READY-TO-GO SERVICE PROJECTS

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Planting the Seed: An Acorn of Kindness

Time Commitment:
30-45 minutes

Grade Level:
3rd-5th

3Ts Used:
Time
Talent
Treasure

OVERVIEW

After reading the introduction to the book, *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy*, students will have the opportunity to use their own time, talent, and treasure to personalize two acorns—one to keep and one to give away as part of a ripple of kindness. This lesson is meant to get students thinking about different ways they can use their 3Ts to send a ripple of kindness into the world and make a positive change.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

We believe that kindness is the springboard for philanthropy. Both stem from a desire to help others and make a positive impact on those around them. Kindness might involve smaller, everyday acts, while philanthropy looks more into long-term, systemic change. Together, they encourage students to understand and respond to the needs of others.

MATERIALS:

- Wooden acorns—two (2) per student (provided).
- *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy* —"Introduction: An Idea Is Never Too Small to Make a Difference" (provided).
- Project Heart sticker—one (1) per student (provided).
- Bookmark—one (1) per student (provided).
- Paint or markers.
- Googly eyes or other fun things to add to the acorns.
- Glue.

CONNECTION TO CAREERS:

- Local philanthropists
- Botanist
- Biologist
- Red Cross
- Local nonprofits

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INSTRUCTIONS

- Read *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy* introduction, "An Idea is Never Too Small to Make a Difference."
- Discuss the story using cooperative learning strategies.
  - Suggested questions to ask throughout the discussion:
    - Read the title and ask, "What do you think you will learn in this story?"
    - "Who do you think is a philanthropist?"
    - "What's something you know started small and grew into something big and beautiful?"
    - "What is your understanding of philanthropy now?"
    - "How do you see yourself becoming a philanthropist?"
- Brainstorm with students what some of their talents are, how they use their time to help others, and how they could use or help find treasures to share with others.
- Explain to students that they will be decorating two acorns—one for themselves to keep to remind them about being a philanthropist, and one to share with someone outside of the classroom so that it starts a ripple effect.
- Brainstorm what students want to put on their acorns. Possibilities include:
  - Positive words or a positive message.
  - A smiley face that shows what they will look like when they spread kindness.
  - Decorations.
- Decorate the first acorn to keep as a reminder to be kind to those around them. Use markers, paint, etc.
- Brainstorm a list of people to whom they could give their acorn, and have them think why they want to give it to that particular person. Have you noticed that they've been sad lately? Did they have a bad day?
- Have students think about how they want to decorate it before starting, maybe doing a rough draft on a blank piece of paper first.

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INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

- Decorate the second acorn to be given away.
- Tell the students that they will each receive a Project Heart sticker at the end of today's lesson. They can put this sticker on a water bottle, the front of a folder – anywhere that will help them remember to be kind to people.

RIPPLE OF KINDNESS SENTENCE STARTERS

- I see your potential to grow into a big, mighty oak tree by the way you . . .
- I see you becoming something big and beautiful when you . . .
- You show kindness by . . .
- I appreciate that you use your time to help me . . .

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Why did you decorate your acorn the way you did?
- How did you use your creativity when decorating your acorn?
- Who will you give your "ripple of kindness" acorn to and why?
- What impact do you think this will have on your life? On the community? On the world?
- Describe how you would feel if you received one of the acorns from someone.
- What did you learn from this?
- How will you share your kindness today?

EXTENTION OPPORTUNITY

- Have STEM teacher/class 3D print acorns.
- Have students decorate and personalize one of the kindness bookmarks using one of the kindness sentence starters or by creating their own message.
- Want to make more to pass along? Have students pick up other "seeds"—pine cones, seed packets, or rocks to paint messages on!

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SKILLS ALIGNMENT

Entrepreneurial Skills:

- Creativity/Innovation: Demonstrate curiosity, imagination, and eagerness to learn more, and build on personal experience to specify a challenging problem to investigate, engage in novel approaches, moves, directions, ideas, and/or perspectives, and synthesize ideas in original and surprising ways.

- Informed Risk Taking: Demonstrate a willingness to try new things, demonstrate flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness in taking on tasks and activities, innovate from failure, connect learning across domains recognize new opportunities, and act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution.

Civic/Interpersonal Skills:

- Civic Engagement: Identify and reflect upon personal connections to community systems, connect knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from personal ideas and understandings to civic engagement, participate in social or community activities, and "participate effectively in civic life."

Professional Skills:

- Leadership: Model positive behaviors for others, demonstrate leadership skills (e.g., organizing others, taking initiative, team-building), demonstrate confidence while recognizing that personal actions impact others, and educate and inspire others to realize their potential.

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Crafting Gratitude: Being Thankful Every Day

Time Commitment:
30-40 minutes

Grade Level:
3rd-5th

3Ts Used:
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OVERVIEW

After reading a chapter of *Unstoppable!* (or another book from the list below), students will have the opportunity to use their own time and talent by designing a gratitude jar to share with family members, friends, or service providers. This lesson is meant to remind students all there is to be thankful for and all the ways they can show gratitude to others.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

We believe that teaching gratitude can show students all the good around them, even when things don't go their way. Research suggests that gratitude inspires people to be more generous, kind, and helpful, and strengthens relationships. While gratitude and being thankful can feel interchangeable, showing gratitude involves more of a deeper state of appreciation and recognition of the goodness in one's life—beyond an immediate response to something given to us. Teaching gratitude will help students to recognize the goodness in their lives, and will help lead them to want to share their blessings with others who are less fortunate.

