EXPLORING KINDNESS AND EMPATHY

LESSON PACKAGE FOR GRADES 4 TO 6

THEME: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION | SUBJECT: HEALTH
WE Are Canada
EXPLORING KINDNESS AND EMPATHY

WE LEARNING FRAMEWORK SKILLS LEGEND:

THEME: Diversity and Inclusion
SUBJECT: Health
GRADE LEVEL: Grades 4 to 6

LESSON PACKAGE OVERVIEW:
The lesson focuses on developing student understanding of kindness and empathy. Through team building exercises and improvisation role playing, students will practice empathy and kindness. Students will apply their knowledge by planning and executing kindness actions in their community and reflecting on its effectiveness.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
► What role does kindness play in our lives?
► How does empathy drive acts of kindness?
► What are the effects of acts of kindness on a community?

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS:
Students will:
• Explore the effects of acts of kindness
• Learn and apply knowledge of empathy and apathy
• Action plan and take action on acts of kindness in the community

Recommended Assessment for Learning:
You know your students best—their learning styles and preferences, skill levels and knowledge. You are also best positioned to anticipate the habits of mind that will make this lesson package successful.

In this lesson package, teaching strategies include collaborative group work, class discussion and role-playing. Suggestions for demonstration of learning include written, oral and visual reflection, exit tickets and student-generated discussion. Please make any accommodations or modifications that serve your students.

WORD BANK
Apathy—lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern
Empathy—the ability to understand and share the feelings of another
Kindness—the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate
Sympathy—feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else’s misfortune

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
• Blackline Master 1: Improv Scenarios
• Six to eight standard Hula-Hoops
• Hula-Hoop Challenge [link]
• Chart paper

LIST OF RECOMMENDED CHILDREN'S BOOKS
• Frog and Toad are Friends by Arnold Lobel
• The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig
• Those Shoes by Mary Beth Boelts
• Pocket Money: A Book About Random Acts of Kindness by Kaye Llewelyn
• Because Amelia Smiled by David Ezra Steier
• Hey Little Ant by Phillip Hoose
• Mufaros Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe
• Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox
• Pinduli by Janell Cannon
• Paulie Pstrami Achieves World Peace by James Proimos
• Enemy Pie by Derek Munson
• A Chair for my Mother by Vera B. Williams
• Chrysanthemum by Kevin Hanks
• Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister
• If Kids Ran the World by Leo Dillon
• Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White
• Wonder by R.J. Palacio
• Edward the Emu by Sheena Knowles
LESSON 1:
WHAT IS KINDNESS?

SUGGESTED TIME:
60 minutes

Investigate and Learn

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: For the following activity, students will be required to hold hands. Students who are uncomfortable holding hands with their peers may participate by working with a group outside of the circle encouraging their peers and offering suggestions on how to successfully pass the Hula-Hoop around the circle.

1. Have students form groups of five to play the Hula-Hoop challenge.
   Instructions:
   • Have students within each group hold hands forming a circle
   • Momentarily break each circle to place a Hula-Hoop around two of the interlocked hands so it cannot escape the circle
   • Explain that the goal of the game is to get the Hula Hoop all the way around the circle without anyone letting go of their teammate’s hand
   • Encourage students to cheer each other on
   • Once complete, discuss success and challenges and try again
   • Try the game in different variations: whole class, groups of ten, with eyes closed or no verbal communication

2. Lead a discussion with the class: How did they feel while playing the game? What made it easier to complete the game successfully? What words did you use to cheer your team on?

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: The next activity in the lesson requires a collection of fiction and non-fiction children’s books which present the concept of kindness to students. The books are for a younger reading level but they should be familiar to students and will allow them to critically examine them for acts of kindness and empathy. We have provided a recommended list of books, but you may also want to speak with your school’s teacher-librarian for recommendations of children’s books on kindness.

3. In partners, instruct students to select a book from the collection you have accumulated. Ask students to read the book then using think-pair-share answer the following questions:
   a. What is the theme of the story?
   b. How does the story show kindness or empathy?
   c. How can we apply the lessons of kindness and empathy to our daily lives at school, home or in our community?

4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING: Individually, have students choose another book and write a proposal for how this book could be used in the school. How can the lessons from the book be applied to respond to issues that may be happening at school or in the community?
LESSON 2:
IMPROVISING TO UNDERSTAND

SUGGESTED TIME:
40 minutes

Steps:

1. Write numbers on separate slips of paper from one to the total number of students in the class. Place them in a container so students may be randomly selected for participation later. Or skip this step and ask for volunteers during the improve.

2. Cut out the scenarios from Blackline Master 1: Improve Scenarios and place these slips of paper into another container.

3. Tell students they will be performing improvisational skits that use apathy and empathy. Number off students for selection later. Define empathy and apathy for students. Record the definitions on the board for reference.

4. For each skit, select a scenario and read the description section out loud to the class. Pull the number of name slips the scenario requires assigning the specified roles as names are pulled. Ask selected student actors to come to the front of the classroom to improvise the scene. The actors will perform two skits, one displaying an apathetic take on the scenario and another where empathy is employed. As the skits are performed, dictate whether empathy or apathy leads, mix it up.

