

# CHOOSE TO BE KIND



Kindness Week  
is managed by  
United Way Ottawa

## Teacher's Guide

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## GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR STUDENTS

If you would like to get your classes involved during Kindness Week or beyond, we've put together this package of ideas and tools that you can use in your own classroom.

This Teacher's Guide is not a rigid program that you have to add to your already full school day. Rather, this guide invites you to incorporate kindness naturally into your current classroom or school environment as you see fit.

### Check out what other schools are doing

In this guide you'll find all sorts of activities and projects that other educators have done successfully. Please feel free to adapt them to your own needs.

## SHARE THE EXPERIENCE

Take pictures and preserve some samples of your activities. Send them to [info@kindottawa.ca](mailto:info@kindottawa.ca) and we will post your story.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS BY ACADEMIC SUBJECT

### Reading and Writing

- Have each student write a positive comment about every student in their class on 3x5 cards or paper. Pass the notes to the children they describe and have them make a collage of answers. Option: sort the comments by student on the computer, print out a list for each student of other's comments about them, and give it to them to take home and save.
- Ask students to perform an act of kindness for a stranger and then write an essay describing the experience – how it made them feel and the reaction of the person who received their kindness.
- Provide time for students to start a kindness journal in which they can keep their own kindness stories, pictures, ideas or feelings about kindness.
- Choose a book at the library or a story in your reading book 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 think about a time when they hurt someone's feelings by being unkind and then to rewrite the situation with a different outcome.

- 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 about kindness. Put them up around the room and discuss what they mean. Students can memorize or illustrate their favourite quote.
- Conduct a newspaper kindness search. Have the students look through the newspaper for stories about acts of kindness and summarize 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.
- Send kind-o-grams (heart-shaped telegrams between students).

### Math

- Make a quilt out of paper or fabric as part of a unit on measurement, with each patch containing a drawing of an act of kindness. After it is completed, the class can hang the quilt in the hallway or donate it to a local charity.
- Calculate the amount of aluminum, paper and other recyclable items currently being thrown away and how much income could come from recycling them.
- Have your students tutor younger students in math.
- Create Kindness 'dollars' that can be given to a student by another student, a teacher, the principal, the janitor, etc., to tell the student that they have done something kind and have made a difference that day. 'Dollars' could be left anonymously in the student's mailbox. At the end of the month, there could be an auction where students could buy privileges with their 'dollars' such as lunch with a teacher.

### Science

- 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.

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## 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.
- 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.
- Start a conversation with a new student or with a classmate who seems lonely.
- Write a nice note to someone in your class who is having a bad day.
- Put photos of kind acts in hearts on the classroom or hallway walls. Afterward, donate the display to a local hospital, nursing home or senior centre.
- Kindness Zone: Create and put up a sign designating a classroom where students practise kindness.
- Kindness Banner: Make a large banner and invite children to draw pictures about kindness on it. The banner can be displayed in the school's lobby, cafeteria, gym or classroom.
- Kindness Rainbow: Have children trace hands in rainbow colours and post with kind acts written on them.

## History

- Study kind people in history. Then have kids illustrate their kind works 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.
- Kindness Acrostic: 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.
- Kindness Week Slogan: Create a slogan and make bumper stickers. Use slogans as writing/illustrating. Examples: "Kindness begins like a ripple of water." "Kindness makes your heart glow!"
- 100 Day: Collect 100 hugs. Keep track on chart.
- Kindness Reading: Read over the intercom kindness stories by the principal each day of Kindness Week.
- Kindness Zone Signs: Display signs at entrances to the school and classrooms to remind people to practise kindness.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

### Elementary School

- Wave hello to a crossing guard or police officer.
- Share your smile (generously). Smile at your mom, dad, brother, sister, teacher, classmate.
- Make a thank you card for a mail carrier, firefighter or school staff person. Example: write thank you notes to firefighters for conducting fire drills for everyone's safety.
- Make a birthday card for a classmate or teacher.
- During class meetings have children share about a time they did an act of kindness for someone and how it felt. Younger children can draw a picture and tell about it. Assemble drawings into a paper quilt on a bulletin board.
- Have students start a kindness journal. They can keep track of their own kindness stories, pictures, ideas and feelings about kindness.
- Kindness Card Day: Distribute three cards to each child with the names of the three students whose last names are right after theirs alphabetically. Everyone in the class writes something nice on the cards or draws pictures of their three kindness pals, then distributes the cards by name and shares what they wrote.
- Kind Acts: 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.
- Sticker Campaign: Staff and teachers can give out stickers to students they observe doing kind acts, telling them exactly what they did to earn the sticker.
- Kind Notes: Have students write notes of kindness to relatives and friends letting them know why they are special.

