BE FEARLESS BE KIND:
AN EMPATHY TOOLKIT

Brought to you by: Ashoka's Start Empathy Initiative in collaboration with generationOn, generously sponsored by the Hasbro Children's Fund

INTRODUCTION

The World is Changing...

Social challenges are increasingly complex. How are we preparing our children for this world of change? In this new environment, the skills of empathy and kindness matter more than ever. Empathy and kindness help us build authentic relationships, understand problems through the perspectives of others, and create meaningful solutions. The faster we master empathy and kindness, the faster we can shape a world where problems no longer outrun solutions.

...and school is changing.

It's time for our education system to catch up to these new realities. This is why the Hasbro Children's Fund, generationOn and Ashoka's Start Empathy Initiative -- a global collaboration of social entrepreneurs, educators, parents and students working to make empathy as essential as reading and math in education -- have created this toolkit for teachers.

This toolkit is powered by the expertise and experiences of Start Empathy's network of Ashoka Changemaker Schools -- over 200 schools around the world who are practicing"changemaker education" in their curricula and culture by distinctively cultivating empathy, leadership, creative problem solving, and teamwork in their students. The activities in this toolkit will help teachers 1) Build the Foundation for empathy and kindness in and out of the classroom, and 2) Activate Empathy and Kindness with specific activities that can be done in class and at home.

By practicing and prioritizing empathy and kindness in our homes, schools, and communities, we hope to build a future where every young person is on a journey of becoming an empathetic changemaker.

What is Empathy?

Empathy is the little-known giant. Empathy is hardwired into our brain and when harnessed, plays a crucial role in innovation, changemaking, and solving systemic problems. The textbook definition of empathy is "the ability to understand what someone is feeling," but when put into practice, empathy means so much more:

It means being able to grasp the many sides of today's complex problems and the capacity to collaborate with others to solve them; it means being as good at listening to the ideas of others as articulating your own; it means being able to lead a team one day, and participate as a team member the next.

Cognitive empathy expands our social imagination beyond our own direct experience. It is what gives us the **will and the tools to be effective changemakers**. Empathy in action is foundational in our ability to resolve conflict and make decisions with no precedents and drive positive change.

Why is it Important?

We hear a lot about grit, determination and perseverance. But those are all about 'me,' the individual. Empathy means looking up from your desk, looking around you at others, and taking ownership for the community you are in -- whether it's a classroom, a neighborhood, a country or a planet. Our conviction is that in a world defined by connectivity and change, empathy is a key currency. If we want a society or a world of changemakers, where problems no longer outrun solutions, then we have to prioritize empathy because changemaking is empathy in action.

Videos

- What is empathy? We asked some students at PS in the Bronx what empathy meant to them. Here are their answers. **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icIlUdTEQnU**
- Brené Brown on Empathy **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw**

How Empathy Helps Students From the Making Caring Common Project

- Higher engagement
- Higher academic achievement
- Stronger and more positive classroom community
- Stronger communication skills
- Lower likelihood of bullying behavior
- Less aggressive behaviors and emotional disorders
- More positive relationships

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Children learn empathy when they are in an environment that helps them understand the perspectives of others and how to act accordingly. These environments include:

1. **Supportive relationships:** enabling children to act with kindness requires building strong relationships between children and teachers.
    - This **blog post and video** from Momentous Institute shares how to make vision statements with your students and their families.
2. **Modeling:** children learn by observation and gain insight on how to interact with others by watching the adults around them.
    - This Teacher **Self-Reflection Guide** can help you self-monitor your daily interactions with students.
3. **Physical Environment:** Ashoka Changemaker Schools are intentional about how the physical environment sets the tone for social and emotional health, for self-efficacy, and even for risk-taking. In the right kind of environment, children feel safe in finding their place, space and voice in the school.
    - **Momentous Institute:** provides a comfortable space for students to go in the classroom where they can regulate their emotions. Check-out these directions to create a **calm-down basket**.
        a. **Environmental Charter High School:** between some of the busiest freeways in the country — students dodge chickens and pick grapes on their way to class. The students play an active role in caring for the flora and fauna on campus, including everything from fruit trees to fish. They use **Tribes** in their advisory, professional devopment and school community building activities.

(left:) Here is a model from **Momentous Institute**, an Ashoka Changemaker School in Dallas, TX, that depicts the foundation that children draw on to be changemakers.

Build Empathy Through Class Culture

Routines and procedures enable students to understand the class expectations. How are they supposed to act toward other students? What are they supposed to do when they start losing control of their emotions? What are they supposed to do when a conflict occurs?

Schools can create a foundation for students to act with empathy and kindness when they have the following types of routines and procedures set in place:

- **RULES OF KINDNESS**: A set of student-generated rules for how to act toward each other.
- **IDENTIFYING FEELINGS**
- **IMPLEMENT SELF-REGULATION PROCEDURES:** A set of strategies that students can use to get their emotions back under control.
- **TEACH SELF-AWARENESS STRATEGIES:** A set of choices that students can make to help themselves maintain a healthy emotional state.
- **USE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCEDURES:** A set of strategies that students can use to solve conflicts amongst themselves.

IDENTIFY FEELINGS

ACTIVITY: Emotions Continuum

Best for elementary school

One way to build students' emotional intelligence is to ask them to identify how they are feeling. By asking students how they are feeling every morning at arrival, students learn to identify their emotions and build emotional vocabulary. Teachers are also better able to understand what that student needs to learn his or her best that day. Athena Kopsidas at the **Inspired Teaching School** engages her class deeply in identifying emotions at the beginning of the day using the emotions continuum: a display of emotion faces that students use to indicate how they are feeling. The emotions continuum, as well as other ways that Ms. Kopsidas builds empathy during arrival time, can be seen in **this video**.

