

# Kind Campus MONTH 1

## Defining Kindness

What is  
Kindness?



What does it mean to “be kind” and why is being kind important?



### Understanding our Social and Emotional Brains

**Fixed vs. Growth Mindset:** Psychology professor Carol Dweck writes that human beings have one of two attitudes toward learning: a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. We develop this mindset as young students, and it guides us throughout our lives. In a fixed mindset, we try to appear intelligent and not show too much effort, which can result in a lack of coping skills and strategies to handle challenges. With a growth mindset, we focus on learning, and effort is a positive quality that develops skills. As a result, we develop resiliency in the face of setbacks (Dweck, 2015). When we strive for a growth mindset, we place value on improving our different abilities, emphasize the importance of process, and appreciate and respect effort, strategies, perseverance, and improvement (Dweck, 2014). To help others strive for a growth mindset, praise people carefully and concentrate on effort and process.



### Self-Awareness

**“Noticing” phrase:** Sometimes the person it’s most difficult to be kind to is ourselves—we can be our own worst critics. A first step in self-awareness is to become mindful of self-critical thoughts. Thoughts can become habitual, but by noticing these thoughts as they occur, we can learn to break our self-critical cycles. Encourage students to redirect self-critical thoughts by labeling them as what they are—ideas that aren’t necessarily true or accurate. Instead, when we catch ourselves in a self-destructive thought pattern, try labeling self-critical thoughts with a “noticing” phrase:

“Aha, I just had a self-critical thought!”

“Thanks, mind! That’s an interesting thought.”

“Ah, here comes the ‘I’m not good enough’ story again.”

When we label our thoughts in a non-judgmental way, these thoughts lose their power over us. Ultimately, they decrease in frequency because they are no longer reinforced (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012).



### Awareness of Others

**Why Write Kind Notes?** In your classes, talk about Kind Notes—what they are, why we write them, and how they benefit us as individuals (both the writing and the receiving). Discuss how Kind Notes provide concrete ways for students to practice intentional kindness through written communication and reflection, as well as learning to accurately understand and manage feelings and show gratitude. Encourage students to recognize the kindness of an adult on campus. Help students think about the adults who support them at school, from bus drivers and maintenance staff to front office administration and teachers. Then create a Kind Post Office where students can drop off Kind Notes on a regular basis. Encourage students to write Kind Notes every week.



# Defining Kindness: Kindness in Action



## Self-Kindness

**Kind Notes to Selves:** To emphasize the importance of Self-Kindness, have students write (or draw) Kind Notes to themselves, recognizing something they like about themselves or a quality that makes them a kind person. Another option is for teachers to collect the Kind Notes and keep them until the end of the year. During the last month of school, have students write an end-of-year Kind Note to themselves, reflecting on the growth of their acts of kindness. Return the original Kind Notes to students so they can recognize and celebrate their development.

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## Kindness Toward Others

**Kindness Ambassadors:** Kindness Ambassadors are responsible for modeling kind behavior, recognizing kindness in others, and acting on the need for kindness in daily interactions. Encourage each classroom to select two students to be Kindness Ambassadors for the week, month, or whichever time period works best for your group. Kindness Ambassadors create a sense of belonging by brainstorming ways to welcome new students, and to show gratitude to staff, faculty, and volunteers. Kindness Ambassadors also may serve as on-going student leaders for a school-wide Kind Leadership Team, which represents the needs and interests of the school community.

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## Kindness Dilemmas

**Building Intention:** Every interaction is an opportunity to practice kindness. In some situations, the kind thing to do is obvious and easy, but in others it isn't as clear. When we feel threatened by a situation, we may automatically react, without thinking through how our actions affect others and ourselves. Kindness dilemmas present a chance to think through each step of our decision-making process, with the end goal of building necessary problem-solving and critical thinking skills to use in real-life situations. Use the Kind Choices Wheel as a problem-solving tool! (See supplementary materials for the Kindness Dilemma Discussions and Kind Choices Wheel.)

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## Adult Practice

**Creating a connected campus:** Making your campus a kind space means ensuring that all students, staff, and faculty feel recognized and included. Make a list of all students or colleagues who may need extra connection. People may need extra connections because of a stressful life situation, a disability or mental illness that makes connecting more difficult, or being new at the school. Assign one or more staff/faculty who will go out of their way to connect regularly with the student or colleague. Even a simple connection, like greeting them by name, can be powerful.



## Our Kindness Priorities This Month

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Share photos of your Kindness Ambassadors with us!



“Kind Campus creates an environment of caring that is contagious as it established new cultural norms through a language of words and actions that are palpable in their positivity!”

-School administrator, Rock River, WY