

# PROMOTING **CONNECTEDNESS**



## **A school-based toolkit**

SUPPORTING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A HEALTHY SCHOOL



**ML**  
BUREAU DE SANTÉ DE  
MIDDLESEX-LONDON  
HEALTH UNIT

# PROMOTING **CONNECTEDNESS**

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Original Source: Ministry of Education, Foundations for a Healthy School:  
A Companion Resource to the K-12 School Effectiveness Framework  
(<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/resourceF4HS.pdf>)



### Strategies to Increase Connectedness: Elementary School Toolkit

The purpose of this resource is to provide educators with strategies to increase connectedness and student sense of belonging to their school. Strategies target multiple levels of influence including attitudes and knowledge as well as the social and physical environments.

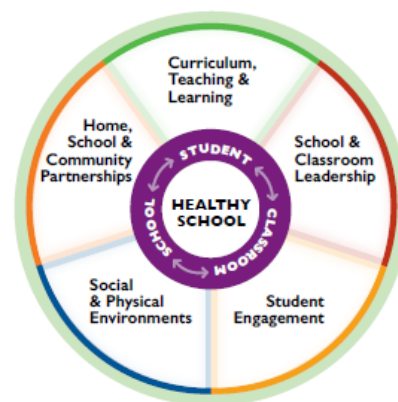
#### Highlights of the Toolkit:

- Curriculum related activities that can be used in the classroom and school to enhance student sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Activities to support school and classroom leadership and student engagement.
- School level initiatives to create supportive environments.
- Announcements and health walls.

#### How was this resource developed?

This toolkit was designed to support *The Foundations for a Healthy School* resource, which recommends that health promotion activities in schools' target each of the components of the framework which include:

- Curriculum teaching and learning
- School and classroom leadership
- Student engagement
- Social and physical environment
- Home, school and community partnerships



For more information about the Foundations for a Healthy School visit  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/foundations.html>

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***The evidence clearly demonstrates that for an initiative in the school setting to be impactful, it has to be multicomponent and delivered over an extended period of time versus single component or “one off” programming. Therefore, to effectively address connectedness, the best action plan is to implement various activities from each component of the Foundations for a Healthy School Framework.***

### Why focus on school connectedness?

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In Canada, approximately 14 to 25% of children and youth experience mental health concerns (Waddell, Shepherd, Chen & Boyle, 2013). According to the 2015 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, an estimated 16.5% of students in grades 7 to 12 reported fair or poor mental health, a significant increase from 11.4 % in 2007 and a non-significant increase from 15% in 2013 (Boak, Hamilton, Adlaf, Henderson, & Mann, 2016). Further, females were more likely to report fair or poor mental health compared to males (23.2 % compared to 10.3% respectively). The likelihood of reporting poor mental health was found to increase significantly with grade, ranging from 7.7% among grade 7 students to approximately 18.9% in grade 12 (Boak et al., 2016).

Mental health concerns during childhood and adolescence are associated with poor academic achievement, substance misuse, an increased risk for poverty, and other adverse outcomes throughout the lifespan (Barry, Clarke, Jenkins & Patel, 2013). According to the 2002 Mental Health and Well-being Canadian Community Health Survey, almost 70% of young adults aged 15–24 years with mood or anxiety disorders reported that their symptoms had started before the age of 15 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). During childhood and adolescence, there is an opportunity to lay the foundation for positive mental health and to reduce the risks for mental health concerns later in life (Barry et al., 2013; Weare & Nind, 2011).

Literature has indicated that enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors can help children and adolescents avoid multiple behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Protective factors are defined as “individual or environmental characteristics, conditions or behaviours that reduce the effects of stressful life events to promote social and emotional skills and reduce risks” (Centers for Disease and Control Prevention, 2017). Some protective factors include positive school climate, a sense of belonging, and recognition of achievement (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Toronto and Toronto Public Health, 2014). Additionally, there is an association between school connectedness and improved emotional health, increased academic achievement, and reduced risk-taking behaviours (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan & Shochet, 2013).

The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium of School Health defines school connectedness as “the extent to which students perceive that they are accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the educational environment” (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, “school connectedness is the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health conducted in the United States, found that students’ sense of school connectedness was one of the strongest protective factors of youth high-risk behaviors, such as substance use, violence, and suicidality (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, Tabor, Beuhring, Sieving, Shew, Ireland, Bearinger, and Udry, 1997 and, McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). School connectedness has also been shown to be a protective factor for adolescent sexual and reproductive health (Markham, Lormand, Gloppen, Peskin, Flores, Low, & House, 2010). Since school connectedness has been shown in the research literature to be a predictor for mental health (Kidger, Araya, Donovan & Gunnell, 2012), enhancing the implementation of activities to increase school connectedness and sense of belonging can be part of an overall strategy at schools to improve the positive mental health for children and youth.

### Why schools should play a role?

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Schools have been identified as an ideal setting to work with children and youth because of the universal enrollment of children in school and the consistent access to this target population. However, a more compelling reason aligns with *Ontario's Well-being Strategy for Education*. It is undisputed that healthy students are better prepared to learn. Studies demonstrate that promoting student health and well-being can help schools meet their educational goals, such as reduced absenteeism, fewer behavioural problems, and higher school-wide test scores and grades (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

A healthy school not only provides educational opportunities but creates a supportive environment for health and well-being. The *Foundations for a Healthy School* is an Ontario Ministry of Education resource that emphasizes the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to address health-related topics that contribute to well-being. This approach demonstrates that multiple levels of influence determine individual behaviour and recognize that no single factor can adequately account for why children and youth engage in health risk or health promotion behaviours.

### Why is student engagement important?

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Students are arguably the most important stakeholders in the education system and thus student engagement should be at the heart of a healthy school. The *Foundations for a Healthy School* defines student engagement as “*the extent to which students identify with and value their learning; feel a sense of belonging at school; and are informed about, engaged with and empowered to participate in and lead academic and non-academic activities*”. While student engagement is one of the five components of a healthy school, student engagement is best achieved when it is integrated into all of the Foundation's components. When students are given the opportunity to be active contributors to their learning and their learning environments, they derive a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community, and gain feelings of competence and satisfaction. The role of the adult is to empower students; give them the skills and confidence to contribute equally to decisions, lead meetings, organize and implement activities. See Student Engagement Activities for ways to increase school connectedness in your school.

### What is Public Health's Commitment to Schools?

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The goal of Middlesex-London Health Unit's (MLHU) Child and Youth Program Team is to improve the health of children and youth, and contribute to a positive, healthy school climate. Specifically, our team works with school boards and/or staff of elementary and secondary schools, using a comprehensive health promotion approach, to influence the development and implementation of healthy policies, and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments to address key topics. Each school in London and Middlesex County is assigned a Public Health Nurse (PHN). For a list of PHNs assigned to schools, visit <https://www.healthunit.com/public-health-at-your-school>. Contact your PHN to determine how they can support this resource and collaborate with your school to improve the health of children and youth.



