

Kind Campus MONTH 9

Celebrate Your Kind Community

How can we become more aware of kindness in our community
so we can experience all of its benefits?



Understanding our Social and Emotional Brains

Being Kind to Unkind People: It's not always easy to be kind, and it's particularly challenging when someone is rude or dismissive. When someone is unkind, it triggers the defensive part of our brain, the reptile/lizard brain, which quickly reacts. We often mirror the negative behavior shown to us. Psychology professor Christopher J. Hopwood asserts that we can choose to act differently, however, by using noncomplementary behavior. Noncomplementary behavior is difficult because it contradicts expected behavior. For example, we can act with intentional kindness when someone has been rude. Hopwood advises that noncomplementary behavior can sometimes be tensely received, so we should use it strategically (2016). When we're regularly practicing our kindness skills and feel good about ourselves, we can treat people with kindness, even if their initial behavior was unkind.



Self-Awareness

Changing Behavior Patterns: Talk with students about how difficult it is to change habits. The first step is identifying that we need to make a change. Then we must recognize that we have the ability to change our behavior by building self-awareness. Print out or project the poem "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters" by Portia Nelson (available online) and read it aloud with students. Then lead students in a reflective activity in which they begin to recognize the "holes" in their lives—the difficulties that they face, especially those that come up repeatedly. Then discuss how new "streets" symbolize innovative ways of changing behavior so that students can respond with kindness (conscious brain), rather than react with defensiveness (lizard/reptile brain). Considering the different "routes" we have in life helps students think about building self-awareness, which empowers us to make choices that are kind to ourselves. It also helps us change behavior, so it's kind to others too.



Awareness of Others

Connecting with Another's Suffering: It can be easy to think, "why me?" when we're going through a difficult time or experiencing adversity. Instead of thinking of our experience as separate from others, create the opportunity to feel connected to people and practice self-kindness by bringing awareness to the fact that we all suffer. Start by encouraging students to accurately identify and feel their emotions. Next, remind students that whatever challenge they're facing, others are facing the same challenge at this very moment. The goal is to focus on shared experiences so that we can more easily see our common humanity. As students see themselves alongside others in distress, invite them to practice using a kind phrase to feel less alone: "May I, together with all those who suffer [this], find peace" (Frederickson, 2013). As students build awareness of others, they will be empowered to act with kindness.



Celebrate Your Kind Community: Kindness in Action



Self-Kindness

Focus on Gratitude: Ask students to write down or share aloud ways that they express gratitude. Compile a list of ideas, and use them to start a discussion about the meaning of gratitude, and what the class is grateful for. Use the “Thank You for Your Kindness” notes in the classroom Kind Post Office this month.



Kindness Toward Others

- **Kindness to Plants:** Plants, just like animals and humans, are an important part of our community. Explore what plants provide us, and what we can do to care for them. Students work in groups or pairs and choose an established plant on campus (a tree, a bush, flowers, etc.), or plant something new, to monitor and document changes. As students look for growth, new buds, and color, they provide care to help keep their plant healthy and growing, alerting landscaping staff of pruning needs or other issues.
 - **Kindness to Creatures:** Brainstorm ways that students, staff, and faculty can be kind to the creatures in your community. Send home “be kind to animals” cards (see supplementary materials) for students to share with family and distribute in the community. Encourage students to talk with peers and adults about how caring for the earth means creating a kind community for its creatures.
 - **Kindness to the Environment:** List ways that your school can be kind to the earth by improving the environment in your community. Hang posters around campus or start a social media contest to gather ideas for your school. Then commit to improving your community’s environment this month. Some ideas might include a food-and-supply drive for your local animal shelter, collecting recyclables, or cleaning a local park.
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Kindness Dilemmas

Anticipating Future Kindness Dilemmas: Continue honing problem-solving skills with kindness dilemmas in large groups, small groups, and on an individual basis. Then, have students work in small groups or pairs to come up with two or three kindness dilemmas that they anticipate in the future. Encourage students to think about dilemmas that might happen over the summer, on a trip, during a sports or arts program, at summer school, or during the next school year. Post the dilemmas in classrooms or on the Kind Campus bulletin board, and have students consider preparing dilemmas to share through role-play at your school’s end-of-the-year kindness celebration.



Adult Practice

BENevolent Brigade: Organize a community activity this month that helps your school connect to your community. Call it the “BENevolent Brigade,” or create your own name. Brainstorm different places or people in your larger community that your school would like to support—food banks, animal shelters, or even families from your own school. Connect directly with an organization, or look online to find out what items are on its wish list. The Kind Leadership Team then shares the wish list with students, staff, faculty, and families. Encourage everyone to bring in items on the wish list, or provide information on how they can volunteer with the organization. Advertise on morning announcements and around school. Deliver items at the end of the month.



Our Kindness Priorities This Month

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Share photos of your school's year-end kindness celebration with us!



“Kind Campus is an essential part of early education, giving children the tools they need to be empathetic, understanding, and know the right ways to communicate in conflicts.”

-Classroom teacher, Tucson, AZ