

A graphic featuring a white cloud-like shape with a black outline containing the text 'Kind Campus MONTH 7'. Below it is a green rectangular box with a black outline containing the text 'Kindness in Our Community'. The background is an isometric illustration of a school building with a red roof, blue doors, and windows, surrounded by green trees and a paved area.

Kind Campus MONTH 7

Kindness in Our Community

How can we show kindness beyond our school?



Understanding our Social and Emotional Brains

Micro-moments of Connection: It's easy to feel disconnected in our daily lives. One way that we can feel more connected to our community is to focus on the small, yet meaningful, positive interactions that we have nearly every day. Training our brains to focus on what psychologist Barbara Frederickson calls "micro-moments" of connection changes the way our brain works and helps us feel deeply embedded in our families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Frederickson explains that micro-moments develop an awareness of your surroundings, and even your sense of self. "The boundaries between the you and not-you—what lies beyond your skin—relax and become more permeable" (2013). These micro-moments—such as sharing a smile or expressing concern—improve emotional resilience, boost the immune system, and reduce susceptibility to depression and anxiety. Bringing attention to our daily micro-moments helps us receive kindness from others, practice kindness toward ourselves, and share kindness every day.



Self-Awareness

Waving Like Seaweed: Students of all ages must sit for the majority of the school day. Standing up for 5-10 minutes, moving our bodies mindfully, and breathing can help us refocus our energy and offset feeling bored or fidgety. This exercise invites students to imagine they're connected strongly to the ocean floor, yet with the simultaneous strength to bend with the ocean current. An adult or a student can lead this activity by following the script provided (see supplementary materials). Feel free to get creative with the ocean scene you imagine!



Awareness of Others

Mapping Kindness: Create a large map of your school and title it "Our Kind Campus." In the middle, draw a circle with your school's name (or get creative and draw your school's mascot, building, or another school symbol). Brainstorm a list of all the people involved in your Kind Campus—students, teachers, administrators, support staff, bus drivers, maintenance staff, etc. Be as detailed as possible. Add the people to the poster with a line connecting them to the school and to one another. Allow space for additional people and groups to be added.

Next, talk about places on campus in relation to kindness. Where have you seen kind acts taking place? Mark these areas on your map with a specific color or sticker. Then talk about places on campus where kindness isn't present, or needs a boost. Where do students feel unsafe, lonely, or angry? Mark these areas on your map with another color or symbol. Post your map in a common area where students, staff, and faculty can contribute their thoughts on the presence of kindness. Use the completed map as a guide for where to focus kindness activities throughout the school year.



Kindness in Our Community: Kindness in Action



Self-Kindness

Benefits of Spending Time Outdoors: Spending time outdoors improves our health—from breathing fresh air to taking a walk to enjoying a scenic view, it improves our perspective. When we immerse ourselves in the natural world, it makes it easier for us to be kind (Zhang, Piff, Iyer, Koleva, & Keltner, 2014). Studies show that exposure to the natural world—in both urban green spaces and natural environments—enhances our physical health, including lowering stress and improving heart rate (Ulrich, Simons, Losito, Fiorito, Miles, & Zelson, 1991). Encourage students to go outside and then reflect on how they feel. What does being outside have to do with kindness? How does being outside affect your mood? What does being outside have to do with learning? How does it help you feel more ready to practice kindness with yourselves and others? Set a goal for each student to spend 30 minutes outside every day for a week, if possible, and then talk about the results as a class.



Kindness Toward Others

Kindness and Social Media: Young adults spend an average of one-two hours online daily on multiple social media platforms (Levenson et al., 2016). And just like in other areas of our life, social media is rife with opportunities for kind—and unkind—behavior. Students can call upon their kindness skills to mitigate the negative effects of social media. In fact, simply limiting screen time to one hour per day total (for all social media platforms) actually improves mental well-being, while more time decreases the positive impacts of connecting online (Przybski & Weinstein, 2017). “Be Kind Online: Youth Voices” (see supplementary materials) features advice from older adolescents to their younger peers, including tips for developing awareness around social media, ideas for being kind online, and Kindness Dilemmas specific to social media.



Kindness Dilemmas

Tracking Kindness: This month, focus on Kindness Dilemmas that involve more than just people. Think about how we might face kindness dilemmas when it comes to caring for our environment—plants, animals, and the areas in which we live and go to school. Some examples to consider might include witnessing an act of graffiti by a close friend, neglect of an animal or a plant at home, or littering. Encourage students to come up with their own dilemmas to share. Break students into small groups and give them situations from the list provided (see supplementary materials). Use group discussion or pairs to discuss dilemmas, or consider using role-play to engage students further this month.



Adult Practice

Your School Environment: Consider how your classroom or office environment affects your mood and overall school culture. Marketing Professor Kathleen Vohs demonstrates that messy work spaces can be great for brainstorming and creativity, but tidy and clutter-free spaces help facilitate effective meetings and overall efficiency (Mochari, 2014). Well-ordered spaces feel welcoming and calming, so devote time to creating spaces that best serve the different needs of your campus.

Before you organize, get rid of as many unnecessary or out-of-date items as you can. If something isn't highly functional, meaningful, or beautiful, let it go, remembering to donate or recycle when appropriate. Try creating three piles: keep, donate, and recycle. Anything that doesn't go into one of the piles goes in the trash. Extend this practice to common campus areas, including the teachers' lounge, break rooms, and conference rooms. Encourage students to take ownership of their spaces too, and discuss how getting rid of unused items can create more room for other activities.



Our Kindness Priorities This Month

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Share photos of your Campus Map of Kindness with us!



“Being a Kind Campus is helping us cultivate leaders, educating the whole student. Enlightening the mind, and nurturing the body and spirit of each child.”

-Classroom teacher, Nogales, AZ