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**Kindness in School**

**Kindness can be learned and is for sharing…**

A recent study by The University of Wisconsin-Madison found that a kindness curriculum boosts school success and promotes social, emotional and academic skills. For the whole article on how the research team developed a curriculum to help children learn how to be more aware of themselves and others in order to enhance skills such as emotional control and the capacity to pay attention, which influences the positive development of traits like impulse control and kindness, link to the report in The University of Wisconsin-Madison News in January 2015 by Kelly April Tyrrell (<http://www.news.wisc.edu/23437>)

In this guide there are activities for learning, practicing and sharing kindness in order to help your students understand the importance of kindness towards others in school, at home, and in their community. These activities will teach caring, compassion, empathy and respect, develop appreciation and gratitude towards others, and improve self-awareness. By understanding their feelings and actions, and those of others around them, you will be empowering your students with the skills for critical thinking, non-violent problem solving, and quality relationship building. The activities will provide opportunities for your students to increase their understanding of the diversity in our world, the importance of civic engagement and being productive and responsible citizens. It is important to teach and practice kindness daily in order to influence character development.

Spend time each week doing kindness activities. Engage your students by having them develop their own ideas and projects in related to their subjects. Involve the whole class, partner with other classes and the whole school in some of the ideas as full participation is essential. Create a Kindness Corner in your classroom where the students can learn about the positive impact of kindness on the giver, the receiver and the bystander. At any time in their day, they should have access to craft materials to make cards, notes and posters, share ideas, write in their kindness or gratitude journal, talk with other students, pause for reflection, read and search for stories, articles, books, or magazines and on line.

This learning experience for your students will be meaningful, fun and creative. It will tap into their inner being and bring out the best in them. Active engagement creates an environment that engenders success, co-operation, trust and a sense of belonging.

Consult the education resource section of our website for other learning tools and resources. There are many credible organizations from around the world that have developed character development programs that may suit your curriculum and grade.

**Everyday Acts of Kindness for Everyone**

* Wave Hello.
* Say Good Morning and Good Afternoon.
* Share a warm smile.
* Give someone a compliment.
* Be a friend who listens.
* Start a conversation with a new student or with a classmate who seems lonely.
* Eat lunch with a new student or someone whom you don’t normally talk to.
* Offer someone your seat on public transit.
* Be polite by saying please and thank you.
* Learn to say ‘Thank You’ in a new language.
* Let someone go in front of you in line.
* Help those in need.
* Hold the door open for someone.
* Have a positive attitude.
* Be open to others and new ideas.

**Reading and Writing**

* Make a thank you card or write a note of appreciation for a letter carrier, firefighter, custodians, cafeteria worker, tutor, guidance counselor or nurse letting them know how they are important and appreciated. Example: write thank you notes to firefighters for conducting fire drills for everyone’s safety.
* Make a birthday card for a classmate or teacher or someone in your family.
* Write a nice note to someone you know that is having a bad day.
* Make thank you cards for gifts you have received on your birthday or special occasions from family members or friends.
* Have each student write a positive comment about every student in their class. Pass the notes to the children they describe and have them make a collage of answers.
* Ask the students to think about a time when they hurt someone’s feelings by being unkind and then to rewrite the situation with a different outcome.
* Ask students to perform an act of kindness for a stranger or someone they know and then write an essay describing the experience. They should include how it made them feel and the reaction of the person who received the kindness.
* Provide time for students to write in their kindness journal, in which they can keep their own kindness stories, pictures, ideas or feelings about kindness.
* Provide time for students to write in their gratitude journal, in which they can keep their own feelings about what they are grateful for in their life.
* Choose a book at the library or a story in your reading series or on line that describes someone doing something nice for someone else. Read the story aloud in the classroom. Lead a discussion or have the students write about how the characters felt when they did something nice (or had something nice done for them).
* Ask the students to pick two people who have done something nice for them. Have them write letters of appreciation explaining how those people have made a difference in their life.
* Locate various quotes, poems and stories about kindness. Put them up around the room and discuss what they mean. Students can memorize or illustrate their favourites.
* Conduct a newspaper and internet kindness search. Have the students look for stories about acts of kindness and talk about the stories for the rest of the class.
* Expand your students’ reading skills as well as their social skills by having them read to the younger students in the school.
* Use the letters of KINDNESS to create acrostic poems. Use these poems to create a bulletin board or use them as the written inserts of kindness cards.
* Create a special publication of kindness featuring local kindness stories. These can be broadcast over local TV stations or the school intercom, newsletter and website.
* Gather kindness stories from students, teachers, families and administrators. Publish and distribute the collection to the school and community.
* Have each class chart what kindness looks, sounds and feels like.
* Role play with your students scenarios of bullying and kindness with positive and negative outcomes.
* Display signs, slogans, quotes around the school and classrooms to remind people to practise kindness.
* Place a large blank banner in the entranceway to the school and invite all students, teachers, administrators and parents to write their kindness stories on it.

