallantry, he was quickly promoted all the way to the rank of general. In modern times, when people speak of him, they always call him General Beadle.

After the war, he returned to his alma mater and earned a law degree. He practiced law for a while but another Civil War general, Ulysses S. Grant, now the president of the United States, appointed him surveyor-general of the Dakota Territory (which includes what is now North and South Dakota). His job was to map out the land in the territory and divide it into various plots that could be assigned to counties and sub-divided into townships and



**W. H. H. Beadle, 1857**

South Dakota State Historical Society, Archives

sections. A township is usually 6 miles on each side, or 36 square miles. A section is about 1 square mile. As part of that process, Beadle had to assign 1 section of land per township for the support of public schools. Thus, 1 square mile per township was reserved by the state for the public schools. Sometimes schools were built right on that land, but even then, no school needed a whole square mile and thus the sale or lease of that land would raise money to fund the schools.

As he did his work, General Beadle became alarmed about the school lands. Other states were in a hurry to bring settlers into their territory and the best way to do that was to give them land to homestead or sell them land at very low prices. When they were sold at very low prices, the schools received very little money for the sale and the land was gone, permanently. That land could no longer provide any benefit to the schools. The lands were being squandered and the support for the schools right along with it.

General Beadle began searching for a better way. He may have found it by reading some of the writings of Benjamin Franklin and his ideas on saving money and making *money by earning interest on those savings*. He may have found it from his observations of the people and lands of the Dakota Territory. However he did it, he found that better way. The land set aside for the schools should either not be sold, but leased to others willing to pay rent, or be sold at its true appraised value (what the land was actually worth) but never less than \$10 per acre. Then the money should be invested and only the interest, minus a little extra to grow the principle, given to the schools. He wanted the funds from the public-school lands to “be and remain a perpetual fund for the maintenance of public schools in the state.” In so doing, those funds would become a permanent “trust fund held by the state.”

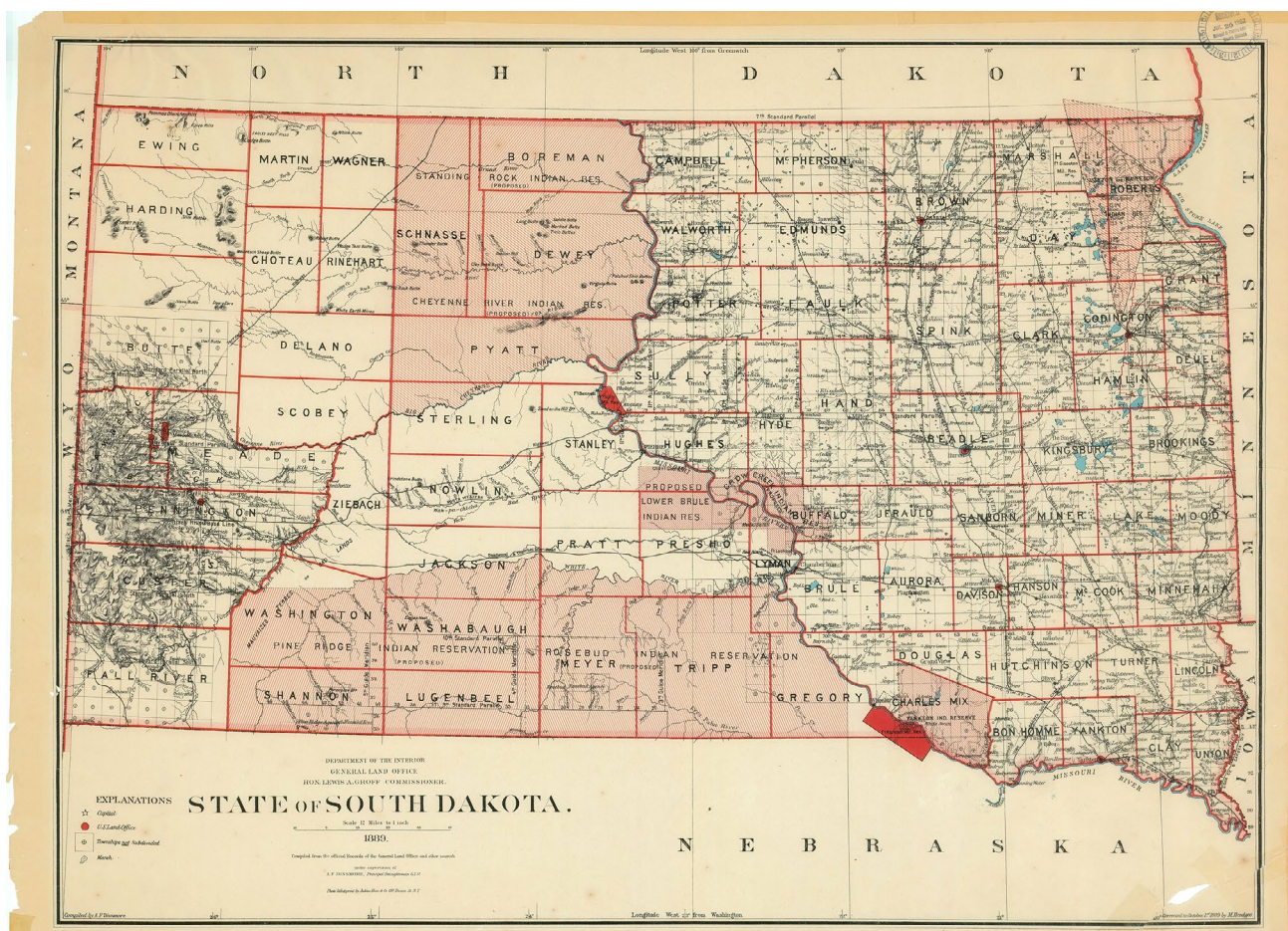
When people heard his idea, they yawned. After all, the Dakota Territory was a wild and wooly place, a land of prairie and hills, badlands and good land, where people had all they could handle just breaking the sod and planting crops, ranching and raising cattle. Even if there were schools, children were needed at