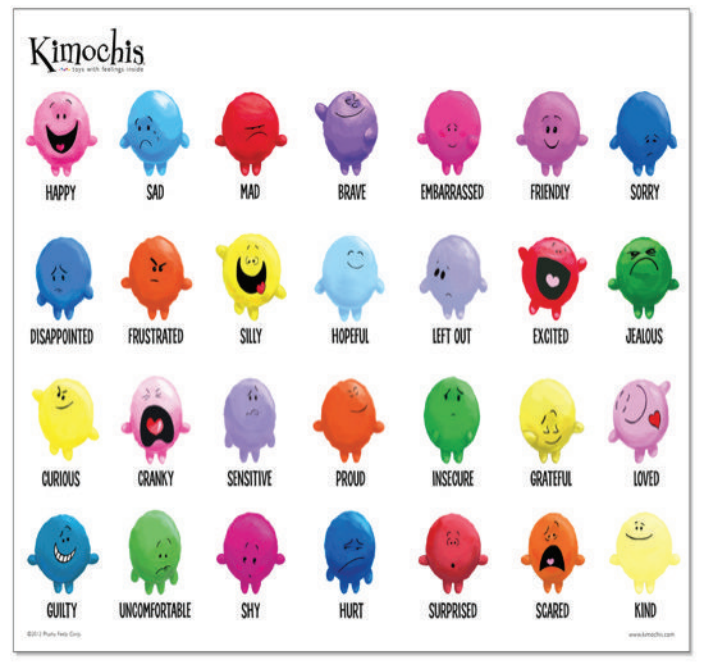
Step-by-Step

1. Brainstorm with your students a list of emotions.
2. Take pictures of students demonstrating facial expressions for those emotions (make sure you photograph one student per emotion, and get a clear view of his face).
3. Create placards with these emotions and hang them in your classroom.
4. Write each students' name on a clothespin.
5. Every morning, have your student move his or her clothespin to the placard that best captures how he or she is feeling.
6. Review as a class how everyone is feeling during their morning meeting and discusses how everyone should act in reaction to their peers' feelings.

ACTIVITY: Practicing Empathy Activity

Best for elementary school

- Helps create stronger emotional connections with each other.
- Builds empathy that kids can put into practice when completing service projects.



Here's what you need!

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- How Do You Feel handout

Facilitator's Note

Talking about differences and prejudices can be a difficult topic to discuss with youth. Not everyone may agree or share the same views. It is important to create a safe space for kids to discuss topics that will require them to be open-minded, express their feelings and feel vulnerable.

Prior to starting the activity, create a safe space by outlining some discussion rules. For example:

- Make sure everyone contributes! Some youth may want to share their opinions more frequently than others and some will shy away, but make sure all participants share the mic.
- To ensure that everyone is listening to what participants are saying, only one person should be speaking at a time.

- What participants say in the room stays in the room. However, what the group learns in the room, is shared with the community.

Activity Instructions

1. Open with a discussion on the word **Empathy**. Ask the group if anyone can define the word or provide examples of empathy.
2. Share the definition: Empathy is a set of skills that involves the practice of relating to others with acceptance, understanding and sensitivity to diverse experiences.
3. Explain that the group will be assigned scenarios so they can practice empathy, using the following steps:
    a. Watch and Listen—Listen and observe feelings. Use the "How do You Feel?" worksheet to understand different emotions.
    b. Remember—Connect with the person by recalling a moment where you experienced a similar situation or felt the same emotion.
    c. Imagine—Put yourself in other people's shoes and think about how you would feel in that situation.
    d. Ask—Ask the person, "How are you feeling?"
    e. Show—Demonstrate your support through encouraging words or simple actions.
4. Divide the group into smaller groups of 3-4 people. Distribute scenarios that will enable the participants to practice empathy using the aforementioned steps. Each scenario will have a minimum of 2 roles: a person needing support and someone demonstrating the 5 steps of empathy. Some scenarios can include:
    - A child is being bullied on the playground for not sharing their toy with another child.
    f. A young woman was told she could not be part of a sports team because of her gender.
    g. A student's grandfather is really ill and he/she doesn't know what to do to help him feel better.
5. Give the groups a few minutes to prepare their role play. Then, have each group perform in front of the group.
6. After each scenario, ask the participants for their thoughts.
    - What parts of the 5 steps did they do well?
    h. How would they show empathy to someone if this happens to them in real life?
    i. Have they experienced similar situations in the past?
7. **Reflection**
    - Why is empathy important?
    j. Why is understanding empathy important to service?
    k. How can we share the steps to practicing empathy with others?

Resources

Brené Brown on Empathy is a short video on the power of empathy.

SELF-REGULATION

Ask teachers what some of their biggest recurring challenges are in the classroom and chances are they will tell you it's having kids who are unable to self-regulate. What's important to understand is that children cannot learn how to self-regulate until they have experienced co-regulation with a caring adult. Often children who have a history of trauma or toxic stress have a difficult time mastering self-regulation because they are in a constant state of fight, flight or freeze. The good news is that all children can be taught explicit strategies to learn how to manage their emotions.

