

Random Acts of Kindness has brought more meaning into my life, and I am committed to help spread the word.

— Carol, State Parent Facilitator, HI

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These Lesson Plans are a culmination of school-wide activities and classroom activities, ranging from grades K-12.

Lesson Plan

Pay It Forward Kindness Project

Submitted by Beth; Jeffersonville, IN

Type of Activity: School-wide

Grade Level: Pre K-5

Time Frame: Approximately 3 months

Objective:

To facilitate the part of our school's mission statement that reads "Creating positive attitudes and developing self-esteem, allowing students to become a positive force in their community." The project will support one of the school's goals for this year, which is to increase parent and community involvement. This project will also promote social skills and character building skills.

Materials:

- Strips of paper (any color, any type) cut into paper chain links approx. 1 x 8 ½ inches
- Collection boxes decorated to be taken out into the community
- Lists of Random Acts of Kindness ideas (mine were taken from the activity sheets on the RAK website: www.actsofkindness.org)

Procedure:

Students, staff, parents, and community members perform kind acts, big or small, planned or unplanned. The receiver of an act is asked to pay the kindness forward by doing 2 kind acts for 2 other people. Each time a kindness is performed it is written on a strip of paper, which becomes a link in a kindness chain. Kindness chains are collected weekly from each classroom and added to a cumulative school kindness chain strung from the ceiling in the school's halls. Grand totals are announced each week and posted on the wall wherever the chain has ended; a kindness grand total is updated on the office window. Kindness collection boxes are set out in area businesses to encourage community participation, and letters are sent to area schools to invite participation.

Additional Kindness Activities:

- Ideas for being kind are listed in the school's monthly newsletter and parents are encouraged to develop kindness chains with their children at home.
- Each classroom, the office, the assistants, the cafeteria staff, and the custodians post lists in the hall of how they plan to be kind, i.e. "The office staff pledges to be kind by..."
- A banner stating "Jonathan Jennings Pledges to Be Kind" with all staff and students signatures is posted in the cafeteria
- "You are now entering the KINDNESS ZONE" signs are posted at school entrances
- Each grade level decides on a "Kindness Project" to complete during the course of the "Pay It Forward" project.
- Cumulative activities are planned for Random Acts of Kindness week to celebrate kindness and the completion of the "Pay It Forward" project
- Each morning during the school-wide morning meeting students and staff sing the "Kindness Pledge" (see attached)
- "Pay It Forward" school t-shirts are printed and distributed at cost
- A Random Acts of Kindness Week poster contest is held
- An essay contest is held; selected winners read their essays during the Teacher Talent Show kindness finale
- Kindness rewards such as Random Acts of Kindness pencils, stickers, books, pins, etc. are given away as students and staff are "caught being kind"

Phase 1: Introduction of the "Pay It Forward"

Volunteers were taken to be on a "Pay It Forward" project committee to oversee all activities, brainstorm, and facilitate.

Introduction to Staff

The project was introduced to all staff at a 15 minute "premiere". Teachers were invited to the premiere with a movie ticket, which gave the date, time and location of the premiere. Refreshments and door prizes were available. Clips from the movie "Pay It Forward" were shown and teachers were informed on how we would be using the ideas from the movie in our school-wide project. Teachers were given lists of activities to help facilitate developing grade level kindness projects.

Introduction to Students

In each classroom:

- Discuss kindness pledge and why we sing it each morning (sing through with preK-I)

- Discuss what it means to be kind. Students give examples of what they can do to be kind; teacher lists on chart to be finished later "Mrs. Smith's class pledges to be kind by..."
- Play clip from the movie "Pay It Forward" of Trevor explaining his project idea
- Intro the "Pay It Forward" school project
- Do a kindness
- Write it on a strip
- Ask that person to pay it forward to 2 more people
- Check back with them and write their kindness down for them if necessary
- Count and join links in classroom, join with school chain on Fridays; goal is 1million acts of kindness by Random Acts of Kindness week; discuss finale activities
- Read a few kindness examples from the chain already started by the office staff

Introduction to Parents

Parents were introduced to the program briefly during parent orientation meetings at the beginning of the school year. Follow-up information was given through the monthly school newsletter.

