

Be the Change

This lesson gives students an opportunity to think about how people are already courageously working in their communities and how they can get involved. Students will brainstorm ways they can get involved in either starting something they are passionate about or joining an endeavor already in progress.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Vulnerability, Humility

Lesson Timeframe

35-40 minutes

Required Materials

- Be the Change worksheet (see below)

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**
See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Discuss the role of courage in making change in a community.
- Brainstorm ways to get involved in local community efforts for change.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

The ultimate goal of every teacher is a kind and respectful class. When the environment in which we spend 8-10 hours a day naturally responds with kindness as a default, we are able to more easily teach the academic components required of us. As you head into the final few weeks and months of the school year, the positive environment you established at the beginning might be waning a bit as students get more antsy for summer vacation. Now is the perfect time for a kindness tune up. Although you are bogged down with end of year testing, grades, and parties, taking a few moments at the beginning of each day with some focused kindness will do wonders for your classroom environment. One idea is to write a bunch of uplifting notes on index cards and have each child choose one from a bowl during your morning meeting. Have them read their kindness card aloud as they are excused to their desks. Not only will each child be encouraged, but you may find that kindness is contagious!

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Be mindful of any students who may have to take advantage of some of these community organizations; some may be open to sharing (if they are involved in something like a kinship program or Big Brothers/Big Sisters) or they may be embarrassed or nervous (if they use the food bank, for example). Adjust the lesson accordingly (discussing change on a state or national level and brainstorming ways to get involved in those programs would work just as well).



Share

5-7 minutes

Let's review what we learned in our last lesson about saying "no" to peer pressure. What are the strategies we can use to say no?

Invite student response and demonstration.

Good! Has anyone had to use one of these strategies since our last lesson?

Invite students to raise hands. You can decide if you want to ask for examples or not. This may lead to some discomfort if they have had to use these strategies with classmates. A simple show of hands should make the point quickly without going into details.



Inspire

7-10 minutes

For this lesson, we are going to talk about how we must use courage to be kind in our communities. Like we learned in our last lesson, it takes courage to make good decisions and respond with kindness. This is true when we are responding to things happening around us. Sometimes we must use courage to simply engage in new ideas or to support those who are standing up for change.

Here is an example of someone who is using courage to be kind in the community:

If possible, talk about someone or an organization in your local community that is using courage to be kind, such as food shelf/food bank organizations, homeless shelters, family safety networks, Kinship partners, YMCA programs, etc. If there isn't an example of this locally (or even regionally), you could use an example of one kid who is making a difference in the broader community/world:

[Kids Under 12 Who Are Changing the World. Right Now \(tinybeans.com\)](http://tinybeans.com)

Or use a celebrity or someone well known who is also regularly engaged in philanthropic activity.

In what ways is this person using courage to make a difference in his/her community (or the nation/world)?



Empower

15-20 minutes

A wise, peaceful leader named Mahatma Gandhi once said something like this: “Be the change you want to see in the world.” This means that if you want to see something happen in your community, you have to go out and be a part of it. You can’t just sit back and wait for it to happen on its own.

Today we are going to take some first steps toward being the change we want to see in our community. I want everyone, on their own, to brainstorm something in our community (and it could be in our school community) that you feel is important and beneficial for the community or that you feel should change in the community. It might be recycling, adding a specific after-school program for kids, homelessness, feeding the hungry, caring for the elderly, or volunteering at a specific charity event. Think about what is important to you or a change you’d like to see, and then answer the questions on the “Be the Change” worksheet. What change do you want to see in our community and how can you help make it happen?

Complete the worksheet and then we will talk about them in the wrap-up!



Reflect

7-10 minutes

Invite students to share their “Be the Change” ideas. You could do this in the large group or break students into small groups. After 5-7 minutes, bring everyone back together (if they have broken out into groups). Review the following concepts:

1. Working in and improving our communities takes courage.
2. There is always good work we could be doing; many people are already at work all around us!
3. You are never too young to get involved and bravely serve others.
4. How many of you want to pursue the passion or change you wrote about?
5. How will you do this?



Extension Ideas

- Add space on the “Be the Change” worksheet for a parent/guardian signature. Invite students to bring these home to share and to ask a parent/guardian to support them in their efforts to get involved. Parents can discuss this idea with their child and sign the worksheet as a sign of support.
- Invite someone from a local organization that is doing good in the community to come and speak to the class about what the organization does and how people can volunteer to help.



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AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Be the change you want to see in the world...

Question	Your Answers
What is something you feel strongly about in your community or that you would like to see changed in your community? Write down what you know about this passion or this change.	
In what ways is it happening already and who is involved? (Sometimes the work of change or progress is already in motion and all we need to do is join!)	
Who might be a good person (or group of people) to talk with about either starting this passion in your community, making this change, or getting involved? (If you don't know, write down who you could talk to about your ideas.)	
If this passion was introduced to your community or if the change happened, what do you think would happen in your community?	
What is your next step to getting involved?	