Grade 3 • Ages 8-9

Communicating with Empathy

This unit builds students' abilities to put empathy into action and offer kind things to say.
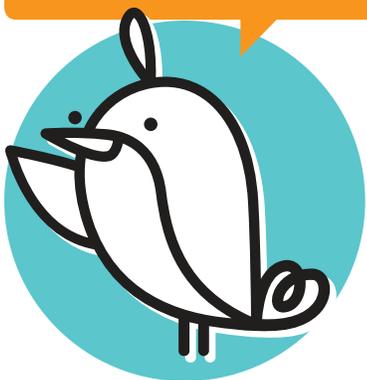
Unit Objective

Students will be able to describe positive ways to communicate that show care, consideration, concern and empathy for others. They will be able to give examples of pro-social behaviors such as helping others, being respectful of others, cooperation, consideration, self-control, and not teasing others. They will be able to describe some of the ways that young children can be helpful, with intention, to others and analyze how a community in an African country is similar to and different from their own community. They will be able to develop the language to respond kindly to people from a variety of cultures.

Introducing This Unit To Your Students

For the next few weeks, we are going to talk about how to show care and concern for others through our words and actions. What does it mean to you to show care and concern? What are some ways you show that you care?

Allow time for students to respond and discuss, either as a class or in small groups. You can also use this time to introduce the Kindness Concepts. You can create community definitions or share the one listed below. Consider using the Kindness Concept Posters as a way to reinforce learning.

Kindness means being friendly, generous or considerate to ourselves and others through our words, thoughts and actions.

These lesson plans were created by The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation. For more information, please visit randomactsofkindness.org

If you have questions or comments, please email us at teacherhelp@randomactsofkindness.org

Kindness Concepts

Consider writing key terms on the board before class to introduce vocabulary and increase understanding.
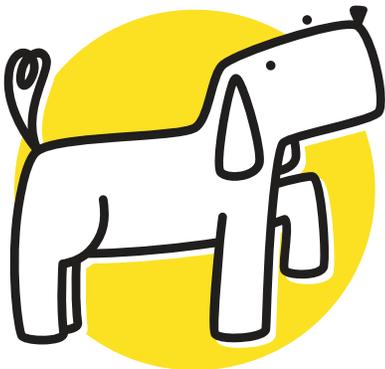
COMPASSION   Being aware when others are sick, sad, or hurt and wanting to help.

CARING   Feeling and showing concern for others.

Unit Lessons

There are four lessons in this unit plus an optional lesson if you have time.

LESSON TITLE	LESSON GOALS	LESSON MATERIALS
Lesson 1: Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters	Students will identify positive ways to communicate that show care, consideration, concern and empathy for others.	• John Steptoe, Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters, New York: Amistad Publishers, 1987 or YouTube video of book being read • RAK journals
Lesson 2: Expressing Empathy	Students will identify the difference between positive/compassionate responses and negative/unkind responses to people who are in challenging situations.	• 15 to 20 age-appropriate newspaper or magazine pictures or Internet images of people who are poor, injured, sad, disappointed, frustrated, angry, etc. (Make sure to show care as you select images; it is important to avoid reinforcing stereotypes about poverty and feelings.) Write responses on the back of some of the images before class, using suggestions noted under activity description and then allow students to develop their own responses.
Lesson 3: Caring Role-Plays	Students will practice kind and caring ways to respond in different role-play scenarios.	• Caring Role-Plays, two copies, one cut apart before class
Lesson 4: Empathy Across the Genres	Students will write a story or descriptive poem that focuses on caring and empathy.	• RAK journals • Paper and pencil
Optional Lesson: Discovering Africa	Students will complete a research sheet about a country in Africa.	• Discovering Africa research worksheet B • Books or research materials about Africa. Some possible websites include: http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/ (Enter country in search feature.) http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html (Enter country in search feature.)

Unit Notes

The activities in this lesson focus on a central theme and connect to different academic curriculum areas.

The lessons are intended to be easy to teach and fun to use while helping to develop social and emotional skills.

Lesson activities use a variety of modalities to address different learning styles and build on each other.

Each lesson includes choice of evaluation or reflection questions, which can be written, discussed or used as journal entries. Consider writing these on the board before the lesson begins.

The activities also incorporate key Kindness Concepts, which can be introduced before teaching the lesson or as the concepts are discussed in the lesson. Consider displaying the Kindness Concept Posters during the unit. See the RAK Educator Guide and Building Trust in the Classroom for information about using Kindness Concepts to create a healthy classroom environment and help students develop pro-social behaviors.

Each activity includes tips for how to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners.

The Kindness Tool Kit is another way to meet the needs of diverse learners. See the RAK Educator Guide for how to create and use this tool kit.

RAK also has developed Focusing Strategies and Problem-Solving Strategies to help students better regulate their emotions, think through challenging situations, and build healthy relationships, friendships and community. See the RAK Educator Guide for more information about incorporating those strategies into the unit.

Establishing kindness as the norm in your classroom positively influences class-room culture. By setting kindness as the expected behavior and having everyone agree to that norm, your students gain responsibility for maintaining an environ-ment that is kind to everyone

Regularly revisiting the topics or questions raised during discussions will expand student understanding of the concepts. Scripted explanations are provided, but feel free to use language that feels natural for you.

The Common Core, 21st Century, SEL and Colorado P-12 Academic Standards met in this unit are listed at the start of each lesson. A Learning Standards Key is provided on the website for your reference.