Introduction to Community

Selected students and staff members took a walking field trip with wagons full of kindness collection boxes (see the sign on the collection boxes attached) to the town's downtown square. Students took turns at each store explaining what the project was about and asking if they could leave a collection box with some blank kindness strips and a letter explaining the project for the manager. (Hint: no one can refuse a child asking for something like this!) Additional businesses not within walking distance were asked to participate. Staff members delivered these boxes.

Businesses were encouraged to connect the links and hang the resulting chain, or just leave the box sit at the register and collect completed kindness links in the collection box. A pick up date was established. (Those businesses that actually did hang their chains collected the most for us.) Churches and area clubs were included in our project. The project was presented at both the local Lion's Club and Optimist Club.

Grade Level Kindness Projects:

Each grade level came up with their own kindness project using their own ideas or those in the activity sheets previously mentioned.

Preschool

The preschool collected new and gently used toys and books for a local children's home called "Noah's Ark". Once the toys were collected our students had a party for some of the Noah's Ark children during Random Acts of Kindness week.

Kindergarten

The Kindergarten classes held a "Sharing Feast" during Random Acts of Kindness week.

Grade One

Our five first grade classrooms took turns doing kindnesses through appreciation celebrations for different groups of people in the school. Cards and treats were given by first grade classrooms on designated weeks to the following: Preschool class, cafeteria workers, day and night custodians, office staff, special area teachers, Health Assistant and the bus drivers.

All first grade students viewed a movie called *Tilly the Dragon* that explained kindness with a discussion following. During Random Acts of Kindness week, first grade attended a 4-H program on character education called "Character Critters".

Grade Two

The second grade classrooms took turns doing bi-monthly litter patrols around the school and school grounds. In addition they did some special kindness writing projects including writing letters to a former staff member dying of cancer.

Grade Three

Third graders adopted two local preschools. Activities with the preschoolers were as follows: reading books and recording them on tape, writing and sending greeting cards, planting a kindness garden, making stickers for preschoolers, making kindness squares with preschoolers and turning it into a kindness quilt in a culminating celebration activity.

Grade Four

Fourth graders adopted the residents of an Alzheimer's unit. Activities included: making door decorations for the holidays, making a student scrapbook to share with the residents, students corresponding through letters and greeting cards and developing a scenic scrapbook for the residents.

In addition, fourth grade students collected money for the victims of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Grade Five

Fifth grade students developed a school beautification project. This included securing the donation of a ship's anchor to place in front of the school and landscaping around it. (Our mascot is a pirate.)

Culminating "Pay It Forward" Activities:

Several culminating activities were planned as a finale to our projects. These culminating activities took place during Random Acts of Kindness week and the following week.

World Kindness Day

On World Kindness Day, a hot air balloon was scheduled to lift off from the schoolyard. The purpose of the balloon was to "spread the seeds of kindness". The balloon was sponsored by a local bank.

Students helped assemble the hot air balloon. The Mayor and City Council President were presented with seeds by the Student Council. A presentation was made in which the students asked the two men to spread the seeds of kindness on behalf of our school. After the Mayor accepted the seeds, he read a proclamation for the city for Random Acts of Kindness week and the balloon lifted off. As the balloon flew away the students witnessed the “spreading” of the seeds. This was a most spectacular and awe-inspiring event, perfectly symbolic of what our project was trying to accomplish.

Several items should be taken into consideration when planning an event such as this. Hot air balloons can only take off within 2 hours after sunrise or 2 hours before sunset. This event can only happen weather permitting. Several parent and community volunteers were necessary to help in the set up of the balloon and to aid in the balloon chase and packing of the balloon.

The cost of the balloonist was \$300.00. The Mayor and the City Council President had to sign waivers before being allowed to ride in the balloon.