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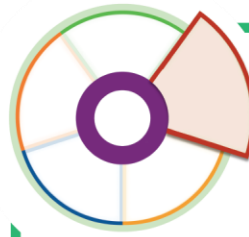






## Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

- [Announce It!](#)
- [Around the World Recipe Book](#)
- [Community Values or Vision](#)
- [Two Minute Mindfulness](#)
- [Understanding Differences](#)



## School and Classroom Leadership

- [All About Me Placemat](#)
- [Brainstorming](#)
- [Mind Mania Mural](#)
- [Treasure Tree](#)



## Home, School and Community Partnerships

- [2 By 10 Activity](#)
- [Family Fun Nights](#)
- [Kindness Bingo](#)
- [Parents Connecting](#)
- [The Power of a Positive Phone Call](#)



## Social and Physical Environments

- [Welcoming Environment & Greeting Students](#)
- [Connecting Through Kindness](#)
- [Make Me Smile](#)
- [Mandala Colouring](#)
- [Murals](#)



## Student Engagement

- [Community Giving](#)
- [Real Acts of Caring](#)
- [Student Driven Committees](#)



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- [Announce It!](#)
- Example Announcements

## Announce It!

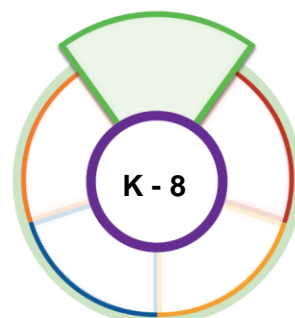
**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase awareness and knowledge about connectedness and mental well-being.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Use communication strategies such as daily announcements, health walls, and social media to raise awareness about connectedness.
- Visit [Announce It!](#) on the website for the Middlesex-London Health Unit. This will provide you with access to examples of announcements, health walls and social media messages that you can use for your school.
- These communication strategies should be a part of a comprehensive healthy school approach.
- For a more youth-friendly approach, engage students from committees or a class to assist with communication strategies.

## Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



### **Example Announcements for Promoting Connectedness**

1. Spending time with people matters! Being connected to your family, friends & school helps you feel healthy. Take time tonight to connect with family! Get involved in school activities, and improve how you feel!
2. Smiling can improve your mood and others! A simple smile can improve your mood and you'll feel better! Make someone smile today!
3. Smiling is good for your health! Make someone smile by saying "Thank you" or by telling a funny joke. Stay tuned this week to find out more, and make someone smile today!
4. Kindness is good for your health! It's good for the people around you and it's good for you. You will have more energy, feel calmer and sleep better.
5. Have you asked yourself - How can we be kind to each other here at school? Ask others to play at recess, help clean up in the classroom or think of any act of kindness that could make someone's day. No act of kindness is too small.

## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Home, School & Community Partnerships
- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Funding or access to a printer for printing the recipe books

## Around the World Recipe Book

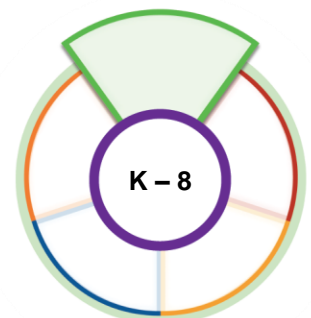
**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase understanding and appreciation for other cultures and diversity represented in the school community.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ask families to share one recipe from their culture or country of origin.
2. Students can work together to create a template that can be sent home with each student.
3. Sub-headings for the template may include the following:  
Name of Recipe:  
Ingredients:  
Instructions:  
Illustration: (photo or drawing if available)  
This recipe is from:
4. Compile all submissions to create a recipe book. Print one per student for students to take home.

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- School & Classroom Leadership
- Social & Physical Environments
- Home, School & Community Partnerships

## RESOURCES:

## Community Values or Vision

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To enhance inclusive and supportive learning environments through the development of a vision using values identified through student input.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- At the beginning of the school year, have students establish a list of values/norms or a code of conduct.
- Encourage students to create a shared vision incorporating some student identified values or a code of conduct.
- Use art to illustrate the values/behaviors identified. Display in the classroom.
- When values are not respected or problems are identified, use student voice strategies to discuss solutions.

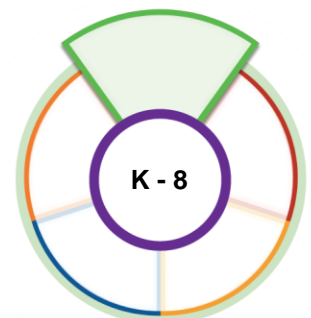
### IN OUR CLASSROOM



Image source: Teach.com

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
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- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management





## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments

## RESOURCES:

- Mindfulness in the Classroom Parent Letter
- [A Teacher's Guide: Everyday Practices for Mental Health and Well Being in the Classroom](#)
- [Calm Classrooms](#)

## Two Minute Mindfulness

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To provide students with an opportunity to connect with themselves and promote a calm, relaxed classroom environment that facilitates improved learning.

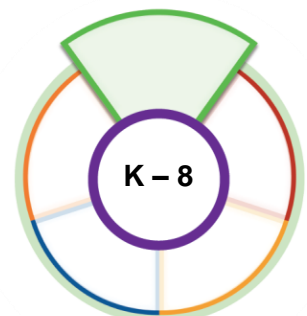
### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

Mindfulness can contribute to calm and positive classroom environments that are necessary for learning.

1. Provide parents/guardians with a letter home about your intentions to practice mindfulness in the classroom. Refer to the Mindfulness in the Classroom Parent Letter.
2. Create a list of Two Minute Mindfulness activities you think would be appropriate for your classroom. Resources include:
  - [A Teacher's Guide: Everyday Practices for Mental Health and Well Being in the Classroom Created by Thames Valley District School Board](#)
  - Calm Classrooms – [www.calmclass.com](http://www.calmclass.com)
3. Select a time during the school day to engage in a Two Minute Mindfulness activity.
4. Discuss with the class why mindfulness is important.  
Educator Prompts:
  - What is mindfulness?
  - Why do you think it is important?
  - When would be a good time to practice mindfulness?
  - How can mindfulness help you to problem-solve?
  - What are some ways our class can practice mindfulness?
5. Consider assigning mindfulness activities as homework.

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE6 Awareness of their own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## Mindfulness in the Classroom Parent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you what is happening in our classroom. [Add 2 or 3 highlights from the month's curriculum].

I also wanted to let you know that we have started integrating mindfulness strategies as part of our classroom's daily activities. Mindfulness is about taking a few minutes each day to tune into our bodies. Specifically, we will spend a few minutes each day practicing calming breathing techniques.

One example technique is called Square Breathing. Students are asked to:

- Sit tall (either on a chair or on the ground) and place both feet on the ground.
- Breathe in slowly through their nose for a count of 4, hold their breath for a count of 4, breathe out through their mouth for a count of 4 and hold for a count of 4.

Taking a few minutes each day to be mindful can improve wellbeing. Please ask your child about mindfulness and have them show you some of the strategies they have learned.

Please let me know if you would like more information about mindfulness.