ACTIVITY: Settle Your Glitter
Best for elementary school

A favorite strategy (that works just as well on adults as children) is one we call "Settle Your Glitter." To do this activity, you:
1. Buy or create glitter jars or balls. Check out this blog from Momentous Institute on how to create your own glitter jars.
2. Use this script from Momentous Institute as you give your student a glitter jar or ball:

ACTIVITY: 7 min reboot
Best for middle and high school

Changemaker High School in Arizona, instituted the 7-minute re-boot last year after reading about the program here. It's a great introduction to relaxation and mindfulness that can be used inside and outside of the classroom. Ms Linda Cato has used this activity with students suffering from anxiety, exhaustion, and other emotional states that have interfered with participation. Many students struggle to identify what they are feeling which makes it difficult for them to understand what other people are feeling. This technique can be used to intentionally grow self-awareness of personal emotional states as a precursor to apply empathy in being able to identify what others are feeling. It also speaks to the tremendous power of the pause: if young people can embrace a pause, and understand it as an alternative to reactionary behaviors, we can move on to reflection and empathy.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

ACTIVITY: Embracing Diversity
Best for elementary and middle school

More than ever, kids and teens need to learn about and practice identifying and valuing difference. Embracing Diversity is an interactive activity to help children recognize and appreciate differences. Youth will explore the importance of diversity and its significance within their community by categorizing different objects and discussing how those different characteristics can be used to describe the unique qualities and attributes in people.

Here's what you need!

- Box of random bottom or objects such as buttons, toys or things around your room
- Flip chart
- Markers

Facilitator's Note

Talking about differences can be a difficult topic to discuss with youth. Not everyone may agree or share the same views. It is important to create a safe space for kids to discuss topics that will require them to be open-minded, express their feelings and feel vulnerable.

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- Make sure everyone contributes! Some youth may want to share their opinions more frequently than others and some will shy away, but make sure all participants share the mic.
- To ensure that everyone is listening to what participants are saying, only one person should be speaking at a time.
- What participants say in the room stays in the room. However, what the group learns in the room, is shared with the community.

Activity Instructions

1. Divide group into smaller teams of 3-4 participants. Give each team a handful of random objects. For example, you can distribute office supplies, buttons, household items, etc.
2. Instruct the groups to discuss the different characteristics of the items. How they would separate the objects into smaller sub-groups? For example, would they separate the items by shape, color, form, texture, etc.?
3. On flip chart paper or a whiteboard, record all of the ways the group characterized the objects. Ask the group to brainstorm additional ways to sort the objects that are not listed. Let the groups continue to sort the items 3-4 more times and record the categories.
4. When the participants are done sorting the items, review the list of characteristics. Discuss how the list is related to how we categorize human beings. Use the categories listed as questions. For example: How do we categorize or identify each other according to our shape? How do we categorize or identify each other when it comes to color?

Facilitator's Note: Below are examples of ways in which the categories identified by the group's exploration could be applied to people.

- Thick vs. Thin: Thick or thin-skinned.

- Old vs. New: Out of date, wisdom and experience vs. alive, immature or inexperienced.
- Concave vs. Convex: Open, accepting of new ideas and views vs. guarded, holding people at arms' lengths.

5. Reflection: Discuss major takeaways from the activity. Use the questions below to guide your discussion:
    - How does this activity help you understand diversity?
    - Why is diversity important?
6. How can we teach others the importance of diversity? What could you do to make your community or school a more diverse or inclusive place? Closing: Reiterate that people, like the objects they worked with earlier, each have a diverse array of qualities and traits. Those differences offer a unique set of perspective, opinions and skills to every community.

Resources

- View Being Different is Beautiful for an animated video for children explaining diversity.
- Do one Thing for Diversity and Inclusion has an informational video about diversity in the world.
- Check out What does diversity mean? For a short puppet's video about diversity.

SELF-AWARENESS

In addition to helping children learn how to regulate their emotions, teachers must help children maintain the emotional state that enables them to act with empathy and kindness toward others. However, children might need different strategies to maintain a positive emotional state. Therefore, it is critical that teachers create the space to help their students learn what actions and tools help them remain calm, focused, and open to others' perspectives.

ACTIVITY: Rethink Classroom Seating
Best for elementary, middle and high School

Classroom Seating: A fourth-grade teacher at **Momentous Institute** in Dallas, TX gave students the option of sitting on exercise balls or traditional chairs in her classroom. Students are able to make the choice to use the balls when they feel the need for them to better focus. They are learning the skill of figuring out how to monitor their own inner state and make adjustments to their environment to be more effective. Check out this **blog post** that the teacher wrote about the change!

Sensory Input: Laura White noticed that some of her preschoolers and pre kindergarteners at **Maury Elementary** in Washington, DC really struggled to behave with kindness toward their peers during circle time. After observing these students, she realized that these couple students were pinching and interrupting their peers because they had unmet sensory needs - sitting and listening to a peer was really hard for them physically! When Ms. Laura gave these students the option to sit on studded, squishy pads, it was much easier for them to keep their hands to themselves and listen to others.

ACTIVITY: Gender Mysteries
Best Middle and High School

Rainbow Community School's Omega Middle School program honor's a child's right to a rite of passage through seasonal cyclical traditions, daily centering routines, educational material addressing puberty, activities grounded in the body, and opportunities for artistic self-expression. Students' quest for meaning, purpose, connection, and identity is met with fierce devotion by their mentors and teachers. Most notable are the Omega specific programs of Gender Mysteries and Mysteries Council that directly address this adolescent need for transformation and initiation.

Within **Gender Mysteries** students are given opportunities to confidentially ask questions regarding gender, gender identity, sexuality, purpose, community, and identity while also learning tools and activities to help them stay grounded, powerful, connected, and respectful towards themselves and others. Teachers make rites of passage readings available to parents as well so that families are empowered to hold a prominent and respected role in this conversation.