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home to help with the farm work and the housework. People pretty much ignored him on the issue of the school lands even as they respected him for his Civil War service and his surveying work.

It was that respect that earned him an appointment as the superintendent of public instruction in 1879; today, we would call that job the secretary of education. General Beadle took his new job very seriously. He joined the board of the state normal school in Madison, which was dedicated to educating new teachers. He joined the Board of Regents, which oversaw the public colleges in the territory. He began teaching education courses for Yankton College. He watched as huge numbers of new immigrants, homesteaders, moved into the territory, and he traveled from community to community to encourage them to begin building the one-room schoolhouses that served students on the frontier and prairie so well. He became involved in the movement for statehood of South Dakota. Whenever he came to a school or a community with several teachers, he provided them with training on how to be a better educator. He pushed hard for a statewide school system, not just an unrelated bunch of schools scattered across the prairie. As he had done when he surveyed the territory, he traveled all over the wide expanses, sometimes by train, sometimes by horse, and sometimes on foot. Everywhere he went he spoke with crowds of



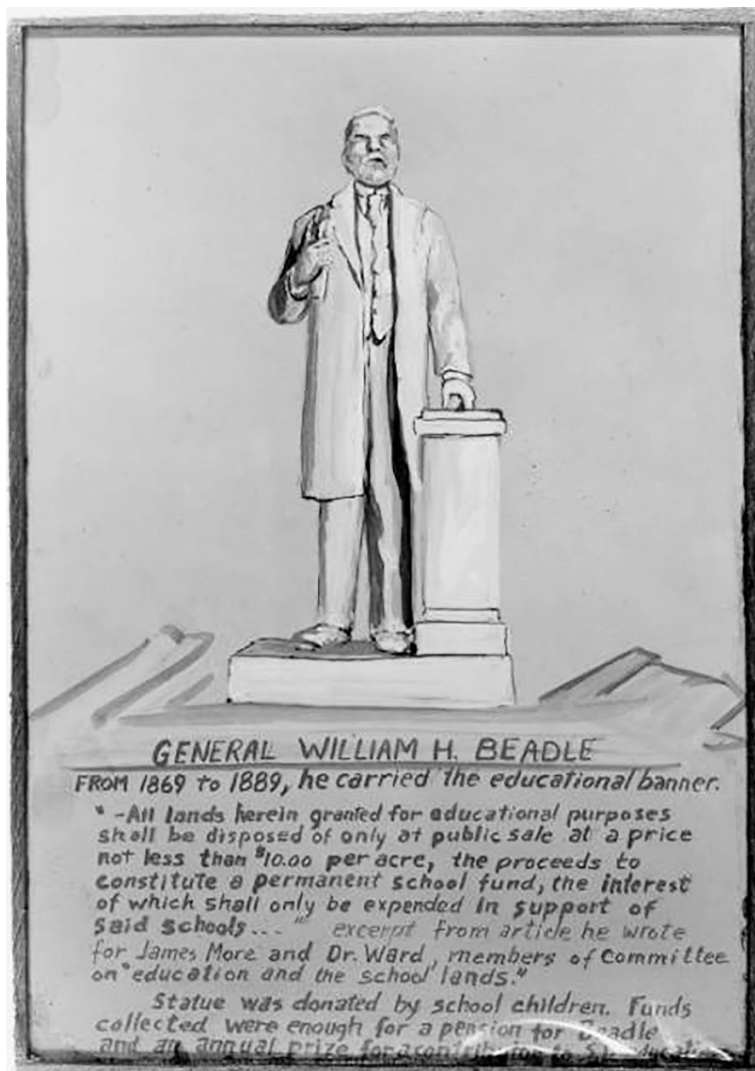
South Dakota School and Public Lands, historical map of 1889



people. They enthusiastically gathered to hear this Civil War general, this man who had surveyed the territory, this head of its schools. Depending on which crowd he was speaking to, he spoke about the importance of education, the necessity for training teachers, the vision for South Dakota as a state not just half of the Dakota Territory, and a myriad of other topics. He was an elegant and spirited orator. But one topic he always brought up, no matter who was in the crowd or the message they expected to receive, was the school lands and the need to protect and cultivate them so they weren't just frittered away, benefiting the current generation of students, perhaps, but leaving all future ones empty-handed. He spoke on the school lands to every community, every crowd gathered around a train depot or sitting in the public meeting house, every individual sitting by a pickle barrel in every general store in the land.