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## Middle School

- Ask students to perform an act of kindness for someone (cafeteria worker, aide, crossing guard, postal worker, secretary) 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.
- Conduct a newspaper kindness search. Have students look through the newspaper for stories about acts of kindness and summarize the story for the rest of the class.
- Choose a story with a kindness theme. Read aloud or have children read in the classroom. Discuss or write about how the characters felt when they did something nice or had something nice done for them.
- Have children start a kindness journal in which they keep their own kindness stories, pictures, ideas or feelings about kindness.
- Ask students to pick someone who has done something nice for them and write a thank you note (example: a tutor for helping them learn math facts, a nurse for bandaging an injury, etc.).
- Buddies: Take students to younger classes to teach little ones to tie their shoes, count to 10, learn colours, etc.
- Historical figures of kindness: Study kind people in history. Have students write a report, illustrate their work and discuss them in class. A book could be made and shared with younger students.
- Set up a “\_\_\_\_\_ Appreciation Day”: This could be for aides, custodians, librarians, teachers, nurses, crossing guards, etc. Make a banner or cards to tell them how much they are appreciated.
- Smile File: Create a “smile file” with cartoons that make people smile. Students can pick out a cartoon to cheer up a friend in need.
- Collect used usable games or toys for children in foster homes, child protective services, family shelters, hospitals, etc.
- Kindness Banner: 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.
- Kindness Journal: Create a kindness journal in your classroom by posting large sheets of paper on the walls. Allow students from different grade levels to write personal stories about acts of kindness. Rotate the journal through different grades in your school. Send it to other schools.
- Food Drive: Hold a canned food drive and give the food to a food bank or shelters for the homeless or abused. Be sure to include some kindness cards and letters with the delivery.
- Custodian Appreciation Day: Have students clean classrooms for custodians. Be sure to make a banner or card telling your custodians how much they are appreciated. A kindness basket could also be given to these special people.
- Kindness Coupons: Children can make kindness coupons that parents, friends and siblings can redeem for kind favours.
- Kindness Mural: Have a class create a kindness mural depicting kindness and bring them to seniors’ facilities. Hold a class field trip and tell the recipients about each student’s particular part of the mural.
- Story Collection: Gather kindness stories from students, teachers, families and administrators. Publish and distribute the collection to the school and community. Allow students to keep a few copies to give to people who have made a difference in their lives.
- Kindness Baskets: Create and deliver baskets of kindness for the elderly or shut-ins. Take a class field trip to deliver the baskets.
- Commuter Kindness: 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.
- Student Council Kindness: Student council can sponsor an activity each day during Kindness week and can announce events each morning over the intercom.
- Kindness Nominations: Students can nominate fellow students and faculty whom they have observed committing acts of kindness. Post nominations in a visible place. At the end of the campaign, all the nominations can be used for drawing for prizes.

## High School

- Create a special publication of kindness featuring local kindness stories. These can be broadcast over local TV stations or the school intercom.
- Create a kindness mascot. It can circulate in high foot-traffic areas distributing bookmarks and/or suggestions for acts of kindness. The mascot can visit elementary schools to talk about kindness.
- Go to the library and ask them to forgive library fees during Kindness Week.

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- Hold a poster contest for all ages. Display posters at city hall or the mayor's office and have the local paper and TV station announce the winners.
- Record yourself reading a book. Use the tapes to entertain sick children or adults at a local hospital or nursing home.
- Write a thank you note for a mentor or someone who has influenced your life in a positive way.
- Kindness Talk: Contact people in the community who are actively promoting kindness and request that they visit your school for classroom discussions or an assembly.
- Kindness Field Trip: Plan a "working" field trip for students to spend a day helping out at a nursing home, shelter, soup kitchen or retirement home.
- Kindness Puppet Show: Create a puppet show about kindness and present it to elementary schools.
- Kindness Snow Day: 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.
- Songs of Kindness: Gather a school choir or singing group and sing oldies or uplifting songs at seniors' homes.

