



Teacher's Guide

Words make a difference. Maintaining an atmosphere of acceptance and kindness in a classroom involves all members of the group in using words that are honest, non-confrontational, and non-stereotypical. The activities below offer practice in choosing words to recognize someone else's efforts, seeing from another's point of view, finding commonalities, avoiding stereotypes and solving problems in a narrative.

Note: To make sure every student in your class has a way to participate in these writing activities, differentiate instruction with graphic organizers, scribes, and other supports when necessary.

LESSON 1: THANK YOU NOTE

This activity gives student practice in writing thank you notes and uses the idea of sending

thank you notes to help build an atmosphere of acceptance and kindness in the classroom.

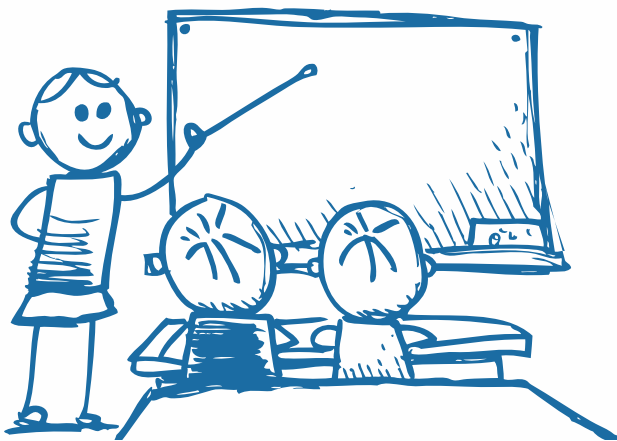
What you'll need:

- Printable *Thank You Box* label and empty cardboard box
- The Whiteboard Activity: "Thank You Note"
- Multiple copies of the reproducible activity master: "Thank You Note"

Time to complete: 10 minutes to assemble box; five minutes to make copies; 10 minutes to explain concept to students. Students make cards on their own time.

1. Introduce the Thank You Box and thank you notes as a way for students to recognize each other's kindness.
2. Download and print the label and tape it to a large box with a suggestion-box style slit on the top.
3. Print multiple copies of the "Thank You Note" PDF and leave them by the box.
4. Bookmark the whiteboard activity on classroom computers so students working independently or in small groups can access it easily.

Encourage students to recognize some of the generosity and kindness of their classmates. Discuss how students can be kind and express support for each other. They can use the whiteboard activity independently to create custom thank you notes or can simply fill in the reproducibles and leave thank you notes in the box. You should distribute the



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thank you notes (with a quick glance to make sure none are inappropriate!).

Pssst: It's a secret! Make sure students receive their notes without fanfare. Leave the notes in desks or cubbies after school or pass them to students when others won't notice. (It's not a competition and part of the fun is going under the radar!)

Take some time to discuss as a class what it feels like to thank or be thanked.

Writing Extensions

This is a great time to build in a short lesson about writing thank you notes.

Help students understand why it's important to be specific with the thank you messages they write by hand on their note cards. After they choose a phrase to headline and decorate their note, they should write a custom message in the space on the printed card.

You may also want to review letter-writing in general and the parts of a letter: date, greeting, body, and signature.

LESSON 2: PORTRAITS IN WORDS

This interactive activity gives students a blank slate to create a self-portrait in words—and allows them to find commonalities with other students. Students choose from a large word bank of descriptive words and phrases to create their “word self-portraits.” Student directions are found with the activity.

What you'll need:

- The interactive whiteboard activity: “Portraits in Words”
- Multiple copies of the reproducible activity master: “The Space We Share”

Time to complete: Several sessions of 30–40 minutes each. Some work is done independently or in teams. The work can be spread out over several weeks, depending on your classroom time constraints.

1. Post students' word portraits around the classroom. When all students have completed their portraits, suggest that students scan each other's portraits to find similarities—others who share a hobby, favorite sport, school subject, motto, etc.
2. When students complete the Venn diagrams in “The Space We Share,” ask them to think about how knowing what they have and don't have in common with other students might change the way they feel about themselves and their classmates. Also discuss why differences can be just as important as commonalities.

