



**Greater Good in Education**  
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

## KINDNESS ART FOR STUDENTS

*"Everything good that's ever happened to me came out of helping others."*

—Danny Trejo

### OVERVIEW

Students will identify examples of kindness and create art that reflects those examples.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To encourage kindness, generosity, and helpfulness
- To build inclusive communities at the start of the year
- To support peer relationships before assigning a group project

#### TIME REQUIRED

- 5-10 minutes

#### LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary

#### MATERIALS

- Art materials (e.g., paint, paper, markers, magazines, clay, glue, pencils)

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify acts of kindness
- Make art that reflects the acts of kindness they identified or observed

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Kindness
- Generosity

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Social Awareness
- Relationship skills

## MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Open Awareness
- Focused Attention

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Identify 1-3 times you observed examples of kindness over the past week. Take a moment to reflect on those acts of kindness. Next, consider making a quick art piece to represent one of the kind acts you witnessed.
- How do you feel after you capture this moment? Do you notice a difference in your behavior? Do you experience a greater desire to help others?

### INSTRUCTIONS

There are many ways we can inspire our students to be kind—from the way we talk to them to how we acknowledge them to the stories we read together. But there is another easy way to encourage kindness in kids: with art.

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#### STEP 1: IDENTIFY ACTS OF KINDNESS

- To connect with kindness more deeply, ask students to seek out stories of kindness in everyday life. The goal is for students to identify 1-3 acts of kindness.
  - For example, your students might encounter stories of kindness on the news, on social media, or from talking to someone they know; or they may witness or experience kindness at school or in their home.

- You can even encourage students to interview people in their community, like firefighters, to learn about kind acts they've experienced or performed.

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## STEP 2: MAKE ART!

- Next, encourage students to focus on one of the acts of kindness that they identified and absorb it further by making art about it.
  - Students can write songs, paint, draw, create collage boards, or write and illustrate picture books or comic books to tell stories of kindness. When possible, you can encourage students to collaborate with others to create art together.

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## STEP 3: SHARE!

- After completing their works of art, have students share their art in pairs, small groups, or the whole class.
- Discuss with students how making their art piece about kindness made them feel. What can they do to encourage more kindness in their classroom and school?

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What acts of kindness did your students notice? How were their examples similar or different?
- Did you notice a change in your students' behavior? Were they more generous with each other or willing to help each other during or after this lesson?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In one [study](#), children (5-10 years old) either made art to celebrate stories of kindness with local artists or learned about kindness from their usual school-based curriculum. Children who made kindness art increased in their intentions to help, share, or comfort another child in need, but this wasn't the case for children who learned about kindness through a school-based curriculum. When children participated in this type of arts program for seven months, their kindness intentions increased for up to six months later.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

During childhood, being inclusive of and caring for others—especially those who may be different from us—can sometimes require extra practice. By the age of three, children already determine who is most like them in group settings and tend to show a preference for those children. This preference peaks around middle childhood and is particularly obvious in competitive situations.

Helping students to focus on acts of kindness leads them to want to help, share, and comfort each other, even those who may be different from them. These are the building blocks of positive, inclusive communities. And kindness is good for students. School-age children who [engage in kind acts](#) are more well-liked by their peers and

have improved well-being. The [benefits](#) of kindness are even seen as early as toddlerhood—young children are happier when giving to others than when receiving.

Using the creative arts is also a fun, accessible, and meaningful way to help students be more inclusive while encouraging self-expression and creativity. With a minimal investment in time and resources, kindness art activities can have a lasting effect on your students and your classroom community.

## SOURCE

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