



MAGIC WAND

"We will never have a perfect world, but it's not romantic or naive to work toward a better one."

—Steven Pinker

OVERVIEW

Students write a description of their ideal world and how they might contribute to creating that world.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the school year, but especially at the beginning of the year to help students make a connection between their purpose (or search for one) and academic content
- To help students develop content for college entrance essays. Visit www.purposechallenge.org for more information.

TIME REQUIRED

- 15-30 minutes

LEVEL

- Middle School
- High School
- College

MATERIALS

- Writing materials

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Describe their ideal world
- Reflect on how they can contribute to creating this world

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Responsible Decision-Making

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on how you might describe your ideal world. What are you already doing to help create this world?

INSTRUCTIONS

THE PRACTICE

Before you begin:

1. This practice can be used on its own, but is meant to be the second in a series of practices that help students discover or begin their search for purpose.
 2. Students can also do the entire series of practices online for free at www.purposechallenge.org. Have them click on "Toolkit" and then register for an account. When they finish the practices, they will receive a digital record of their written answers for each exercise in addition to instructions on how to take these answers and turn them into a college entrance essay.
- If using this practice on its own, review the definition of purpose with students using the instructions from the first four bullets in Discovering Your Strengths and Talents--Purpose Challenge, Exercise 1
 - Begin by asking students to close their eyes (or, if more comfortable, to look at a spot on the floor in front of them) and take a few deep breaths. Say:
 - *Think about the world you live in. This includes your home, your community, and the world at large.*

- *Imagine you've been given a magic wand, and you can change anything you want to change in the world. What would you want to be different and why?*
- After a minute, say to students:
 - *Is there anything you can do to help move the world closer to this ideal? If so, how?*
- Give students a moment to think about this last question before opening their eyes.
- Have students take a few minutes to write a description of their ideal world and what they might do to help create this world. If students don't think that they can contribute to this world, ask them to explain why not.
- Have students share their writing with a partner or in a small group, and then share with the class.

CLOSURE

- Ask students to reflect on whether this exercise confirmed their sense of purpose or, if they aren't sure of their purpose, did it give them any clues or insight into what their purpose might be?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this practice? Did they find it helpful in helping them decide what their purpose might be?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Studies find that pursuing one's purpose is associated with psychological well-being. For example, compared to others, [people with purpose](#) report they are happier, more satisfied with their lives, and more hopeful about the future.

For teens, purpose is related to indicators of academic success, such as [grit](#), [resilience](#), and a belief that one's work is [feasible and manageable](#).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In spite of the benefits, only about [20% of adolescents](#) lead lives of purpose. Granted, the developmental task of teenagers is to discover who they are (identity) and what they want to accomplish that benefits the world (purpose); however, students who have a sense of purpose or are actively looking for one are propelled by a personally meaningful and highly motivating aim--they know what they hope to achieve and how academics can help. Hence, they are more likely to work hard and excel in school.

SOURCE

The Purpose Challenge Toolkit was created by [Dr. Kendall Cotton-Bronk](#) in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and [Prosocial](#). For more information, visit www.purposechallenge.org