USE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCEDURES

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are inevitable, but whether they turn into opportunities to build empathy or lead to ongoing conflict depends on how they conflicts are solved. In Ashoka Changemaker Schools, teachers use a variety of problem-solving procedures to seize the opportunity to teach students how to calm their emotions, then take the perspective of others alongside their own views to find a solution.

ACTIVITY: Ask Restorative Questions
Best for elementary school

Children do not always know why they may have engaged in a behavior that is harmful to others. At **Ephesus Elementary** in Chapel Hill, NC, teachers use restorative questions to help students arrive at a solution. By using restorative questions, teachers can help students understand the reason for their actions, the reason for other's reactions, and how to prevent doing the same harm in the future.

Guiding Questions

1. What were you feeling/thinking before that happened?
2. What were you feeling/thinking when that happened?
3. What were you feeling/thinking after that happened?
4. Whom do you think has been affected by your actions? How have they been affected?
5. What do you think you need to make things right?

ACTIVITY: Create a Peace Table
Best for elementary school

At **Urban Montessori Charter School** in Oakland, CA, and other Montessori schools throughout the world, children use peace tables to solve conflicts. A peace table is a small table that is big enough to seat two children and is situated in a quiet part of the classroom. Teachers can mediate conflicts at the peace table if necessary, but the children should come up with the solution themselves. By using peace tables, children are able to learn how to solve conflicts peacefully on their own.

Step-by-Step

1. Place a small table and two children in a quiet part of your classroom.
2. Choose a calming peace symbol (like a stone) and put it on the table.
3. Model for students how to use the peace table: After becoming upset with a classmate, a student can invite the classmate to the peace table. The person who is upset takes the peace symbol and uses an "I feel" statements to explain how he feels when the classmate does a particular action. The student then passes the peace object to the other student, and they pass it back and forth as they take turns speaking. The two can then agree on a solution.

ACTIVITY: Use the Navajo Peacemaking Process
Best for elementary and middle school

The **STAR School** in Flagstaff, AZ uses the Navajo peacemaking process to solve conflicts. Here is **documentary** that 7th and 8th grade students at STAR School created to explain the peacemaking process so that others can use it. The explanation and demonstration of the peacemaking process starts at 13:00 and goes through minute 20:00, and the explanation and demonstration of playground peacemaking starts at 20:33 and goes through 22:45. We recommend watching the whole documentary to better understand STAR School and the holistic nature of peacemaking and community at this school.

Step-by-Step

1. Understanding relationships
2. Using relationships to establish shared connection
3. Outlining the rules of interaction
4. Defining the problem
5. Restoration/correcting what the problem was
6. Clarifying the settlement
7. Ending with thanks

BUILD EMPATHY INTO THE SCHOOL DAY

Practice Empathy and Kindness Throughout the Day

Teachers can embed opportunities to build students' empathy throughout the day by increasing their emotional literacy, prompting them to immerse themselves in others' experiences, and practicing teamwork. Below you will find activities to strengthen students' empathy skills, organized by the typical parts of a school day: Arrival, work, transitions, recess, and departure.

ARRIVAL: Set the Mood for the Day

The arrival sets the mood for the day. How do Ashoka Changemaker Schools use arrival to help students practice their empathy skills? In the following pages, you will learn some specific strategies for practicing empathy in the very beginning of the school day.

ACTIVITY: Kindness is Cool Notes
Best for elementary school

Giving children examples of kindness is a good way to help them understand what empathy in action looks like. At Spring Mill Elementary in Indianapolis, IN, students try to observe their peers doing kind acts, which are later celebrated on the announcements. By catching their peers being kind and showcasing those actions, students are able to identify specific examples of being kind and see kindness lifted up as a community value.

Step-by-Step

1. Create a box with your class where the notes will be deposited.
2. Create a template note or use this template from Spring Mill Elementary.
3. Tell your students at the beginning of the day to watch for people being kind. that when they see a peer do a kind act, write it down on the note and put it in the box.
4. Read the notes at the end of the day.

ACTIVITY: Centering
Best for elementary and middle school

Many schools are now intentionally incorporating mindfulness into their daily curriculum. Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as paying attention in a particular way, on purpose in the present moment, non-

judgmentally. Using mindfulness techniques with children can also be an effective way to give them tools to self-regulate. In Susan Waddell's 7th and 8th-grade classroom at **Rainbow Community School**, the first part of every morning is used for a series of mindfulness activities called "centering." Centering gives her students an opportunity to leave behind the hustle of transporting to school and transitioning into the classroom.

Step-by-Step: Susan's process for leading centering:

1. Determine in advance a schedule for students to lead centering.
2. As students shuffle into the room, have them grab a meditation pillow and sit in a circle.
3. The student leading centering selects an inspiring quote and writes it on the board. Other students copy the note in their journals.
4. The student leading the centering lights a candle leads every one in three breaths: as he slowly raises his right hand up, everyone inhales deeply; as his hand goes gently downward, the group slowly exhales. Repeat three times.

LUNCH: MAKE THE MOST OF COMMUNITY MEALS

Lunch time can be stressful for both teachers and students alike when students are not practicing empathy in the lunchroom. Here are some strategies that you can use to promote empathy at lunchtime.

ACTIVITY: Gratitude Statements
Best for elementary and middle school

At Rainbow Community School in Asheville, NC, students say a gratitude statement before they have lunch. This builds empathy by emphasizing family and cultural traditions that are held by various students in the class, enabling them to take the perspective of others and experiencing gratitude for others. The blessings bring mindfulness and appreciation for the food and for the natural and human resources that went into growing, making and preparing it. Students can take turns choosing the gratitude statement for the class, and you can easily build in literacy (i.e. rhyme, metaphor) and math (i.e. counting, estimating). You can also consider creating gratitude statements to use at other parts of the day.