Sincerely,

## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- School & Classroom Leadership
- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Template of a Venn diagram

## Understanding differences: How are we the same? How are we different? Venn Diagrams

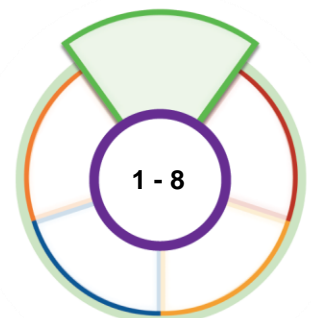
**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase student recognition and appreciation for similarities and differences between themselves and others in the classroom.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Have students work in pairs. Encourage students to work with someone they don't know very well.
2. Provide each group with a template of a Venn diagram with two intersecting circles (see next page for an example template).
3. Ask each pair of students to discuss favourite items or activities that they have in common.
4. Provide a list of ideas: foods, outdoor activities, indoor gym activity, school subject, places to go, board games, books etc.
5. Students decide on three ways in which they are alike. Ask students to write those things on the intersecting part of the diagram.
6. Students decide on three ways in which they are different. Ask students to write those on the circles where they do not intersect.

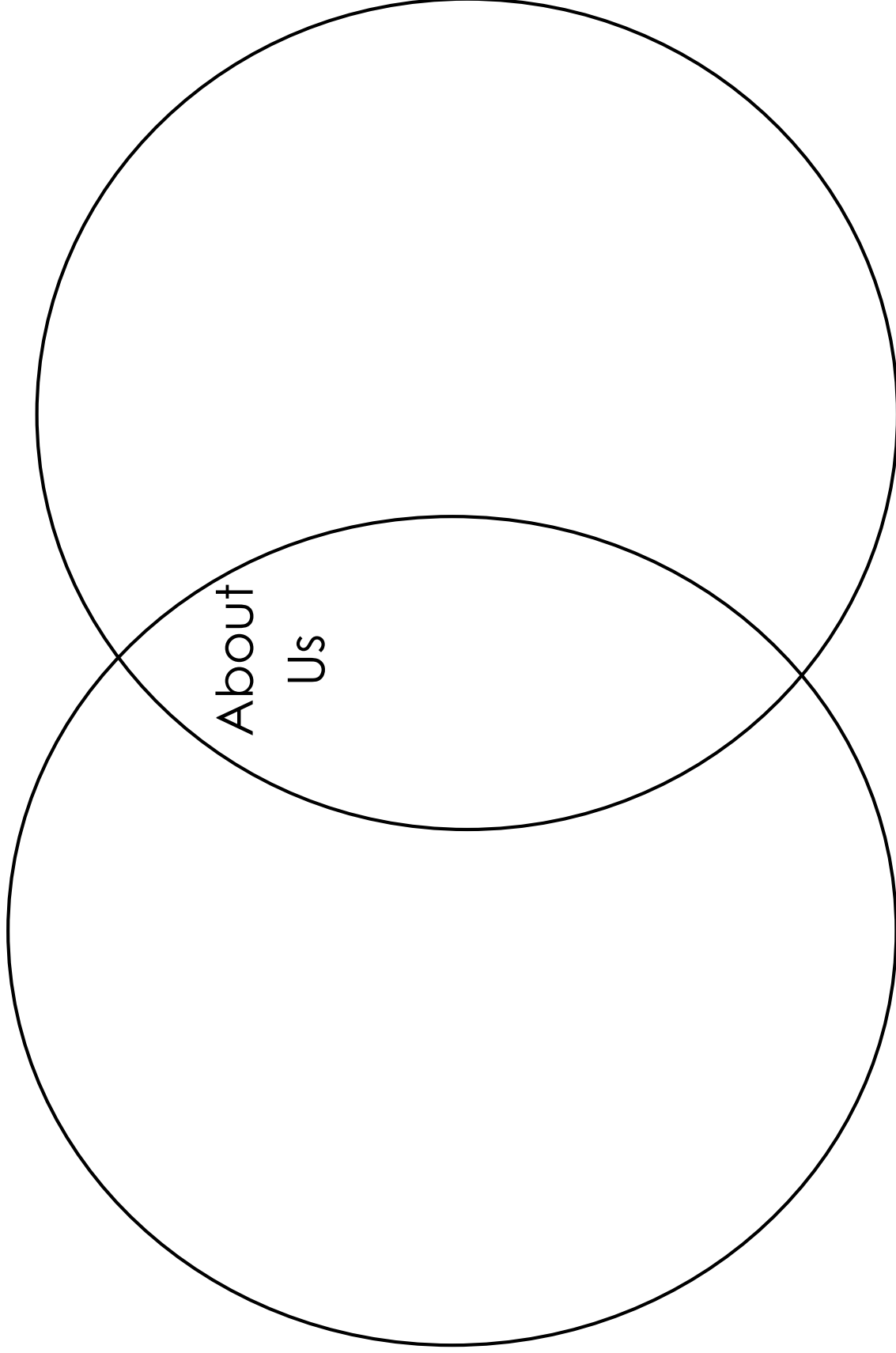
### Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



About Me

About:



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- “All About Me” placemat template
- Crayons, colour pencils, markers
- Photograph of each student
- Laminating machine or budget for laminating

## All About Me Placemat

### ACTIVITY GOAL:

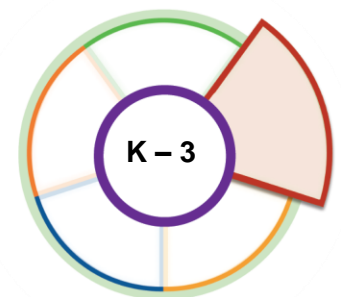
To facilitate school staff getting to know the students better.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Provide each student with a copy of the “All About Me” placemat template.
2. Inform students that the placemats will be given to the principal and/or office staff (or other staff) to put on their desk or hang on the wall in the office as a way to learn about the students.
3. Instruct students about how to complete their placemats.
4. Laminate placemats as an option, if there are resources available.
5. Students can deliver the completed placemats to office staff.
6. Encourage staff to get to know each student and to take some time to greet students by name.
7. Rotate placemats as applicable.

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE3 Social skills; OE4 Problem solving in social contexts; OE5 Diversity; OE6 Awareness of their own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development





# ***All About Me***



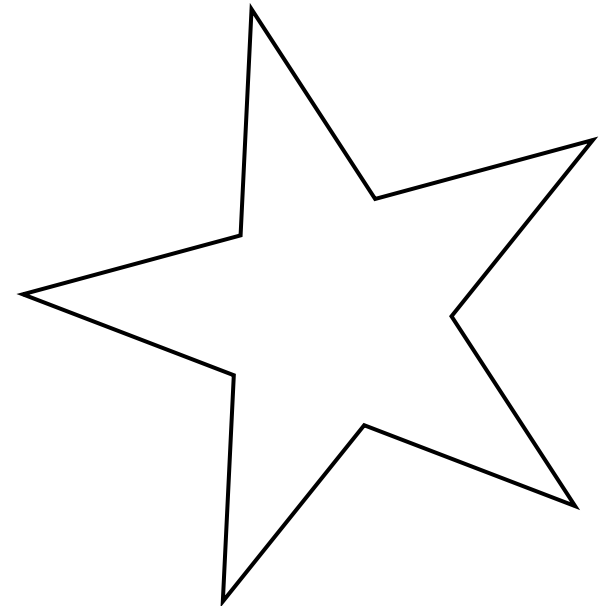
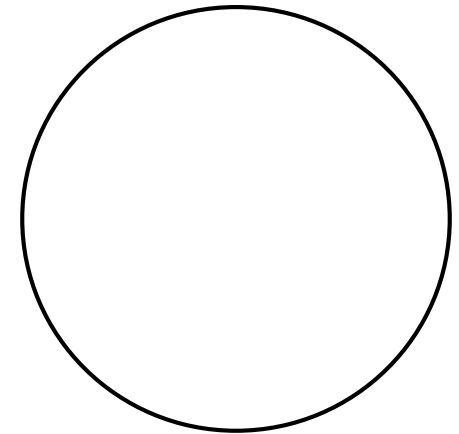
Picture or drawing of me

My name is:

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Something that I want to do this year is:

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## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Flip chart/white board/graffiti wall
- Coloured markers
- [The Centre of Teaching and Learning](#)
- [SpeakUp Project Proposal Toolkit for Students](#)

## Brainstorming

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To engage students in brainstorming as a way to facilitate student input/student voice on decision making for identifying activities that may enhance student's sense of belonging or school/classroom connectedness.

