

Our Greatest Influences

While ultimately each person is responsible for his or her choices, there are many things that impact our ability to think, speak, and act in a way that is kind and responsible. This lesson gives students an opportunity to explore who and what influences them and their ability to make responsible decisions. They also get to reflect on the qualities that they admire in others and develop a deeper sense of self-awareness when they are being influenced to make a choice.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Self-Discipline

Lesson Timeframe

25-30 minutes

Required Materials☐ Influence Station Signs

Supplemental Resources: To remind you how important you are:

- ☐ World Without Teachers:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN3iLeq1828>
[Curriculum - SheHeroes](#)
- ☐ Rita Pierson: Every Kid Needs a Champion
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEnMTHhKdkw>

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.

**Lesson Objective**

Students will:

- Define influence.
- Identify what influences responsible decision making.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Being responsible is often equated with being perfect. Each one of us will drop the ball at some point. How you choose to handle those moments says a great deal about how you view your responsibilities. Take some time this week to examine your response to natural human error. Be kind to yourself and move forward.

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Work with a partner to talk about why they are influenced by certain people more than others.
- Share an image for each statement and highlight the keyword to help organize their thinking as a pre-writing strategy. Encourage them to think of three ways that people influence them the most.
- Eliminate the classroom movement if this is too distracting for your students.

Share

3-5 minutes

Review the definitions for **responsibility** and **perseverance**. See if students can recite the definitions without prompting. If this is the first lesson you are doing in this unit, present the following:

Responsibility: *being reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you.*

Perseverance: *trying our best, even when it gets hard, until we reach our goal.*

Invite students to share an example of perseverance or of taking responsibility that they experienced in the last week.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

For this lesson, we are going to talk about the things that impact our ability to make responsible decisions. Remind students that while we alone are ultimately responsible for the choices we make and the things we think and how we treat others, there are many things and people that influence how we make choices, think, and act.

Ask:

- What does the word **influence** mean?

Invite student responses. Depending on the answers you get, you can offer the following definition: *To influence is to have an effect or an impact on someone or something.*

Go Deeper:

How many of you think you have the power to influence others? Invite students to raise their hands.

Explain that today students are going to do an activity where we show who and what influences us in different parts of our lives.

Instructions:

1. Label different parts of your room with the following signs (pre-label in advance if possible):
 - a. Parents/Guardians
 - b. Grandparents/Extended Family
 - c. Friends/Peers
 - d. Celebrities/Musicians/Influencers
 - e. Teachers/Coaches
 - f. Religious Leaders
 - g. Political Leaders
2. Read the following statements and after each one, ask students to walk to the sign that shows who has the greatest influence on them in this area. Remind students that there are no right answers and ask them to keep track in their minds who has the greatest influence on them.

Who influences...

- How I treat my family or the people I live with
- How I treat my friends
- Whether I do my homework
- How I feel about myself
- What clothes I wear
- What music I listen to
- Who my friends are
- What kind of grades I get

- Which TV shows I watch
- What books I read
- Which computer/video games I play
- What career or job I want
- What movies I like
- How I solve problems
- What hobbies or sports I like



Empower

10-15 minutes

When the activity above is finished, have students return to their seats. The following segment can either be something they journal about, discuss as a large group, or discuss with a partner.

Group Reflection:

It will be interesting to see if students thought they had a variety of influences or if there were primarily one or two. As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions:

- *Who had the greatest influence on you, based on the list I read?*
- *What surprised you about who or what influences you?*
- *Are there areas where you would like to change who influences you?*
- *How do you think you influence others?*



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Personal Reflection:

You can choose to discuss the following prompts as a class or in small groups or ask students to journal privately about their reflections. You may also want to collect the reflections as writing samples and/or to share with parents/guardians if you have conferences coming up.

1. What kind of people influence your thoughts and decisions?
2. What things other than people can influence your thoughts and decisions?
3. Whose responsibility is it for you to make a good decision and be reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you?
4. How do you use perseverance to make good choices when you feel someone or something else influencing you to make a poor choice?
5. What is one thing you can start doing now to be a positive influence on someone else?

If there is time, invite students to read out what they wrote for #5. Together, encourage each student to be the positive influence they want to see in the world.



Extension Ideas

Using magazine pictures or drawing their own, have students create a collage (on 8.5"x11" pieces of paper) showing who influences them and in what areas. Under each photo or drawing, complete one of the following statements:

- _____ influences me to make good choices because...
- _____ influences what I enjoy doing because...
- _____ influences how I treat others because...
- _____ influences how I see the world the most because...



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AS A RECOMMENDED
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
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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/>