Here are some gratitude statements that you can use at lunch:

1. “Thank you for this food that we are about to receive and may we always remember to be truly thankful”
2. “Blessing on the blossoms, blessings on the roots, blessings on the seeds and stems and blessings on this food”
3. “Mother Earth, Mother Earth, take this seed and give it birth.Father Sun, gleam and glow until the roots begin to grow. Brother Wind, breath and blow until the green grass will grow. Sister Rain Sister Rain shed thy tears to swell the grain. Earth, sun, wind and rain turn to gold thy living grain.”
4. Work with your class to create your own collection!

TRANSITIONS: MOVE WITH PEACE AND CONTROL

Transitions are great opportunities for students to practice their empathy skills. As an extra benefit, it keeps them engaged while moving them from one activity or place to the next. Here are some examples of how Ashoka Changemaker Schools make the most of transition times to teach empathy.

ACTIVITY: Breathing Exercises
Best for elementary and middle school

At **Momentous School** in Dallas, TX, the art teacher uses **this breathing** exercise, documented in a video, to help students transition from a high-energy art activity to a low energy walk through the hallway.

Step-by-Step:

1. Hit a chime.
2. Tell students to breath up (this means breathing in and lifting their hands up, by their sides, and finally stretched above their heads with their hands touching together).
3. Then students breath out and bring their hands down, touching together, past their faces to the center of their chests..
4. Then students breath up, but instead of bringing their hands above their head, they lift their hands to the sides of their bodies.
5. Finally, students breath out and cross their arms in front of their chests.
6. Students walk silently to the line and out the door, through the hallway and to their next destination.

ACTIVITY: Walking Meditation
Best for elementary and middle school

At **Rainbow Community School** in Asheville, NC, teachers use walking meditation to build both teamwork and mindfulness. Walking meditations both enable students to calmly work together to regulate themselves as a group, as well as gets students efficiently from one place to another. It is a practice that brings mindfulness to our bodies and awareness to our surroundings including creating a meaningful space for classmates.

Step-by-Step:

1. Practice mindfully walking with students by having them walk in a circle.
2. Tell them to take one step, think about feeling their heels on the floor, then their toes. What else are they feeling? Tell them to notice how they breath - are they breathing fast, or slow? Are they breathing in rhythm with their stepping? Are you walking faster than others around you? Slower?
3. Once the students have practiced, give them a phrase or concept to think about as they walk from one place to another.

RECESS: PRACTICE EMPATHY AND KINDNESS

As an unstructured time, recess is prone to break-downs in empathy. The following examples are some structures which Ashoka Changemaker Schools have put in place to help students practice empathy during their free time.

ACTIVITY: Build a Buddy Bench
Best for elementary and middle school

One student-led trend that is spreading across the United States is the buddy bench. **Originally created** by a student named Christian at Roundtree Elementary School in York, PA, buddy benches provide a way for students to signal that they are feeling sad or lonely during recess and want help. Several Ashoka Changemaker Schools have buddy benches, including Lusher Charter School in New Orleans, LA. A team of students worked together to create a buddy bench at Lusher; students designed the bench, painted the bench, and work together to ensure the bench is used properly. According to kindergarten teacher Elizabeth Sepanik, “This project was created based on the students’ ideas and desire to help others.”

Step-by-Step:

1. Select a bench as a class or school community. Ideally it is one that the students design and make their own, but any bench will work as long as everyone understands its purpose.
2. Explain to students that if someone does not have a friend to play with, he or she can sit on the buddy bench, and another student will come help that student.

DEPARTURE: CLOSING THE DAY

Closing the day presents the opportunity for everyone in the class to leave on a positive note, as well as practice their ability to recognize others. Here are some ways that teachers at Ashoka Changemaker Schools incorporate empathy into the end of the day.

ACTIVITY: Hold an Appreciation Circle
Best for elementary and middle school

At **Rainbow Community School**, each class closes the school day with an appreciation circle. By taking the time to show gratitude for others' actions throughout the school day, students develop a stronger sense of their values.

Step-by-Step:

1. In the beginning of the day, have each student draw the name of another student from a bucket.
2. Have a value of the day already selected. This could be related to one of your class rules, or related to the school values.
3. Tell your students to watch whichever student whose name they pulled for examples of when they demonstrated the value of the day.
4. At the end of the day, the gather the class in a circle. Ask students to share who they were observing and examples of when they saw that person practicing the value of the day.

THE CHANGEMAKER JOURNEY

Middle and High School

Being a changemaker is a journey, not a destination. As a changemaker, students harness the power of 'why?' and generate their own solutions to the problems they see in the world around them. Ashoka has created a few steps to helps students launch their changemaking journeys and turn these challenges into opportunities for improving their lives and the lives of others.

To download the full Sustainable Action Plan for students to use to define their passions, develop their ideas, and take action, see **HERE**. For more resources for young changemakers, see Start Empathy's website **HERE**.

APPENDIX: Additional Resources

- **Start Empathy**: On Start Empathy, Ashoka publishes stories of empathy's role in society, as well as resources for educators and parents to build empathy in children.
- **Generation On Projects**: Generation On organizes many large-scale service-learning projects in which your class could participate.
- **Momentous Institute**: In addition to being a school, Momentous Institute conducts research on their practice. They make many of their strategies available for free through their blog, and also sell materials and resources at an affordable price. They also conduct research on the effectiveness of their approach.
- **Responsive Classroom**: Responsive classroom provides training, books, and free blog posts on ways to build a positive relationship with students and engage them actively as learners.
- **The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project**: This organization provides training on how to do home visits.
- **The Parenting Changemakers Toolkit**: Developed by Ashoka, this free toolkit is for parents who would like to learn more ways to build empathy, teamwork, leadership, and changemaking skills in their children.