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

Brainstorming can be implemented with either large or small groups.

### Steps for Brainstorming:

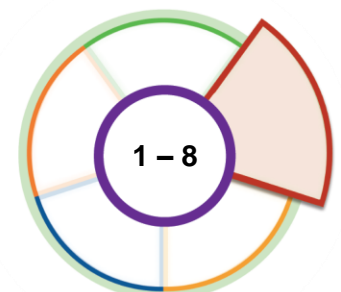
1. Students select a leader, a recorder and a time keeper. This may need to be modified depending on the age group. An educator may need to conduct the session.
2. Set up rules for the session (e.g., allow everyone to contribute; no discussion of ideas until all contributions have been made etc.).
3. Begin the session by writing down the question/topic on flip chart/white board/graffiti wall, making it visible to everyone.
4. Get everyone's input and write them on the board.
5. Group ideas by common themes.
6. Decide on some priority ideas/activities.
7. Set up plan, implement and evaluate results following each activity.

For more information on brainstorming, visit:

- The Centre of Teaching and Learning  
<http://humber.ca/centreforteachingandlearning/instructional-strategies/teaching-methods/classroom-strategies-designing-instruction/brainstorming/brainstorming.html>
- SpeakUp Project Proposal Toolkit for Students  
[http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/speakup\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/speakup_toolkit.pdf)

### Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Paper
- Markers/Pens
- Box
- Sticky notes

## Mind Mania Mural

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To provide the classroom or school community with an opportunity to brainstorm activity ideas to increase connectedness.

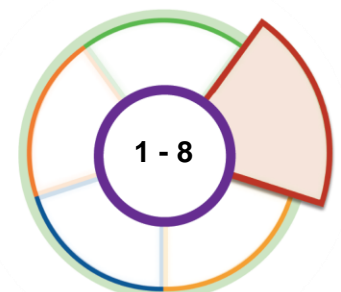
## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

This activity can be done as a whole school or with an individual classroom.

1. Create a box titled “Brain Buster Box” and place in a common area, such as the teacher’s desk or the office, so that it can be monitored.
2. Invite students and staff to write their ideas on sticky notes for potential activities on how the school or classroom can increase connectedness.
3. Encourage students to place their sticky notes of ideas into the “Brain Buster Box”.
4. Have a group of student volunteers from the class or from the Healthy Schools Committee (Wellness Committee/Safe Schools’ Committee) work together with a teacher to review the ideas submitted.
5. Students can decide on a process for identifying ideas and prioritizing potential school activities based on all the ideas submitted.
6. Create a list of activities to be implemented.
7. Post a large piece of mural paper in the classroom/school for a “Mind Mania Mural”. Students can use artwork, drawings and written words to display the list of chosen ideas/activities to be implemented.

### Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Chart Paper
- Markers

## Treasure Tree

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To provide each class with an opportunity to work together to create ideas for activities to improve connectedness (this is a school-wide activity).

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Select the first class to begin the activity. Give this class a sheet of blank chart paper and brainstorm ways to improve connectedness. Educator Prompts:
  - What is connectedness to you?
  - Why is connectedness important?
  - How do you like to get to know other people?
2. Give the next class the first class' ideas. The next class should come up with 2-3 ideas to branch off (like the branches of a tree).
3. After every class has participated, collect the papers and compile all the ideas. Use the diagram below for posting the ideas.

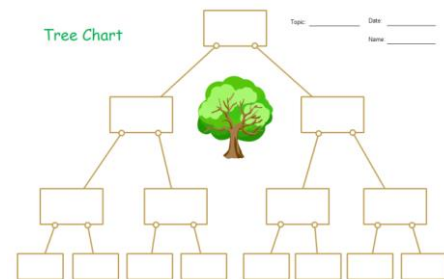
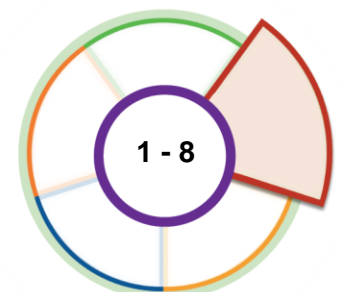


Image Source:

<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=tree+chart+&view=detailv2&adlt=strict&id=E4E22257005644BB3EE77FDBC0BB6A1C7FB88374&selectedIndex=84&ccid=F3grUOQd&simid=608006940503314156&thid=OIP.M17782b50e41dde2843ff3066fd366585o0&qjxhist=0>

### Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
- Home, School & Community Partnerships

## RESOURCES:

- Various community agencies
- Volunteers

## Community Giving

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To facilitate community connectedness by giving back to the community.

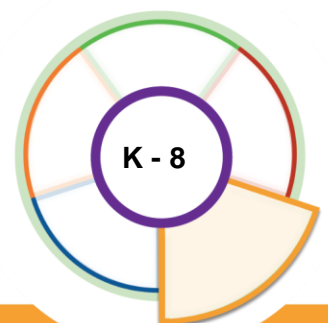
## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

This activity can be done as a whole school or classroom activity.

1. Gather input from students, staff, and parents about what types of community giving projects they would be interested in exploring.
2. Make a short list and contact those local community agencies to determine details.
3. Discuss details and decide on which community giving project to work on (e.g., food drive, clothing drive, etc.).
4. Plan and implement the community giving project. Consider sending a note home to families outlining the project.
5. Share and celebrate the successes and contributions to the community.

## Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 1: C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self/others
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health
- Other connections: Social Studies Grade 1: A2.2, B1.3 Community



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum Teaching and Learning
- Home, School & Community Partnerships
- Social & Physical Environments

## RESOURCES:

- Ideas and examples can be viewed at [Real Acts of Caring](#)
- Brainstorming activities from this Connectedness Toolkit

## Real Acts of Caring (RAC)

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase mental well-being by the implementation of intentional initiatives with “*Real Acts of Caring*” (RAC) engaging students, staff and/or families to provide intentional caring activities for others at school or within the community.

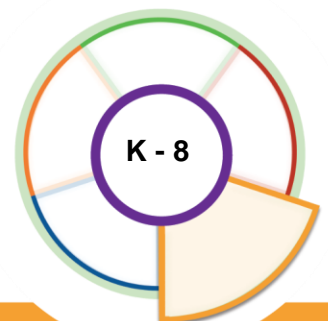
### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- *Real Acts of Caring* can be implemented as a classroom activity, or as school-wide initiative.
- Use the brainstorming activities described in this toolkit as a way to create a list of ideas for acts of caring.
- Plan RAC activities throughout the school year as a part of a school promotion of well-being. Document/maintain photographs and stories about the accomplishments and the ‘sense of caring’ that is created by the various activities. Share stories and images with the community and families as a part of newsletters or other communication channels.