5. Give each scenario about five minutes (two to three minutes per skit).

6. After all the scenarios have been performed, ask students to reflect on the following prompts in a journal, with a partner or as a class discussion:
   - How do people generally respond to situations?
   - Are people usually more apathetic or empathetic?
   - Use specific examples from the scenarios or life experiences to develop your reflection.
   - Address why people might react this way and why we possibly change our behaviour.
LESSON 3:
SHARING KINDNESS

SUGGESTED TIME:
60 minutes

Action Plan

1. Ask students: How can we create a classroom, school, and wider community environment that inspires kindness toward others? What actions can we do individually, in groups or as a class that demonstrate kindness?

2. In small groups of three to four, have students brainstorm and discuss ways to take action to benefit the community. Direct the brainstorm with the following questions:
   a. What ideas do you have?
   b. Who will they affect?
   c. What is the goal of the action?
   d. How can you implement the ideas?

3. Allow students to write, draw and map out their ideas on chart paper and share their ideas with another group.

4. Allow students to form groups or work independently on actions they have come up with. Once the action has been selected, ask students to set the goal and ensure that those goals can be measured using evidence and documents that students will collect.

5. Prior to taking the action, ask students to write or draw a short reflection on how they believe the action will positively affect their lives and what they will learn? How will they become a better person and a better Canadian through these actions?

6. Before taking action, review the goals and think about the types of evidence that may be collected later to reflect on the action. For example:
   a. Photographs showing students participating in the action
   b. Verbal and written anecdotes from those who were affected and those who were assisting with the action
   c. Social media posts connected to the action

Take Action

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: Ask parents and family members to join the action to assist students.

7. If desired, before interacting on social media, review classroom and school guidelines on using social media. Before interacting with members of the wider community, review classroom guidelines on etiquette and respect. Ensure students are actively participating and collecting evidence throughout the take action phase.
LESSON 4:
CELEBRATING ACTS OF KINDNESS

SUGGESTED TIME:
60 minutes

Report and Celebrate

1. Now that students have completed their action, take it a step further and invite the entire school to celebrate kindness. Here are a few ideas for getting everyone involved:
   - Invite members of your school to share their messages of kindness on sticky notes.
   - Designate one wall of the school to collect people’s responses to receiving their cards, or their own messages of kindness. Take photos as it grows.
   - Encourage students to tag the lockers of people they don’t normally spend time with sticky note messages of friendship and encouragement.
   - Invite participating groups of students to reflect on the day and produce a work of art that expresses their response to receiving a card or sending a message they want to share with the school community.

Reflection

2. As a class, reflect on the learnings and experiences from planning and taking action. Think about the measurable goals that were set, use the evidence collected to reflect on how well these goals were achieved through the action.

3. Write the goals on the board. Ask students to reflect through a written, verbal or visual response. Within the reflection, students should link the evidence collected with the measurable goal. Does the evidence demonstrate a successful campaign?

4. Ask students to reflect further to understand the deeper effects of the action and to consider how they can ensure their work has lasting impacts:
   - How will we ensure that these actions will continue next year?
   - How can we check that these actions have changed our personal actions to regularly show kindness towards others?
   - How will we continue to seek feedback from others about additional ways we can show kindness towards all community members, regardless of social identity?
   - How does kindness build inclusiveness within a community?

5. Encourage students to think about how as an individual they are able to make their school community more kind and inclusive for all people?
# Blackline Master 1: Improv Scenarios

Use the following scenarios with students to reinforce the concepts of apathy and empathy and to assess their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of the terms.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Roles</th>
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| **THE ELEVATOR WON'T MOVE** 5 STUDENTS | You are in an elevator that is stuck between the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth floors. How do you react? | • Elevator operator  
• Important business woman or man who is used to being in charge  
• Young teenager with evening plans  
• Mother or father with bags full of groceries and a hungry family waiting for dinner  
• Twenty-something with their pet beagle |
| **MUSICAL PUBLIC TRANSIT CHAIRS** 4 STUDENTS | You are riding a city bus and an elderly person boards. | • Bus driver  
• Seated passenger  
• Standing passenger |
| **FLY SOUP ANYONE?** 3 STUDENTS | You’ve gone out for dinner and while you are eating your soup you notice a fly in it. | • Waiter  
• Patron with fly soup  
• Patron eating with patron with fly soup |
| **DON’T I KNOW YOU FROM SOMEWHERE?** 2 STUDENTS | You run into someone who is familiar but you are not sure why and they know you. | • The person who remembers  
• The person who does not remember |
| **CALL 911!** 3 STUDENTS | Walking down the street you see someone faint. | • The fainter  
• First passerby who sees the fainter fall  
• Second passerby who comes across the situation but does not see the initial faint |
| **WAITING... PATIENTLY** 5 STUDENTS | Waiting in line at a coffee shop, someone cuts in line. | • Cashier  
• First in line  
• Second in line  
• Third in line  
• Person who cuts in line |