**Math and Science**

* Have your students tutor younger students in math subjects.
* Calculate the amount of aluminum, paper and other recyclable items currently being thrown away and how much income could come from recycling them.
* Learn about the science of Kindness and the positive effect it has on health and well-being.
* Learn about how pollution and trash affect the environment, including animals and plants. Discuss how kindness towards our environment can help humans, animals and plants.
* Adopt a nearby park and learn about the ecosystems within that park. Work together to keep it clean and beautiful.
* Learn how to make homes more energy-efficient. Share the information with local residents. Discuss how energy efficiency helps the environment and, in turn, humans and animals.

**Social Studies**

* Identify community helpers such as crossing guards, firefighters, police officers, etc. Visit their workplaces and learn about their jobs. Discuss how their jobs help the community.
* Meet with senior citizens and record their memories of the community when they were growing up. Compare their likes and dislikes with those of young people today. Compare prices from then to now.
* Choose a problem that needs to be solved in your area and contact local officials to try to get it solved. Learn about the political process by attending city council meetings, visiting local officials and writing letters.
* Distribute a checklist of kind acts to students encouraging each to complete some or all of the kind acts listed. Activities could include picking up litter, smiling and saying thank you to the bus driver, and eating lunch with someone new.
* Arrange for students to attend a meeting of your local or provincial government and talk about the importance of kindness in the community. A good way to get the legislators involved is by sharing kindness stories with them and asking them to share in return.
* Keep a box in the office where students can drop in the name of another student who did something really nice for others. They list what it is and that can be put in the school newspaper, year book and website. The focus is very positive and reinforcing for students.
* Students draw the name of a secret kindness pal in the classroom. For one week do small acts of kindness for the person and leave anonymous kindness messages on his/her desk. At the end of the week the students try to guess who their kindness pal was. Spend time with the class reflecting and discussing how it felt to give and receive kindness.
* Develop a kindness page on your school website and fill it with stories, articles, book suggestions, things to do, quotes and pictures.

**History**

* Study the history, development and impact of kindness behaviour.
* Study kind people in history through literature, the arts, culture and community. Have students write a report, illustrate their work and discuss how their chosen path affected the world.
* Create a crossword puzzle with the names of kind people from history. When the puzzle is complete, discuss how each historical figure was kind.
* Study the global kindness movement.

**Community**

* Create and deliver baskets of kindness for the elderly. Take a class field trip to deliver the baskets.
* Conduct a food or toiletries drive to give to the food bank or shelters for the homeless or abused. Be sure to include some kindness cards and letters with the delivery.
* Pass out free coffee or hot chocolate to commuters at bus stops or transit stations. Be sure to have a banner and a smile to encourage people to practice kindness.
* Record yourself reading a book. Use the tapes to entertain sick children or adults at a local hospital or nursing home.
* Gather a school choir or singing group and sing oldies or uplifting songs at seniors’ homes.
* Contact people in the community who are actively promoting kindness and request that they visit your school for classroom discussions or an assembly.
* Plan a “working” field trip for students to spend a day helping out at a nursing home, shelter, soup kitchen or retirement home.
* Create a puppet show about kindness and present it to elementary schools.
* On a snowy day organize a group of students to travel to the parking lot of a shopping mall or grocery store. Wipe snow off grocery carts and cars and hold umbrellas for shoppers on the way to their cars.
* Take time out of recess or lunch to wash off graffiti or pick up trash in your playground.
* Take students to younger classes to teach little ones to tie their shoes, count to 10, learn colours, etc.
* Conduct an Appreciation Day for aides, custodians, librarians, teachers, nurses, crossing guards, etc. Make a banner or cards to tell them how much they are appreciated and valued.
* Collect gently used games or toys for children in foster homes, child protective services, family shelters, hospitals, etc.

Be Kind. Make a Difference.