Source: Information for this activity has been reproduced with permission from Real Acts of Caring <http://www.realactsofcaring.org/>

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE6 Awareness of their own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- School & Classroom Leadership

## RESOURCES:

## Student Driven Committees

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To provide an opportunity for students to take a leadership role in promoting connectedness.

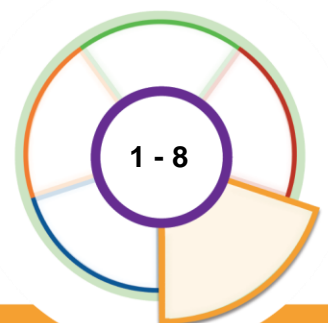
### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

Student driven committees such as Healthy Schools, Safe Schools, Mental Health or Wellness Committees can plan and implement activities targeting various health promoting behaviours.

1. Promote the establishment of a school committee involving students, school administration, teachers, public health nurse, and/or parent representatives
2. Recruit students. Ask students who do not usually volunteer for school committees.
3. Define the purpose of the committee while emphasizing the importance of student voice and developing leadership skills, which is integral to the success of the committee.
4. Encourage students to plan activities that align with the identified goal. For example, if the goal is to improve school connectedness, all of the activities planned during the school year should target this and build on each other. Refer to the activities in this resource for ideas.
5. In addition to impacting the health goal identified, a key outcome of these committees is to build leadership skills and strengthen student voice among students and staff.
6. Recognize student contributions as school leaders and celebrate accomplishments.

### Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management





## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Home, School & Community Partnerships

## RESOURCES:

- Welcome Wordle
- World flag images/printouts

## Welcoming Environment and Greeting Students

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase students' sense of connectedness by creating a welcoming environment and positive school climate.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

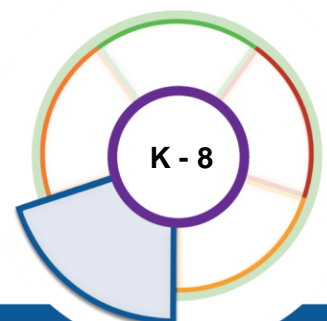
- Display welcome signs in various languages(see the next page for an example sign); post flags representing the different student cultures and/or post student artwork in the school entry area.
- Have one or two staff members greet students at the beginning of the day as they arrive or enter the school.
- Strive to greet students by their first name. Face-to-face interaction with students enhances their feeling of connection to school.
- Encourage students to greet their peers every morning and when they walk by each other in the halls.
- Have a classroom discussion about the importance of greeting one another.

### Educator Prompts:

- Why is it important to greet one another?
- How do you greet your family? Your friends?
- Is there a difference between how you greet your family and how you greet your friends?
- How does it make you feel when someone greets you at school?
- What are some ways you can participate in making everyone feel welcome at our school?

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE3 Social skills, OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



Example welcome sign



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Home, School & Community Partnerships
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

### (A) Lend a Helping Hand

- Announcements
- Promotional Posters
- Hand template

### (B) Warm Fuzzies

- Blank sheets of paper
- Masking tape
- Pens or Markers

## Connecting Through Kindness

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To promote positive relationships and a positive school climate.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS FOR 2 ACTIVITIES:

#### (A) Lend a Helping Hand Activity Instructions (K-8)

This can be a week long whole school or classroom activity.

1. Create blank hand templates for recording helping acts.
2. Provide two or more copies to everyone participating.
3. Have students and staff write helping acts on the hand cut-outs.
4. Promote the activity (e.g., email to staff, posters, letters home, announcements, posting health walls found at <https://www.healthunit.com/school-posters/>).
5. Display the completed work on a wall or bulletin board.

Another resource: Random Acts of Kindness

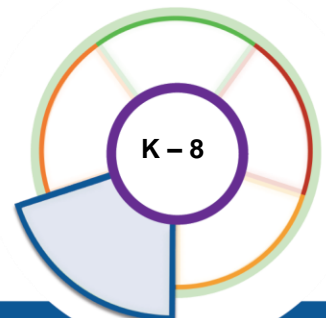
<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>

#### (B) Warm Fuzzies Activity Instructions (K-3)

1. Distribute a blank piece of paper to each student.
2. Have students:
  - write their names at the top of the paper,
  - work in pairs/small groups to tape the paper to each other's backs,
  - circulate the room and write positive comments about each other on the sheets of paper taped to each other's backs, and
  - share with their partner or with a small group the comments on their paper.
3. Encourage students to take sheets home to share with their families or post them in the classroom.

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## **“Lend a Helping Hand” Announcements**

### **The week prior:**

Next week is “Lend a Helping Hand” week here at \_\_\_\_\_.  
Take the time to lend a helping hand to someone at school, home or in the community. Hold the door open, share your markers, help someone with their homework, help carry someone’s books, clean your room, set the table, walk the dog... the possibilities are endless. With so many helping hands at school, next week will be AWESOME!

### **Day 1:**

Today we start “Lend a Helping Hand” week at \_\_\_\_\_.  
Be on the look-out for ways that you can help your classmates, your teacher, all students, and your family or neighbours. Write your favourite helping acts on the ‘hand’ and post them on our bulletin board. Let’s see how many helping acts we can do this week. It’s going to be an awesome week.

### **Day 2:**

Why should we help others?  
Because we all need help sometimes!  
Did you know that helping others is actually good for your health?  
Researchers have found that when people help others and show kindness they feel happier themselves. So “Lend a Helping Hand” to others and you’ll be glad you did.