## IDEAS FOR ENCOURAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Brainstorm ideas with your students about how they can perform and promote acts of kindness as individuals, as a class, as a school and out in the community. Here are some ideas to start thinking about:

### As Individuals

- Smile at other students you see in your classes, in the hallway, at lunch and on the way to the bus.
- Start a conversation with a classmate who seems lonely.
- Eat lunch with a new student or someone whom you don't normally talk to.
- Write an encouraging note to someone in your class who is having a bad day.
- Share your snack at recess.

### As a Class

- Take time out of recess or lunch to wash off graffiti or pick up trash on your playground. One day ask another class to join your efforts.
- Surprise another class with cookies, hot chocolate or treats on a winter day.
- Write notes of appreciation to the cafeteria workers, janitors or other staff members who don't normally receive recognition.
- Ask your principal if each student from your class can read a quote or story about kindness each morning over the intercom for as many days as there are students in the class.
- Form a group of students to help the school staff — in the cafeteria, younger ones can clean lunch trays while older ones can pick up trash, dust classrooms or patrol the aisles to give the adult monitors a break.
- Have each class chart what kindness looks, sounds and feels like.

## TEACHING KINDNESS

The following are ideas from a number of teachers and classrooms. Most of the ideas can be adapted to any grade level.

- Validation Chain: At the end of each class day we do a 'validation chain.' One of the students begins by sharing a respectful appreciative remark to another student. This is passed on until all students have received and given a compliment. They leave feeling really good about themselves and others. They are very careful to include everyone. This is a powerful remedy for conflict.
- Various Activities: A high school teacher created a kindness door competition. Students in each classroom decorated their door with kindness quotes, stories, pictures, etc. Some teachers did the judging and prizes were given out in addition to a breakfast for the winners. The school climate improved and there was general enthusiasm. A TV station covered the event.
- Secret Kindness Pals: Students in one classroom drew the names of secret kindness pals. All week long they did little kind acts for the person and left anonymous notes on his/her desk with kind messages. At the end of the week they tried to guess who their kindness pal was. They also spent time reflecting and discussing how it felt to give and receive kindness.

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- **Cookies for Businesses:** Parents baked cookies and sent them to school. Fourth grade students and their teachers dropped off cookies at random establishments (local businesses, etc.), then explained acts of kindness to the workers there and took pictures.
- **Kindness Connection:** Students made cutouts of the human body silhouette. They wrote an essay, poem or the name of someone students saw doing a kind act. They then connected the paper figures: "We are all connected by Kindness."
- **Kindness Chain:** Students in many schools write each kind act they do on a construction paper chain link and create a chain of kindness, which they hang around the classroom or from the ceiling throughout the school.
- **Kindness to the Staff:** Our school participated in Kindness Week by celebrating "Custodian & Teacher Appreciation Day." We served continental breakfast to the staff, cleaned cafeteria after breakfast and lunch, and cleaned the windows inside the school. Everything went well. The children now have a better appreciation of the custodians and the school.
- **Popcorn Surprise:** Hold a surprise popcorn party at the school. A class can fill bags with popcorn, and while the rest of the school is at recess, slip into empty classrooms and leave a bag of popcorn for each student.
- **Caught in the Act:** We acknowledged kids every time they displayed an act of kindness to someone. We called it "Caught in the Act." The student received a \$1 voucher on the spot that could be used at the school store. At the end of the month all students received a carnation with a Kindness bookmark attached. We heard that many students turned around and gave the carnations to their parents, friends, bus drivers, secretaries, teachers and custodians. It was great.
- **Share Warmth:** Students bring in mittens and scarves, hats, socks, etc., for those in need; younger students can decorate paper mittens for display.
- **Note to Parents:** When a student is observed being kind, the teacher surprises the student by mailing a note to the parents or guardians, reporting the kind act to them and commending the student's kindness. The student is awarded a kindness certificate at the next student assembly.
- **"Caught you caring:"** Teachers complete a little form every time they find students doing something positive. The names of all the students are read out once a week over the intercom. Simple and very positive!
- **"Catch them being good:"** A box is kept in the office and students drop in the name of another student who did something really nice. They list what it is and then we have daily draws for prizes. The focus is very positive and reinforcing for students.
- **Bully awareness program** that includes monthly assemblies, skits, songs and videos. Each month we select a theme related to bullying and to character education. Our first theme was friendship and our second will be "How does someone else feel?" (Empathy)