Kindness in the Classroom

Presenters: Krista Warners & Theresa McIsaac
We would like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on Treaty 7 territory, a traditional meeting place and home for many Indigenous people including the Blackfoot, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina peoples. The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.
The science of kindness

“The Science of Kindness”

https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-science-of-kindness
Random Acts of Kindness Foundation
Key take away messages

- Kindness can be taught
- Kindness is contagious
- Kindness is good for learning and health
- Kindness changes relationships

R.J. Hawkey – Rocky View Schools
Support kindness in the classroom by:

i. practicing self-care/wellness
ii. modelling kindness
iii. teaching what kindness is and why it matters
iv. practicing kindness
v. creating classroom & school climate/conditions
i. Practicing self-care

Look after yourself
– Life balance, good nutrition, physical activity, sleep, connection to others

Self-regulate
– Know and name your emotions
– Be aware of your biological functions
  (Are you hangry/sleep-angry/hormone-angry?)
– Respond thoughtfully/mindfully (reacting is different)

Contagion effect
– Be aware of how relationships affect you
– Be aware of how you affect your students; if you are regulated they are more likely to achieve regulation
i. Practicing self-care

50 Ways to Take a Break

ii. Modelling kindness: some tips

- Pause and take a deep breath when you feel upset. Imagine the student perspective before responding.

- Reflect back a student's feelings/actions
  “I'm guessing you feel a bit embarrassed? Is that why you yelled at your friends to stop?”

- Reflect a rationale for their behaviour
  “I'm guessing you feel nervous. Speaking in front of the class can be scary for anyone.”
ii. Modelling kindness: some tips

- Redirect inappropriate behaviour.
  “Please ask in a nice way.”

- Note students' non-verbal cues and follow up
  “I noticed that you were quieter than usual today. Is something bothering you?”

- Get student input as appropriate
  e.g., to create classroom expectations, generate ideas for projects
iii. Teaching what kindness is and why it matters

- Clearly explain the concept of kindness
- Explain how kindness improves things
- Explain the importance of sharing kindness with everyone
- Discuss many examples of kindness
  e.g., helping others, listening to others, caring for others
iv. Practicing kindness

• Create opportunities for practice
e.g., lessons, books, reflective journaling, project based learning

• Foster social and emotional skills
e.g., emotional literacy, relationship skills, problem solving
Creating a climate of kindness in the classroom

Classroom culture:

- Use praise for effort and give full attention
- Use everyday interactions
e.g., greet at door and say good bye, create class expectations, use restorative practices
- Support taking risks. It’s okay to be wrong
e.g., learn from mistakes, foster a growth mindset, enhance curiosity
v. Creating a climate of kindness in the classroom

Classroom routines:

- Try talking circles
e.g., dial in, solve a problem, review the routine, grateful practices, calming exercises
- Add sensory or movement breaks
- Teach up and down regulation techniques
- Be authentic
- Add healthy food and water
Whole school approach to kindness

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfsPdFNQA10
School environment

Creating a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment.

Fostering healthy relationships.

St. Matthew – Calgary Catholic School District

Evergreen Elementary – Grande Yellowhead School Division

Eric Harvey – Calgary Board of Education
Whole school activities

Random acts of kindness
Kindness letters or postcards
Anonymous compliments
Student-generated values and beliefs

Braeside Elementary – Calgary Board of Education

Catholic Central High – Holy Spirit Catholic Schools
Classroom lessons / programs

Cooperative learning activities
Thankful journal
Kindness calendar
Teaching self-regulation
Mindfulness

Calgary Catholic Elementary School
Greet students at the door

Student generated expectations:
“What makes a good classroom?”

Encourage a growth mindset

Sharing circles

Classroom routine
Inquiry projects

#thekindnessproject

Our Mission:
To become kindness ninjas too and spread Christmas kindness to our school (and maybe others) everyday in December.

Goals:
1. To be very sneaky and not let anyone know that we are responsible for the Random Acts of Christmas Kindness (RACK).
2. How will we do this?
   a. Step 1: Wear authentic ninja headbands
   b. Step 2: Ninja training
   c. Step 3: Practice kindness in our classroom. The ninjas will be watching us.
   d. Step 4: Act on Christmas joy to as many people in our school as we can.

Examples:
1. December 12th: The am class made a wreath and a card for Mrs. Long.
2. December 24th: The pm class made handmade wreaths and delivered them to the teachers.
3. December 7th: The am ninjas made a card and a holiday garland for Mrs. Lamb.
4. December 9th: One of our ninjas went on a solo mission to deliver a card and handmade garland to Mr. Brown.
Inquiry projects

PEACE RIVER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS STRIVE TO CREATE A COMMUNITY-WIDE CULTURE OF ACCEPTANCE

“How can we show that our school supports equality and is supportive of the LGBTQ community” is the driving question behind a project led by a group of grade nine students at Peace River High School (PRHS) during their ‘Project Based Learning Class’.

In support of their driving question, students have recently completed designing a ‘pride pillar’ by painting the pillar located in the main foyer of the school with quotes on acceptance and ten flags that identify and represent different genders.

“A lot of LGBTQ youth are not accepted and to be accepted at school says that no matter what sexuality or gender you are, we accept you” says Angelica, one of four students working on the project during their Project Based Learning class. “The more you talk about it, the easier it is to accept. We hope this makes kids feel more comfortable, safe and happy at school and in the community.”

To extend awareness to the community, the students went to local businesses to share their project goals. As they shared their project goals with business owners, they invited businesses to display a “We support equality” poster in their establishment as a way to bring awareness and make people feel supported in the community. Wyatt, another student working on the project says the response from the community was great.

“I was surprised with the amount of support we received from the community” says Wyatt. “It tells us that Peace River is a pretty accepting place.”
Service projects

Collecting donations for local charities
Volunteering

Sam Livingston – Calgary Board of Education

McKenzie Towne – Calgary Board of Education
Books

- Ordinary Mary’s Extraordinary Deed
- Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
- Bucket Filling from A to Z
- How Full Is Your Bucket? For Kids
- Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness: Three Rules for a Happier Life
- Will You Fill My Bucket?
- fill a bucket
- Have You Filled a Bucket Today?
- Wonder by R.J. Palacio
Staff wellness

Staff appreciation day
Staff potlucks
Physical activity groups

Crossfield Elementary – Rocky View Schools

Sam Livingston – Calgary Board of Education
How do you promote kindness?

School environment
- Whole school activities
- Staff wellness

Classroom lessons / programs
- Classroom routine
- Inquiry / service projects

Books
Here’s a note from me to you. Sending you thanks for all that you do.