### **Day 3:**

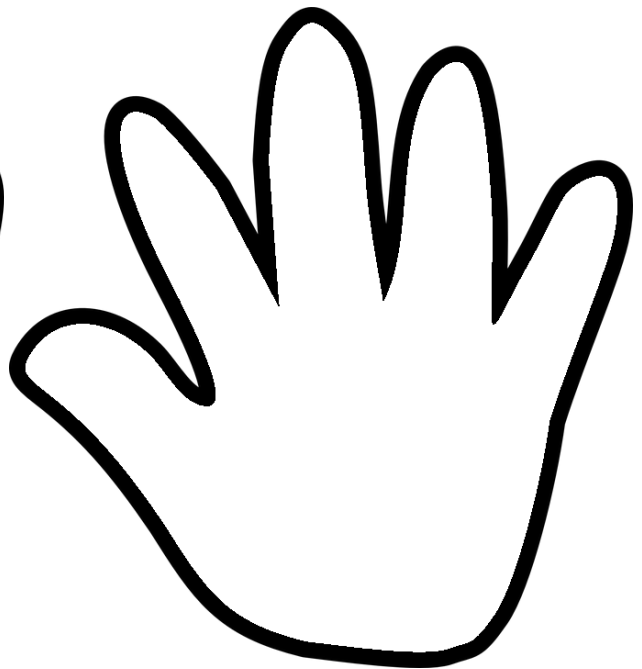
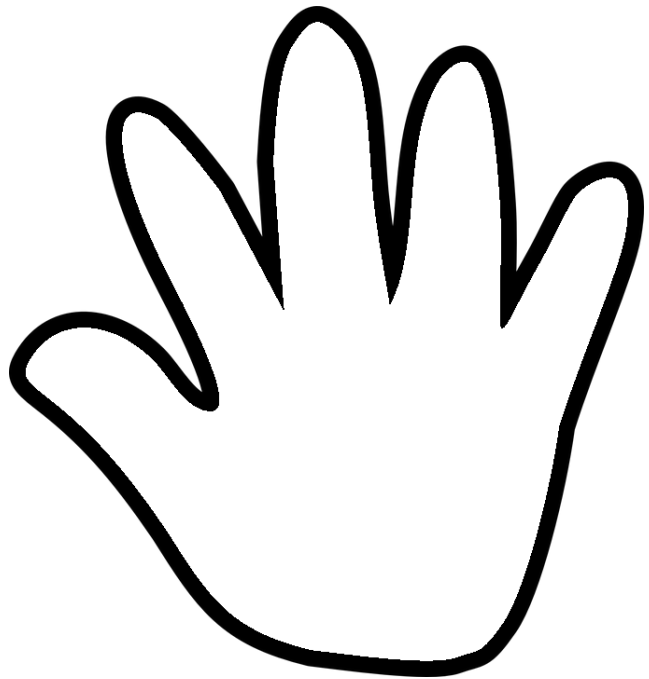
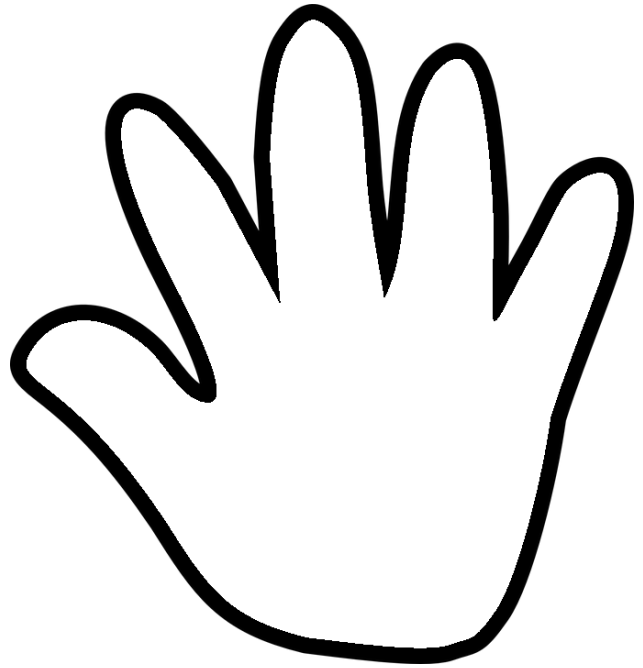
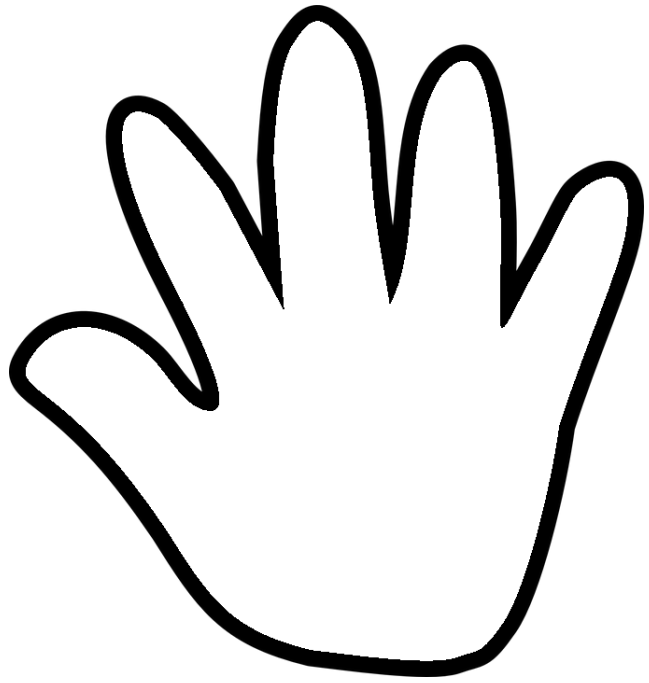
Lend a Helping Hand week at \_\_\_\_\_ has been going well.  
Today we want to showcase a few helpful examples happening at our school.

### **Day 4:**

It’s Lend a Helping Hand week at \_\_\_\_\_. Be creative and help someone today. Be sure to record you helping deeds and post them on our wall of Helping Hands.

### **Day 5:**

Today is the last day for “Lend a Helping Hand” week at \_\_\_\_\_ but it’s not the end of helping others. Keep it up all year long. Be sure to post your Helping acts so we can celebrate the kindness happening at our school. And thank you for ‘Lending a helping hand.’



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Promotional poster
- Make Me Smile Announcements
- Smiley face template

## Make Me Smile

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase connectedness by encouraging staff and students to reach out to one another in a positive way.

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

This can be a whole school or classroom activity.

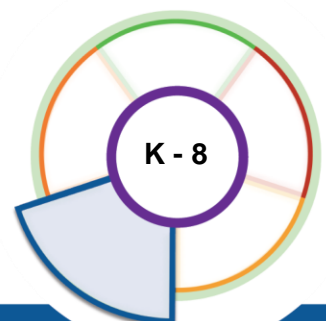
1. Provide a copy of the smiley face template to everyone participating
2. Promote the activity (e.g., email to staff, posters, letters home, announcements).
3. Have students record on the template what they've done to make someone smile.
4. Designate a space to display the smiley faces.
5. Run the activity for at least one week to allow participation to build. Include frequent reminders with ideas.
6. Celebrate the many positive ways that people are spreading smiles.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Consider kicking off the activity with a school assembly providing ideas of how students can make others smile at school and at home.
- Purchase smile stickers for everyone to have on a "Make Me Smile" Day - as a daylong reminder and messaging.
- Take pictures of students and staff smiling and create a "Wall of Smiles".

## Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management





### Make Me Smile Announcements

**Week Prior:** Did you know that smiling can make any day better? Next week is “Make Me Smile Week” here at \_\_\_\_\_

Let’s all make others smile. How you ask? There’s lots of ways: with a thank you, a compliment, a word of encouragement, tell a funny joke or story, by being polite, positive, respectful, and inclusive, or with an act of kindness - the list is endless!

**Day 1:** Today we start “Make Me Smile week”. Did you know that smiling is good for your health? It helps us relax and feel happier and helps others feel better too. How many people can you make smile today?

**Day 2:** Did you know that smiling is contagious? When someone is smiling they lighten up the room, change the moods of others, and make things happier. Share a smile and make someone else smile today!

*Acknowledge someone who made others smile at your school:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Day 3:** Did you know that smiling can help relieve stress? When you are stressed, take time to put on a smile. The stress may be reduced and you’ll feel better. Take some stress out of the day and make someone smile today!

