

CULTIVATING KINDNESS

In this lesson students will read about a student who spread kindness in her school and reflect on how they can cultivate kindness in their own communities.

Grade Levels 3-6

Note: Lessons are designed to support multiple grade levels. Modification suggestions and extensions are for alternative pacing and to engage students at various levels.

Standards

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

SOCIAL AWARENESS The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

Social Studies Standards (NCSS)

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

What You'll Need

"Being a Buddy" article from TIME for Kids; class set of "Choose Kindness" worksheet; class set of "Cultivating Kindness Survey" exit ticket; paper to make room labels



Before teaching this lesson, share your perspectives in this short survey.

Essential Question(s)

- What is kindness? Why is it important?
- How can you show kindness in your school and your community?

Learning Objectives

- I can make personal connections to a text.
- I can define what kindness means to me.
- I can list ways to show kindness in my school, home, and community.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN**Introduction**

Start the lesson asking students to write down their definition of kindness. They'll return to this definition at the end of the lesson. Next, have students complete a short, anonymous survey on the topic of kindness and inclusion. This can be done with a Google Form, with results displayed automatically; an entrance slip, where you indicate results aloud; or a heads-down, hands-up vote, in which you record the result on the board.

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt nervous or scared because you didn't know anyone?
2. Have you ever felt left out or excluded from a group?
3. Have you ever worried about not having a friend in a social setting?
4. Have you ever gone out of your way to include someone else?

After reviewing the results, facilitate a group reflection. Example: Out of 24 students, 22 answered "yes" to question 1. What does that tell us? Does this surprise you?

Next, think aloud a time when someone performed a small act of kindness to make you feel included or more comfortable. Ask students to think of a similar experience of their own. This can be an act of kindness they performed, received, or witnessed. Give them a chance to share their experiences aloud or with a partner. How did the experience make them feel? Why are small acts of kindness important?

Discussion

As a class or independently, have students read the article "[Being a Buddy.](#)" Ask them, while reading, to make connections to the text using writing materials or notes. If students have not connected with texts, you might need to model this reading strategy aloud.

T2T (text to text): A connection to another text they have read

T2S (text to self): A connection to themselves

T2W (text to world): A connection to the world

Have students discuss these with a partner after reading. Then bring the class back together for a discussion.

Discussion Questions

1. Where did Sammie get the idea for a buddy bench?
2. How was Sammie able to reduce the cost of the benches?
3. How have the buddy benches helped others? Provide evidence from the text.
4. Sammie presented her idea to her principal. What character traits did she need to take this action?
5. How has the buddy bench project helped Sammie?
6. What exists at your school to promote kindness? Do you think it makes a difference? Explain.

Whole Group Activity

Set up for this part of the activity by designating one side of the room as “strongly agree” and the opposite side “strongly disagree.” Tell students they’ll be thinking more deeply about the idea of kindness. Read the prompts below aloud (you can add your own, as well). For each, have students move around the room to indicate their level of agreement with the statement. The room should be a spectrum, with “neutral” or “unsure” in the center.

Prompts:

- Being kind is easy.
- You need to be outgoing to be kind to others.
- Large acts of kindness are what’s important.
- Being kind is a responsibility everybody has.

Give students time to talk with people nearby, then invite volunteers to explain their position. As students discuss their ideas, ask them to support their thoughts with details from Sammie’s story. They should feel free to move to a different part of the spectrum as the discussion progresses.

Closing

Have students return to their definition of kindness from the beginning of the lesson. How would they change their definition? Call on volunteers to share their definition and explain it to the class.

Then provide students with the worksheet “[Choose Kindness.](#)” Read through the scenarios as a class. Have students choose one that resonates with them. You might also invite students to create their own prompts. After they’ve completed the worksheet, bring the class back together and have volunteers share their responses. Then have the class brainstorm ways in which students can spread kindness in their school and community. Ask them to share their ideas aloud. Make a list for the class to consider. Ask students to make a personal commitment to kindness. This can be a small act, a group project, or a conscious effort to be kinder each day.

Exit Ticket (Survey)

Have students complete the “[Cultivating Kindness Survey](#)” to capture the impact this lesson has had on them.

Optional Extension Opportunities

- Read more about [Sammie’s Buddy Bench project](#).
- Read Carol McCloud’s *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*
- Read *Pay It Forward*, by Catherine Ryan Hyde.
- Use the free resources provided by the [Random Acts of Kindness Association](#).

Home-to-School Connections

- **Talk about it.** Ask students to think about a character who showed kindness in a TV show, movie, or book. How did they show kindness? How did their actions affect others and themselves? Ask students to discuss with an adult how kindness was portrayed in this scenario. Extend this conversation by thinking of a character who did *not* show kindness and how the situation could have gone differently if they had.
- **Act on it.** Have students brainstorm intentional kindnesses that their family can show a neighbor or someone nearby. For ideas, students can draw from the list they made in class. Have them choose one or two acts that their family can do together to cultivate kindness in your neighborhood. Ask them to share their results with the class.