Kindness Appreciation Celebration

Toward the beginning of our project, the Principal and Principal Intern of our school attended an event with several political figures. A Congressman and the Governor’s wife were informed about the “Pay It Forward” project and given a copy of the letter sent out to area businesses to invite community participation. Both seemed interested in the project. Several weeks into the project, the Congressman’s local office called to ask for a collection box to be placed into their office. The Governor’s wife was contacted to see if she could speak to the students to congratulate and encourage them in their kind endeavors. Thus the “Kindness Appreciation Celebration” was born.

During the celebration event, our school choir sang several songs, the First Lady talked to the student body, and certificates were presented to area business representatives for participating in our project by having kindness collection boxes in their stores. At the conclusion of the program a reception was held for all the guests and the Student Council.

Several factors should be considered when planning an event such as this. The First Lady had to be scheduled months in advance. Invitations to the community participants were sent out several weeks before the event. The invitations were delivered as the kindness collection boxes were collected. Businesses were called a day or two before the event to ensure someone would be there to receive the participation certificate on the day of the event.

Parent volunteers were needed to set up the reception and serve cake and punch.

Teacher Talent Show

During the teacher introduction of the program, volunteers were sought to perform in a teacher talent show as a reward for the students’ kindnesses. A sign up sheet was put out 1 month into the project, which gave the teachers 2 months to plan and practice. Acts such as singing, dancing, reader’s theatre, magic, and instrumental music performed. The favorite of all the students seemed to be a lip-sync act of an INSYNC song. Twenty-two staff members participated in the show. Seven students who won the Kindness essay contest read their essays between teacher acts.

Several factors should be considered in planning this event. Be sure there will be enough acts to pull off a complete show. It helped to have a few acts that involved the students. The more goofy the act, the more of a hit it was. Draft an MC to announce acts and keep the show going.

Additional Comments

All activities were released to the press. A local press agent voluntarily put together a press release (a copy is attached). There needs to be a person designated from the school to greet the press and answer any questions.

Originally we set out with a goal of 1 million kindnesses. Although this goal ended up to be a bit lofty, it was more the idea of how quickly kindness can spread when one continues to "pay it forward" that was our goal. At the end of 3 months, approximately 16,000 kindness links were attached to our chain. This included the work of our students, the community, several families and 2 other schools.

This project was so successful with our students and community that the school was presented with several awards through the Mayor's office including the Good Neighbor Award and the Good Samaritan Award. Our students did not want to stop completing and recording kindnesses. The chain continues to grow. Our most recent challenge was to have each classroom collect 100 kindnesses during the 2 weeks before the 100th day of school. The results of this challenge brought our kindness total up to 17,086.

At our school, we believe we have made a difference in the world by bringing kindness to the consciousness of everyone our project has touched. An individual can truly make a change in the world, one kindness at a time.

Kindness Pledge

(Sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I pledge to myself on this day,
To try to be kind in every way.

To every person, big and small,
I will help them if they fall.

When I love myself and others too,
That is the best that I can do.

Sample Press Release:

(text slightly modified to protect individual names, etc.)

An Elementary Chain Gang ... KINDNESS DECORATES SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Kindness multiplies across neighborhoods and generations.

Whether forming a paper chain signifying helpful deeds or scattering seeds of kindness across acres near our town, goodness is tangible to the students at an Elementary School. Thanks to the school-wide "Pay It Forward" program, the children, staff, community members and businesses launched a campaign Sept. 4 that will culminate in Random Acts of Kindness Week Nov. 11-17.

As people completed kindnesses for others, they wrote the deed on a paper link and challenged the recipients of the kindness to "pay it forward" by doing two kindnesses for two more people. The result is an astounding chain of more than 12,000 links that hangs up and down and around the halls of the school.

The colorful chain is a visible reminder that simple acts of kindness have an enormous ripple effect, according to the principal intern and kindness coordinator. She stretched the "Pay It Forward" concept to the northern tip of the state by inviting students at her childhood elementary school to participate and send its chain links to be added to those created by the our students and community.

SEEDS OF KINDNESS

The chain will be the centerpiece of next week's activities, which will begin with the city's mayor ascending in a hot air balloon from the schoolyard at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 13. He will scatter thousands of flower seeds across the County in the event funded by a Bank.