Student pairs should collaborate on a short written statement that explains what they learned about each other. Ask students to share these paragraphs with the class. If you have the equipment available to students, they may also want to make short videos of themselves talking about what they learned from sharing with the class.

Writing Extensions

To encourage talk and sharing about other aspects of identity, some students may want to draw family portraits or write paragraphs describing what they feel makes their family unique.

You might want to create a class portrait display of the individual portraits surrounding a class photo or individual “snaps” of the students.

The activity also lends itself to small-group and class-wide activity, creating group



portraits or a class portrait. Students work collaboratively to choose or vote on words and phrases to describe the group or class.

LESSON 3: IF THE SHOE FITS

These creative activities encourage students to write from the point of view of someone else, which is a first step in building empathy.

What you'll need:

- The interactive whiteboard activity: "If the Shoe Fits"
- Copies for each student of the reproducible activity master: "Put a Twist on It"

Time to complete: Several sessions of 30-40 minutes each, over one or two weeks' time. The reproducible activity master can be completed independently in class or as homework.

1. After students work on "If the Shoe Fits," talk with them about what strategies they found most helpful in seeing situations from a different point of view. Create a list of pointers for taking a different perspective, and help students return to these themes when conflicts arise in your community.
2. The "Put a Twist on It" activity gives students a chance to think and write creatively about what happens when one critical element of a well-known story is changed and alters some stereotypical assumptions about the characters. Encourage the students to share their stories with the class...and enjoy!

Writing Extension

Discuss the meaning of being in another person's shoes. Ask students to put

themselves in the shoes of someone they have read or heard about recently who was affected by a natural or human-made disaster and to write about it.

LESSON 4: WORDS MATTER

This exercise provides an opportunity to discuss how the choice of words can color how individuals see a situation or pursue a difference of opinion. Using words that are not "loaded" with stereotypes or anger is important in maintaining an atmosphere of acceptance and trust within a classroom.

What you'll need:

- The interactive whiteboard lesson: "Words Matter"
- Multiple copies of the reproducible activity master: "Words Matter"

Time to complete: One session of 30-40 minutes. The reproducible activity master can be completed independently in class or as homework.

1. Before you begin, find out what students understand about stereotypes. Come up with a working definition of the term, and talk about where stereotypes come from and how they can be harmful.
2. Help students understand that even "positive" stereotypes, such as "nice girls always look neat and well-groomed," can be counterproductive.
3. Talk about real-life situations where stereotypes might be communicated in subtle ways and what we can do to combat them.
4. Discuss how even ordinary words and phrases can be too confrontational—



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especially when they generalize or demean: “you always get your way” or “that’s a dumb idea.”

Answer Key:

1. The only non-confrontational statement is “I don’t know how that will work.” The other statements characterize: “That’s a dumb idea.” “Is that the best you can come up with?”
2. “He just made an error in spelling” is a simple statement of fact. The other two statements make assumptions about all boys or all boys and girls.
3. The first and the third statements are stereotypes. The first assumes all nurses are female. The third makes a sweeping statement about nurses’ personalities.
4. The first two statements are sweeping and confrontational and emotional.

Writing Extension

Have students make posters or booklets for the school hallways as part of a campaign to make stereotyping and bullying unacceptable.

LESSON 5: WHAT’S THE STORY?

This creative-writing activity uses story telling as a medium for problem solving and for thinking about how stereotypes and preconceived notions can alter the meaning of our writing and thinking.

What you’ll need:

- The interactive whiteboard activity: “What’s the Story?”
- Multiple copies of the reproducible activity master: “All in the Details”

Time to complete: Two to three sessions of

30–40 minutes each. Some work can be done independently, as homework, or in teams.

