

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 end of the year can be hard- try a kindness tune up to keep spirits up. Start each school day with one specific gratitude for class. Open the floor for others to pipe in as well.

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).
- For the Share activity, students could also submit fictional scenarios where you would need to use courage when responding to a mean or hurtful comment or situation.



Share

5-7 minutes

Let's play a game to highlight ways we have been courageous when others have said mean or hurtful things. Don't worry: I will not be asking you to share yours with others.

- Give each student an index card.
- Have each student write or draw one time they used courage when someone was mean or hurtful. Remind them to NOT put their name on their card. No one will know who wrote what.
- Place all the index cards in a hat or basket.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
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- Have students lay their heads on their desks to listen.
- Draw each one out and read it aloud. Remind the students that no one should try to guess who wrote what (or to identify themselves).
- If students try to guess, or start to self identify, remind them that the goal of the game is to highlight ALL the different ways we can use courage and kindness in the face of anger and negativity.



Inspire

7-10 minutes

For this lesson, we are going to talk about how we must use courage to be kind in our communities. 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 desired, use this big picture example as well:

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



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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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. | |
| 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? | |