*Share an act that made others smile:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

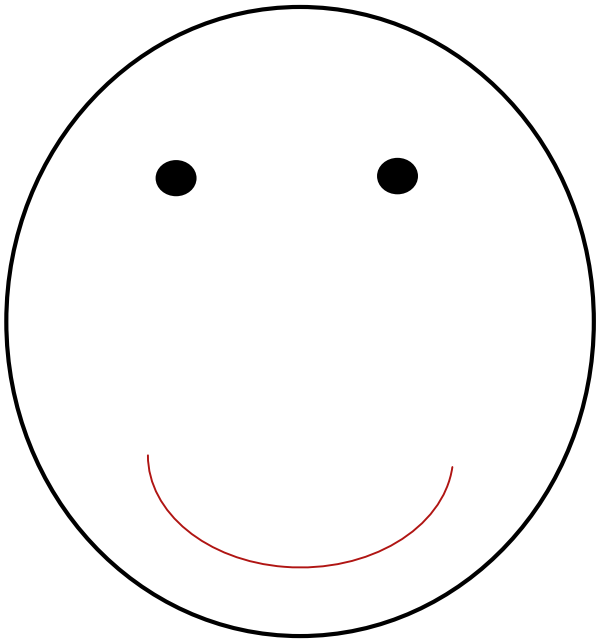
**Day 4:** Did you know that smiling can improve your mood? Next time you’re feeling down, try putting on a smile. There’s a good chance your mood will improve and you’ll feel better! Smiling can trick the body into feeling happier and more positive. Improve your mood and make someone smile today!

**Day 5:** Did you know that when we treat others with kindness it will improve your mood too? Try it and see. Spread some happiness and make your classmates, teachers and family smile today. They’ll feel better and so will you.

This is not the end of “Make Me Smile Week” here at \_\_\_\_\_.

Let’s make it a practice to smile and help others smile today and everyday all year long.

This is what I did to make someone smile.



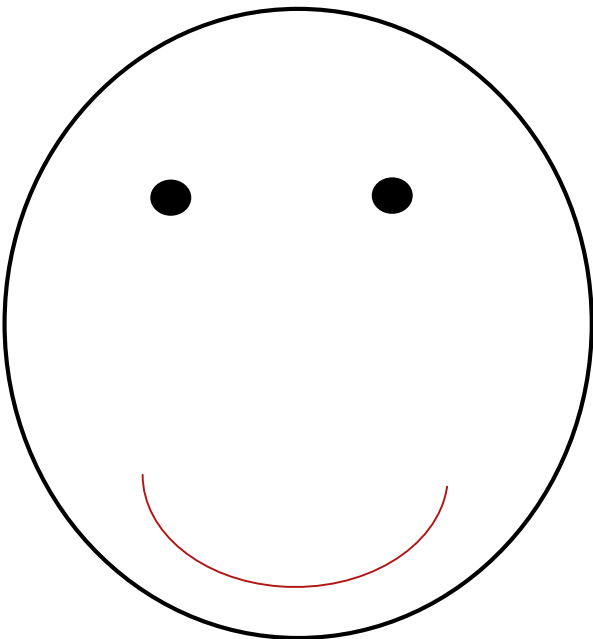
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This is what I did to make someone smile.



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## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Print source
- Tape or adhesive putty to post mandala
- Pencil crayons, crayons or markers

## Mandala Colouring

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To promote school connectedness by participating in the creation of a large group mandala.



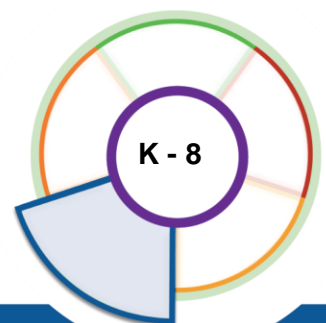
## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

This can be a whole school or classroom activity.

1. Plan the details of the mandala such as the design, size, and location to display.
2. Ensure that the mandala you choose is a high resolution (e.g., 1200 x 1200 or 300 dpi).
3. Print the large mandala on blueprint or engineering paper.
4. Announce the purpose and location of the mandala inviting students, staff and the school community to participate in colouring.
5. Provide announcements to the school to build interest and encourage participation.

## Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management
- Other connections: The Arts



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- A roll or large sheets of paper
- Pencils, markers and/or crayons
- Tape or sticky tack to post the mural paper
- A title poster or banner for the Mural
- Instructions posted beside the mural

## Murals

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To illustrate a common school vision through the creation of a school mural.

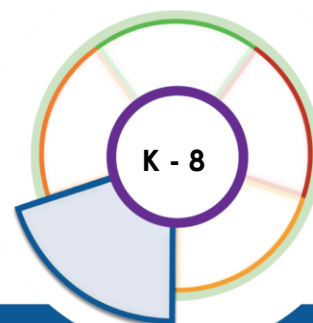
### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

This can be a whole school or classroom activity.

1. Plan the details of the school mural. Decide to create one large mural or a composite mural made up of many individual murals that can be created in the classroom.
2. Decide on a timeline, theme, size and location to display the mural(s). Possible themes may include:
  - Our school spirit is all about...
  - What makes me feel happy?
  - What are you thankful for?
  - Living a healthy life means...
  - Being kind means...
  - I feel connected to my school by ...
3. Promote the activity (e.g., email to staff, posters, letters home, and announcements).
4. If creating one large mural, classes will need to plan a “trip” to the mural to add their content or make a class schedule.
5. Provide announcements daily during the initiative to build interest and encourage participation.
6. Post mural(s) in a designated area.
7. Post a title above the mural to help clarify the topic.
8. Monitor the mural daily to ensure all postings are appropriate.

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments

## RESOURCES:

- 2 minutes each day for 10 consecutive days per student

## 2 By 10 ACTIVITY

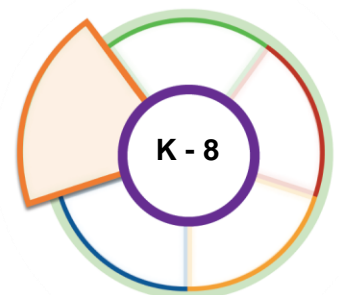
**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To promote a positive relationship between teachers and students by connecting students to caring adults.

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Select students that you believe would benefit from this activity.
2. Determine an ideal time to connect with the students one-on-one that is free from interruptions.
3. Spend time with the students and connect with them about non-school related topics for two minutes every day for ten consecutive days.
4. Assess for positive changes in the students' behavior throughout this activity.
5. Incorporate this activity into your practice throughout the school year.

## Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
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- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments

## RESOURCES:

- Example: Family Multicultural Night
- Promotional items: posters, newsletters
- Community partners
- Food safety guidelines if serving food or beverages

## Fun Family Nights

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To promote positive relationships with families and increase the connection between school and home.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

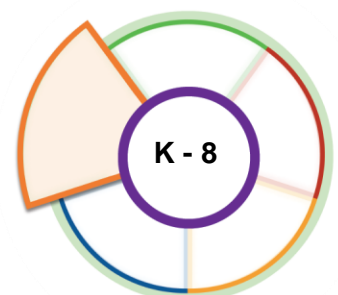
Fun family nights or family events can promote community connectedness.