DEEPER DIVE

Forming Strong Relationships
The first step to enabling children to act with kindness is building strong relationships between children and teachers.

ACTIVITY: Conduct Home Visits
Best for elementary, middle and high school

At several Ashoka Changemaker Schools (**Momentous Institute** in Dallas, TX, **Maury Elementary** in Washington, DC and others), teachers spend the weeks before school starts visiting every one of their new students and families in the place where they are the most themselves – their homes. By conducting home visits, teachers are able to meet parents and students in a location in which the family feels comfortable and empowered, and the teacher is able to establish a positive rapport before the school year even begins. The only goal for this home visit is to build relationships.

See this **blog post and video** from Momentous Institute on how to do home visits.

Step-by-Step

1. Set the stage: Families must know that these visits are absolutely not in any way evaluative.
2. Share a little about yourself: Tell them about your interests, passions, families and more.
3. Ask questions about the student and their family: What is important to this family? What do they love? What is a challenge for them?
4. The most important question you must ask is, “What would you like me to know about your child?”

ACTIVITY: Create Parent-Student Vision Statements
Best for elementary school

At Momentous Institute, parents take family photos during these home visits, which are then posted outside of each classroom’s door in the school. These photos both comfort students, as well as signify the partnership between parents and teachers. Along with the photos, families create vision statements that articulate their long-term goals for their children. Vision statements articulate the parent’s deepest wishes for their children. By explicitly identifying parent desires and highlighting them in a prominent place, teachers are able to keep the parents’ visions top of mind when educating the students and interacting with parents. See this **blog post and video** from Momentous on how to make vision statements with your students and their families.

Step-by-Step

1. Take or secure a picture of the family.
2. Ask the parents to consider these questions: What kind of an adult do they want their child to become? What values do they hope their child will carry with them?
3. Ask the student what stands out to them from the parent’s vision.
4. Put what the child has agreed upon next to the family picture on a wall display.

ACTIVITY: Check-in, Check-out with students
Best for elementary school

Ashoka Changemaker Schools prioritize individual interactions with students to make sure they know their teachers care. For example, each student is greeted when they arrive in the classroom, often with a hug, high-five, or handshake.
Students who demonstrate some challenging behavior might need a greater level of one-on-one interaction with a caring adult. At Ephesus Elementary in Chapel Hill, NC, these students are given an adult buddy at the school, which could include anyone from a teacher to the school secretary. By checking-in with a buddy, students are able to benefit from the attention of a caring adult, who models empathy for them.

Step-by-Step

1. Create or select a behavior chart.
2. Create or use a home report sheet (like **this one** from Ephesus Elementary).
3. In the morning, have the student meet the adult when they arrive.
4. Have the adult check-in to see how the student is feeling that morning. Then have the adult give the student a behavior chart and wish the student a good day.
5. At the end of the day, have the student meet the adult.
6. Have the adult check-in with the student to reflect on the day. Then have the adult give the student a home report and wish the student a good afternoon.

Modeling: Demonstrate Empathy
Children learn by observation and gain insight on how to interact with others by watching the adults around them. One of the best ways to teach children how to practice empathy and kindness is to act with empathy and kindness toward your students. The following resources will help you self-monitor your daily interactions with students, as well as create opportunities to show students that you care about how they are doing.

ACTIVITY: Reflect on your interactions
Best for elementary, middle and high school

Step-by-Step

1. Select a student.
2. Record how many positive interactions (including observations: 'I notice you practiced multiplication problems in your free time').
3. Record negative interactions (include commands: 'put the toy in your backpack' and corrections 'we keep our hands to ourselves at school').

Download full questions guide HERE

Positive Interactions	Negative Interactions

RETHINK YOUR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Ashoka Changemaker Schools are intentional about creating an environment that promotes an emotionally healthy community. Much of this environment is shaped by the relationships within the school, beginning with the relationships between the adults themselves, and by school routines and procedures that have been discussed above. But a school's very physical environment often sets the tone for social and emotional health, for self-efficacy, and even for risk-taking. In the right kind of environment, children feel safe in finding their place, space and voice in the school.

ACTIVITY: Make a Family Collage
Best for elementary school

During the beginning of the school year, teachers in Maury Elementary's preschool and prekindergarten program ask each student and their family to make a photo collage representing the student. The photo collages often include pictures of the student, family members, and the student's interest. Each student gets a chance to share their photo collage during a morning meeting, and the collages are hung on the wall where all students can see them. In addition to sending the message that all students in the class are important, showcasing collages also provides the opportunity for students to understand each other's' perspectives.

Step-by-Step

1. Ask parents to go through family photos with their child and select ones that the child wants for the collage.
2. Look on the internet or through magazines to find images of things the child enjoys
3. Work together with the child to cut out and paste the photos and images to a piece of paper.

ACTIVITY: Build a Calm Area
Best for elementary school

Everyone becomes overwhelmed by their emotions sometimes. **Momentous School in Dallas, TX** provides a comfortable space for students to go in the classroom where they can regulate their emotions. A critical tool, called a calm down basket, is available in this space. According to Momentous Institute, "A calm down basket is a small collection of tools that can help a kid regulate herself when she is feeling overwhelmed." Check-out these directions, paraphrased from from Momentous Institute's blog, on how to create a calm-down basket:

Step-by-Step

1. Get a basket and fill it with small, calming objects.
2. Introduce the basket by letting children explore the contents: pass it around, take turns holding the items, and make it available to explore during work or center time.
3. Explain to the students that the calm down basket is in the calm area for when they feel overwhelmed and lose control of their emotions. Tell your students that there will be times that you will recommend that they go to the calm area when you can see they are "having a big feeling," and there are times when they can choose to go to the calm area themselves.