1. As a group, discuss the pictures in the whiteboard activity. What might be going on in each picture? Ask students to draw inferences from the image. What generalizations can they make about the situations in the images? What do they think about the people in the pictures? What is going on? What might happen next? Are they relying on stereotypes as they begin to think through the narrative of the stories? Help students think about any generalizations they make about the people in the images.
2. Have students select the images and starter phrases they want for their stories. Help them print out the pages if needed.
3. Do some pictures feel safer or easier to turn into a story than others? If so, talk openly with your class about why. Encourage them to think about difficult issues the pictures bring up.
4. Explain to students that one of the great things about writing a story is that the author can control what happens and can decide how to solve the problem in the plot.
5. Distribute a copy of the activity master “All in the Details” to each student.
6. When students answer the question “How will the story end?” in “All in the Details,” remind them that while a fictional story can be resolved by the author, real-life issues of conflict and acceptance can be messy and don’t always end in clear resolutions.



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Writing Extensions

Students may write longer stories about the pictures that deal with issues of acceptance involving appearance, religion, family structure, and other aspects of identity.

Try having students write in small groups of three to five. A group should choose a picture together. Students take turns adding to the story, and then share with the class. Have the authors discuss how each member's contribution affected how the story evolved.

ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Book Club

Choose a book from the booklist—or a favorite of your own that deals with acceptance—and read it to (or with) the class. Consider your class's makeup and any particular class concerns when making your choice. Each book on our list has several questions that can spur class discussions. You might want to suggest parents read the book with their children as well.

Debate

A debate format—in which each side is required to support its position with facts—can be useful when controversial local or national issues come up during the school year, or to understand why long-settled historical issues were once controversial. Student debaters should research an issue carefully and take a side. You may want to select topics for younger students or students who may have trouble coming up with a topic on their own.

Each side should prepare a list of facts and supporting opinions. Give each side time to present arguments. The class, or an outside team of judges, should award points for how clearly the team presented its arguments and how thoughtful the presentation was. Teams should lose points for unsupported opinions or accusations.

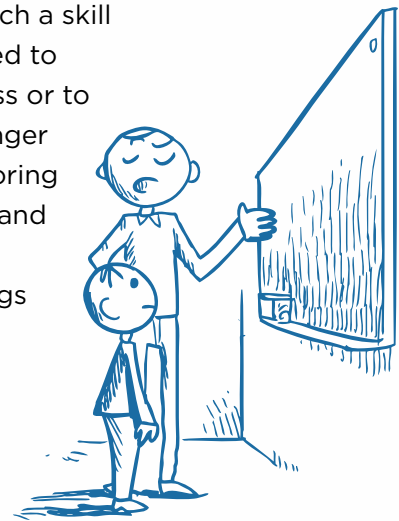
OPTIONAL SCHOOL-WIDE ACTIVITIES

School's Got Talent!

A school-wide talent show is a great chance to showcase and honor diversity and gifts. Students who are not interested in performing can participate by recruiting performers, designing posters, programs or props, or preparing refreshments.

Share My Skills

Students can develop pride and build important connections bridging age and other differences by sharing what they know. Volunteers can sign up to teach a skill they have mastered to others in their class or to students in a younger grade. After a tutoring session, the tutor and the learner should make a list of things they learned or gained from the experience.





NATIONAL STANDARDS AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS

The lessons in this program address the following national standards and benchmarks:

Language Arts Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

- Prewriting: Uses prewriting strategies to plan written work
- Drafting and Revising: Uses strategies to draft and revise written work
- Evaluates own and others' writing
- Uses strategies to write for a variety of purposes
- Writes expository compositions
- Writes narrative accounts, such as poems and stories

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Language Arts

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly
 - a.** Introduce a topic clearly and group-related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension
 - b.** Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic
 - c.** Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., *another*, *for example*, *also*, *because*)

- d.** Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic
 - e.** Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences
 - a.** Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally
 - b.** Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations
 - c.** Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events
 - d.** Use concrete words, phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely
 - e.** Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events
 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