1. Include staff, students, school committees, community partners and families in the planning and implementation of the event.
2. Determine the theme for the evening.
3. Discuss how the event will run (e.g., interactive stations, activities, guest speakers, or informal gatherings of families).
4. Communicate details of the event clearly to staff, students and families to generate excitement and encourage attendance.
5. Consider offering door prizes related to the event.

See the next page for an example: Multicultural Family Nights

### Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE4 Problem-solving skills; OE6 Awareness of own health and well-being
- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 4: C1.5 Emotional changes of puberty and social impact
- Grade 5: C3.2 Self-concept
- Grade 6: C3.2 Care for self
- Grade 7: C1.2 Mental health supports
- Grade 8: C2.3 Mental health, stress management
- Other Connections: Social Studies, Grade 2



## **Example: Multicultural Family Events**

**Goal:** To enhance home and school connectedness through the celebration of the diverse cultures found in the school community.

Consider the following ideas for your multicultural event. You can combine them or run them separately:

### 1. Multicultural games

- Set up games in the gymnasium originating from countries that represent the diversity at your school.
- Engage families by asking them to help plan or contribute games that represent their family or culture.
- Consider integrating multicultural games as part of physical education classes.
- For ideas visit: [http://www.phecanada.ca/sites/default/files/multicultural\\_games\\_clipboard.pdf](http://www.phecanada.ca/sites/default/files/multicultural_games_clipboard.pdf)

### 2. Storytelling

- Invite families to share traditional stories from their culture.

### 3. Scavenger Hunt/Treasure Hunt

- Set up a scavenger/treasure hunt around the school that requires participants to answer questions about different countries from around the world.

### 4. World Map /World flags

- Post a map of the world to a bulletin board in the school.
- With stickers, invite students to indicate their family's country of origin on the world map.

## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

## RESOURCES:

- Printable bingo cards
- Link to Announce It!
- Parent letter

## Kindness Bingo

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase feelings of connectedness at school and at home.

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

This can be a whole school or classroom activity.

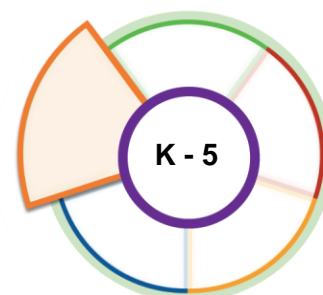
1. Ensure that staff, students and families are well informed.
2. Create a promotional poster for use in classrooms and on school walls.
3. Send a letter home encouraging families to participate. Include details such as when to submit completed bingo cards and any incentives offered.
4. During the activity have daily announcements. Include examples of kind acts that are taking place at school.
5. Provide students and staff with the Kindness Bingo card a few days before the activity begins. Use the attached card or involve students in creating their own card containing their ideas of kind acts to do.
 

Educator Prompts:

  - Why is it important to be kind to one another?
  - Tell me about an act of kindness that was done for you and how it made you feel.
  - Share some examples of how we can be kind to one another.
  - Who is the kindest person you know?
6. Consider offering a prize or prize draw ballots for students who complete their card or a pattern such as a "T" or diagonal line. If offering a prize, remind them to record their name on the cards.
7. Consider kicking off the activity with a school assembly. Include ideas of kind acts that they can do. Illustrate ideas with a skit or video.

## Curriculum Connections:

- FDK: OE3 Social skills; OE4 Problem solving in social contexts
- Grade 1: C2:3 Caring behaviors and feelings
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development
- Grade 5: C3.2 Actions, feelings and self-concepts





# Kindness Bingo

Parents: Please initial each item your child completes.

**B**

**I**

**N**

**G**

**O**

Help clean up the dinner dishes	Compliment a family member	Clean up your room without being asked	Do a Random Act Of Kindness	Say thank you to a family member
Play with a family member	Write a thank you note to a family member for something they did	Ask your parent or guardian how you can help them	Go to bed without being told	Have a technology break -no electronics at the table -talk with family instead.
Carry in the groceries	Make someone smile	<b>FREE</b>	Set the dinner table	Take out the garbage
Help make dinner	Put your toys away without being asked.	Play a game with family or have a family fun night	Put your back pack away after school.	Go for a walk with a family member or friend
Open the door for someone	help pack a family members lunch	Offer to help someone	Pick up your clothes off the bedroom floor	Help a neighbor or friend

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your instructions here:

## Kindness Bingo Parent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you what is happening in our classroom.

[Add 2 to 3 highlights on the months' curriculum]

I would like you to know that we have started integrating ways in which we can be kind and feel more connected to one another as part of our classroom's daily activities. Kindness is about taking time each day to do something special for those around us, our friends, others in our school, community and at home thus feeling more connected to them. Specifically, we will be discussing what kindness means to them and what it means to other people. We will also be discussing how we can show acts of kindness to the people in our lives, especially our family. To promote the concept of kindness, I am sending each child home with the activity, Kindness Bingo. I am encouraging every student to complete the Kindness Bingo Card and return it to school.

Please return it by \_\_\_\_\_

Once it is returned, we will discuss how the activity went and how it felt to be kind to family members. Please take the opportunity to discuss kindness with your child and consider having the entire family participate in the activity, Kindness Bingo. Taking a few minutes each day to be kind can improve your child's sense of connection with those around them.

Please let me know if you would like more information about kindness and connectedness.

Sincerely,

## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments

## RESOURCES:

- Promotions, posters
- Community partners for guest speakers
- Healthy snacks/beverages

## PARENTS CONNECTING

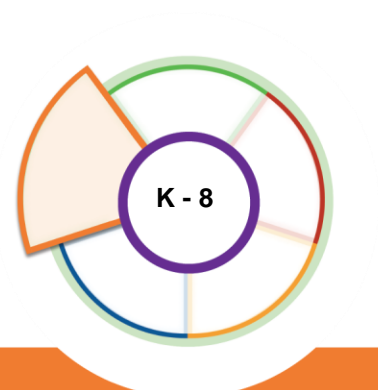
**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To increase parent engagement through social and educational opportunities for parents and caregivers.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Plan to host a series of parent sessions whereby parents can learn and connect with school staff and other parents.
2. Topics of interest may include:
  - Packing healthy lunches
  - Sedentary behaviour and physical activity
  - Sleep routines
3. Promote the sessions via posters, newsletters, school website.
4. Access community partners as guest speakers.

### Curriculum Connections

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- Grade 1: C1.2 Safe Practices; C2.3 Caring behaviors
- Grade 2: C3.1 Relating positively to others
- Grade 3: C1.4 Factors that affect physical and/or emotional development



## RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments

## RESOURCES:

- Schedule for calls
- Phone numbers for parents of students

## The Power of a Positive Telephone Call

**ACTIVITY GOAL:** To enhance the parent-teacher relationship, the parent's connection to the school and involvement in their child's learning.



## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. At the beginning of the school year, plan time to make positive telephone calls to parents/caregivers of students in your classroom.
2. Plan to call 2 - 4 families each month.
3. In the phone call, comment on the student's strengths and note positive aspects of the student's progress in the classroom. This may include:
  - Acts of kindness
  - Completion of school work well done
  - Participation in school or classroom activities
  - Help with clean up
  - Attentiveness
  - Listening
  - Being respectful and inclusive
  - Good test performance
4. This "good news call" can recognize the student for progress or a job well done and helps parents to learn more about their children.
5. During the phone call consider inviting the families to school events.

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