ACTIVITY: Bring Nature Inside

Best for elementary, middle, and high school

How does being surrounded by nature change the way we teach, learn and feel? At **Environmental Charter High School** in South Los Angeles —between some of the busiest freeways in the country — students dodge chickens and pick grapes on their way to class. The students play an active role in caring for the flora and fauna on campus, including everything from fruit trees to fish. Environmental Charter High School has heard from students that when they walk onto campus, they feel peaceful and ready to learn. Although it might be hard to transform your entire school space, here are some ways you can promote a peaceful atmosphere in your classroom.

Step-by-Step

1. Animals
2. Plants
3. Soft light: Consider using lamps, covers for fluorescent lights, or all natural light if possible
4. Stones
5. Art using materials found in nature
6. Soothing nature sounds
7. Babbling water, such as that from a fish tank or small fountain.

Incorporating Empathy into Lesson Plans

There are countless opportunities to help students build their empathy skills during the everyday academic work of the classroom. The following pages include examples and resources of incorporating empathy into math, literacy, social studies, and science lessons.

Literacy

Reading provides a great opportunity for students to explore other people's perspectives. Here are some specific things you can do to integrate empathy into reading and writing.

Bring Empathy to Readers' Workshop
Best for elementary school

While her class is reading, Athena Kopsidas of the **Inspired Teaching School** in Washington, DC asks students to consider and write down what feelings the characters are experiencing. They then break into small groups to discuss the events that led the characters to experience those feelings, make connections to times that the students have experienced those feelings before, and predict what the characters might do next. You can see Ms. Kopsidas's students engage in this practice as well as build empathy through other academic activities in **this video**.

Read Books from the Empathy Book List
Best for elementary school

This book list from **Voyager Academy** in Durham, NC includes books that their teachers have found to be particularly helpful for exploring feelings, perspectives, and kind actions with their students.

The Butter Battle Book by Dr. Seuss
It's Okay to Be Different by Todd Parr
Horace and Morris but Mostly Dolores by James Howe
Hey Little Ant by Phillip M. Hoose
A Sick Day for Amos McGee by Phillip C. Stead
Bear Feels Sick by Karma Wilson
The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi
Swimmy by Leo Lionni
Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell
My Name is Yoon by Helen Recorvits
Amos & Boris by William Steig
Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts
Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña
The Spiffiest Giant in Town by Julia Donaldson
Sam and the Lucky Money by Karen Chinn
Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson
The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss
The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig
Enemy Pie by Derek Munson
How to Heal a Broken Wing by Bob Graham
The Kindness Quilt by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace
The Lion and the Mouse by Jerry Pinkney
The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Andersen

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes
Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch by Eileen Spinelli
Earrings! by Judith Viorst

Take Empathy Walks
Best for elementary school

Empathy walks and empathy play dates are used at **Georgetown Day School** to help students understand others and practice using compassion. Before the walk or play date, teachers paired children with students from different grade levels. They are asked to brainstorm and write down questions that would help them get to know their partner better or plan a game or activity their partner might enjoy. The children then put their ideas into practice and engage with their partner on the walk or play date. Afterward, they reflect about their experience and will write in their journal about something that went well, something they learned about their partner or themselves, or something they want to work on for next time.

Math

Math often presents real-world problems in which everyone's needs must be addressed in order succeed. These problems therefore become opportunities for students to build their empathy skills while using math to solve the problem.

Create a School or Class Store
Best for elementary school

Cunningham Elementary in Austin, Texas embraces real-world problems as learning opportunities uses the Microsociety model. In a Microsociety school, students create for-profit and nonprofit businesses, as well as a government. These institutions are ran by the students themselves, while teachers and staff serve as facilitators. One of the businesses that exists at Cunningham Elementary is a school store. By giving students the opportunity to run the school store, they have the opportunity to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and other mathematical concepts in a context that matters to them. It also challenges them to step into the shoes of their customers.

Step-by-Step

1. Let students make mistakes: If your students want to make their favorite things in the store and few people buy them, what a great learning opportunity! You can guide them to think about how they might find out what things people want to buy.
2. Extend their knowledge of others: Introduce students to social problems, and guide them to consider how they might address those problems through their store.
3. Work together: Identify student strengths and areas of need, and help students incorporate their strengths into their roles while using the store as a way to address their weaknesses through teamwork.

Science

Addressing some of our biggest societal problems often necessitates making science-based solutions easy to understand and use by others. Therefore, science and engineering projects involving designing a product for others provide opportunities to build both empathy and content knowledge.