The State's First Lady will be the guest speaker at the school's Kindness Celebration at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 15. The choir of fourth and fifth graders will entertain as the afternoon recognizes community participation in the program. Forty-three businesses placed kindness collection boxes in their locations so members of the community could deposit records of their kindnesses, which students then transferred onto chain links.

A Teacher/Staff Talent Show at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 21, will turn the spotlight on 20 adults. They will entertain in a variety of ways, from line dancing to singing to magic acts to drama. Ten students also will read stories for the program that will reward students for their involvement in the kindness effort.

ONGOING KINDNESS

In addition to the daily expansion of the paper chain, students of all ages have immersed themselves in creative expressions of kindness for weeks. First graders have planned and hosted thank-you parties weekly since early September to honor the school's support personnel.

Second graders formed a Litter Patrol to keep the grounds and building clean, while third graders recorded books on tape, sent cards, made stickers, and planted a garden for children at a nearby Preschool.

Fourth graders adopted residents of the Alzheimer's Unit and also collected money for the New York City Relief Fund. Other grade levels joined the student body in collecting socks and work gloves that were sent to workers at Ground Zero in New York City.

Kindergarteners will share a Thanksgiving feast in class on Tuesday, Nov. 20, and preschoolers are planning a used-toy drive to benefit residents of Noah's Ark Children's Village.

"We believe in nurturing our children by promoting kindness in large and small ways," Kimmel said. "Our kindness" program helps develop caring, productive citizens in an age when we all feel a stronger calling to make positive changes in our world."

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Contact person:

Any weekday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Inside the school
Halls lined with paper chains

Tuesday, Nov. 13 8:30 a.m. Schoolyard
Hot air balloon lift (weather permitting) with the Mayor spreading seeds

Thursday, Nov. 15 1:30 p.m. School cafeteria
Kindness Appreciation Celebration. Guest: First Lady. Student choir

Wednesday, Nov. 21 1 p.m. School cafeteria
Teacher/Staff Talent Show

Directions *Insert directions to your facility here.*

Sample Letter:

Dear Community Member,

I am writing to invite you to join the Elementary staff, students and community in our *Pay It Forward* kindness program. Our purpose is to demonstrate the extraordinary power and importance of simple human kindness by promoting the practice of kind acts, large and small, ultimately developing caring, productive citizens. Through both planned and random acts of kindness, our participants are engaged in making a significant effort toward the betterment of our world.

The *Pay It Forward* program works like this:

Step 1: An act of kindness is performed

Step 2: The act is recorded on a kindness strip

Step 3: The beneficiary of the kindness is asked to pay the kindness forward by doing 2 acts of kindness for 2 other people.

Each kindness completed by the school learning community (recorded on the kindness strips) will become a link in our kindness chain. We are all working together toward the goal of 1 MILLION kindnesses by Random Acts of Kindness week (Nov.11-17).

We believe in nurturing the realm of possibility, which exists in every one of our students. We believe that if we all work together as a community we can make this a better world. Please join us by placing our sign, kindness strips, and a kindness collection box in your business or agency. A kindness representative will be contacting you by the first week of November to pick up community kindnesses you've collected to add to our chain.

Thank you so much for being a part of our learning community. Together we can make a difference in the lives of our young ones as well as the adults of our community.

Sincerely,

Kindness Coordinator

"Kindness is the golden chain by which society is bound together." -Johann Van Goethe

Sample Invitation:

This is the information included inside of the invitation:

Kindness Appreciation Celebration November 11-17

Welcome: by the Assistant Principi

Songs: The 4th and 5th Grade Students

- * *Peace Round*
- * *State Song of Indiana*
- * *God Bless America*

Guest Speaker Introduction: by Student Council President

Special Guest Speaker: The First Lady of Indiana

Presentation of Participation Certification to area businesses

Reception following in the library

Pictures of the Kindness Chain:



Have you done a kindness today?



Please help the
Elementary
learning community reach our goal of

1 Million Kindnesses!

Become part of our kindness chain by writing your kindness on a kindness strip. Then the next time you do something kind ask that person to "Pay It Forward" by doing 2 kindnesses for 2 other people.

"Remember there's no small act of Kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end."
-Scott Adams