General Beadle believed deeply in education and in the school lands as a permanent treasure for South Dakota's children. And he pursued his belief by focusing on that issue over and above everything else.

Perhaps he learned his lesson from Cato the Elder, a Roman senator more than 2,100 years ago who wanted to remove the threat the City of Carthage posed to the Roman Republic. Whenever he spoke in the Roman Senate, no matter the topic, no matter who else was listening, he ended his speech by roaring "Carthago delenda est," which means "Carthage must be destroyed." Rome had already defeated Carthage in the first of the two Punic Wars, but Cato knew they would soon be seeking revenge. So,



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no matter if he was speaking about Roman roads or Roman plumbing, about the public baths or gladiatorial battles, he would remind the other senators that they needed to destroy Carthage. Finally, after Carthage attacked another kingdom near their city, Rome took Cato's advice and destroyed Carthage. Just to be sure and definitely heeding Cato's advice, they salted the very fields around the city so no one could ever live or grow crops there again. Cato had a laser-like focus, and he wasn't afraid to pursue that focus relentlessly.

So did General Beadle. When South Dakota held its constitutional convention in 1885, his plans for the school lands were written right into the document and the school lands were saved. His focus was so strong, in fact, that the United States Congress required that General Beadle's plan be included in the constitutions of Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.

Because of his hard work and focus on this single, important issue, today South Dakota school lands provide about \$12 million to its public schools each and every year. Because of it, educators are paid better, school libraries are better stocked with books, school buildings are better maintained, school textbooks are more up to date, and South Dakota students have more athletics and activities in which they can participate.

Had the general not focused so strongly on this issue, the school lands and the funds they provide would have long ago wasted away. General Beadle truly is the "savior of our school lands."



## Want to learn more?

You can see the statue of General Beadle at the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre. A sculpture is also in Statuary Hall in our nation's Capitol, one of just two South Dakotans deemed so heroic that they occupy a place in that public pantheon.