Designing With Others In Mind
Best for elementary school

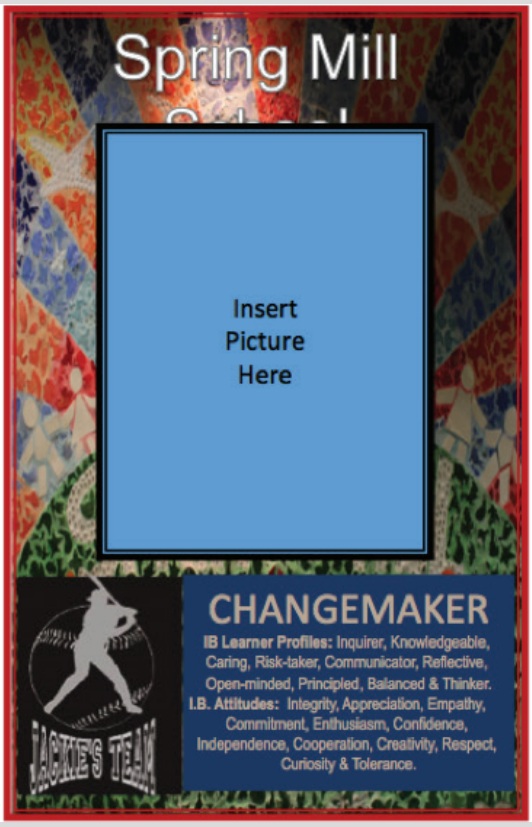
At **Brooklyn New School**, students from prekindergarten to fifth grade run a school- wide composting system.When the school community started noticing that some students and adults were throwing the waste in the wrong containers, they tried to step into the shoes of those individuals to understand why. Through observation, they realized that the people who used the bins incorrectly were mostly older students who transferred from another school, or were adults. Both of these groups had not practiced composting from a young age.As a solution, old and new students alike worked together to make the composting bins and decorate them with bright colors so that they would be harder to miss. Here are some tips on using empathy in your science and engineering projects:

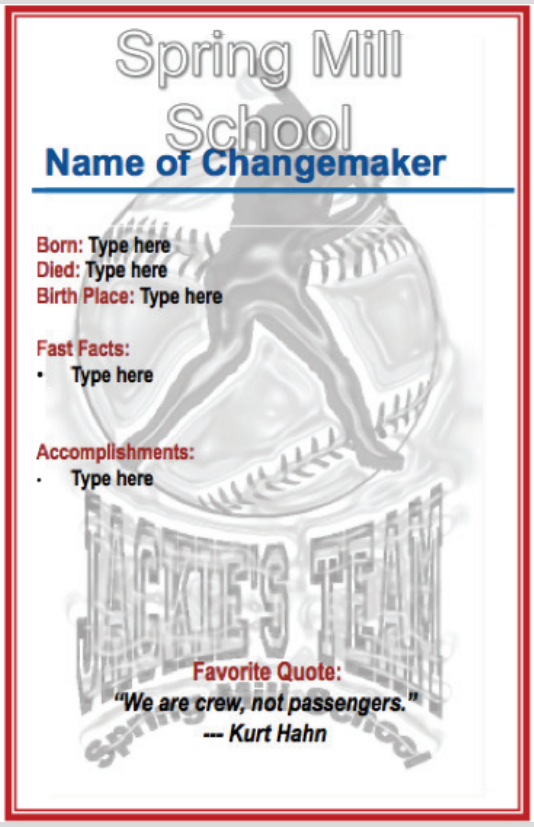
Step-by-Step

1. Challenge students to observe living things to understand why they behave a certain way (if they are people, you can also use interviews).
2. When designing something that living things will use, experiment, observe, and make adjustments until the tool works.
3. If it is for people, involve them in creating the tool.

Social Studies

Social studies is an excellent opportunity to the shoes of other people throughout history, enabling students to better understand the perspectives and actions of others. It is also an opportunity for students to study changemakers throughout history - people who were able to a ct with empathy and kindness to solve community problems. Here are some ways that you can integrate empathy into social studies..





Make Changemaker Trading Cards
Best for elementary school

At **Spring Mill Elementary** in Indianapolis, IN, students study important changemakers in the world in three week rotations. Each student is given a trading card with information about a changemaker, information about the changemaker is read over the announcements, each classroom door is designed to celebrate that changemaker, a book is read about that changemaker, and classes discuss the learner profiles and attitudes that changemaker had.

Write Letters From The Shoes of Others Throughout History
Best for elementary school

Georgetown Day School in Washington, DC, teachers use social studies topics to create immersive learning experiences for their students. For example, according to former third grade teacher Todd Liu, one of the third grade social studies units is on the lost colony of Roanoke. The students read about Roanoke and learn about the different theories of what happened to the colonists that went missing. Then they have to take the role of one of these colonists and write a letter to Governor White, who left the colonists and went back to England.

In the letter, the students have to describe what happened to them, and their story has to fit with the clues that were left behind. The students get so excited adopting another identity and coming up with what they think happened to the colonists. After they write their letter in cursive on parchment paper, they crumple the letter up so it looks like it was written in the 1600's and is a long lost letter of a Roanoke colonist.

Immerse Yourself in Another Time
Best for elementary school

Another 3rd grade project at **Georgetown Day School** is the month-long Pilgrim Simulation. The students are broken up into groups, and they are tasked with competing with the Pilgrims. They are to see if they can have more survivors, plant more crops, and build more houses than the Pilgrims. There are 8 phases, and in each phase the students do an activity that simulates what it was like for the Pilgrims to come to the New World (like crossing the Atlantic Ocean, coming up with a government like the Mayflower Compact, or growing crops). Then the students write in their Pilgrim Logs about their experience and imagine themselves as a Pilgrim. Some pretend they are adults or teenagers, and some make up different stories about their background and families.

In their small colonies, the students help each other with the content of their entries and also their editing. Our study of colonial life culminates with our 3 day trip to Turkey Run, where students get to live like a colonist in 1771. This experience is both challenging and joyful. The students have to start a community and build the camp by working together with the parents and teachers. They have to maintain the camp by helping prepare meals and clean the dishes. They also get to go on hikes and do various crafts like making baskets, tin punch lanterns, corn husk dolls, and knitting. We also do colonial dancing and play field games. After reading and talking about what life was like in the 1700's the students get to actually experience what that was like and remember it forever!