MATERIALS:

- *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy* (provided).
- Other book options—*The Gratitude Jar* by Katrina Liu, *Gratitude is My Superpower* by Alicia Ortego.
- Cardboard jars/containers for final draft (provided)—one (1) per student.
- Gratitude slips to put into jars (provided)—one (1) set of eight blank slips per student.
- Gratitude Conversation Starters (provided)—one (1) set of eight cards per student.
- Project Heart stickers—one (1) per student.

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MATERIALS CONTINUED

- Plain white paper (for rough drafting)
- Scissors
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers
- Glitter
- Glue
- Other materials to decorate

CONNECTION TO CAREERS:

- Artist/designer
- Local philanthropist
- Local nonprofit

INSTRUCTIONS

- Connect this activity to a book. Options might include:
  - *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy*.
  - *The Gratitude Jar* by Katrina Liu.
  - *Gratitude is My Superpower* by Alicia Ortego.
- While reading, talk to the students about expected and unexpected behaviors. Some questions you might ask along the way are:
  - What do you think _____ will do?
  - Was your prediction correct? Why or why not?
  - Have you ever felt this way before? Did you try to look for the positives, or did you get stuck on what was "wrong" or not going your way?
  - What things are you thankful for in your life?
- Explain to students they will be decorating a "gratitude jar" to help both remind them of all the amazing things they have in their lives as well as practice showing gratitude to others.
- Each day or week, write down one thing you are grateful for and put it into the jar as a reminder of the good things in your world. Over time, you'll see your jar of gratitude grow, showing you that even on days when things don't go the way you wanted them to, you still had something to be grateful for.

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INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

- Brainstorm a list of groups of people that students can write the gratitude slips with.
- Brainstorm a list of things that can be written on the blank slips. These are the slips that students will write on every day or every week.
- Using a piece of paper as a rough draft, have students plan what they might write or draw on the outside of their gratitude jar. When they are ready, they can create their final version on their cardboard containers.
- Provided in the kit is one set of eight gratitude conversation cards for each student. Have students spend time cutting the cards out in class or send this home to be cut out another time. Students can use these conversation cards with their families or a special adult to identify all the good in their lives.
- Tell the students that they will each receive a Project Heart sticker at the end of today's lesson. They can put this sticker on a water bottle, the front of a folder—anywhere that will help them remember to be thankful for the things they have in life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Why is it important for us to be thankful for what we have?
- Who can you practice showing gratitude with?
- How did you use your creativity when creating your gratitude jar?
- What impact do you think showing gratitude will make on those around you?

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EXTENTION OPPORTUNITY

- Consider connecting gratitude to the seasons. Create gratitude turkeys in the fall, gratitude ornaments or snowflakes for the winter holidays, or potted plants with gratitude messages for spring.

SKILLS ALIGNMENT

Entrepreneurial Skills:

- Creativity/Innovation: Demonstrate curiosity, imagination, and eagerness to learn more, build on personal experience to specify a challenging problem to investigate, and engage in novel approaches, moves, directions, ideas, and/or perspectives, and synthesize ideas in original and surprising ways.

Personal Skills:

- Initiative/ Self-Direction: Demonstrate personal skills through self-awareness, initiative and self-direction, personal responsibility and self-management, adaptability and flexibility, and perseverance and resilience to pursue opportunities to engage and learn interests.

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Handwritten from the Heart: Creating Kindness Cards

Time Commitment:
30-40 minutes

Grade Level:
3rd-5th

3Ts Used:
Time
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OVERVIEW

Students will have the opportunity to use their own time and talent to create two written cards or letters for someone. This lesson is meant to inspire students to get involved in a community outside of their immediate circle.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

We believe that intentionally teaching kindness sets a strong foundation for the philanthropic journey. Kindness stems from empathy—our ability to understand the feelings of others. Showing students that one simple act of kindness can make a big difference will help lead to more significant contributions using their time, talent, and treasure for other individuals and communities.

MATERIALS:

- *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy* (provided).
- Blank note cards and envelope (provided)—one (1) per student.
- Project Heart postcard (provided)—one (1) per student.
- Encouragement cards for teachers to pass out to students (provided)—one (1) per student.
- Project Heart stickers (provided)—one (1) per student.
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.

CONNECTION TO CAREERS:

- Nursing home workers
- Pediatric doctors and/or nurses
- Veterans
- Nonprofits that serve refugees
- The Red Cross

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INSTRUCTIONS

- Hand out the provided encouragement cards to your students a week before this project so students get to experience the feeling of receiving a kind written note.
  - Positive and fun quotes are provided on each card, but the back is blank for you to fill in if you'd like! Not sure what to write to your students? Here are potential note card starters:
    - I love having you in our class and think that you add so much to our culture with your . . .
    - You certainly know how to brighten a room with your . . .
    - Having you in our class means we have . . .
    - Our class would be so different without your sense of humor/kindness/etc.
    - I noticed in class the other day that you helped . . .
- Start by reading a book. Options include:
  - *Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy*
  - *Dear Dragon: A Pen Pal Tale* by Josh Funk
  - *The Snail and the Whale* by Julia Donaldson
  - *If You Come to Earth* by Sophie Blackall
- Brainstorm a list of people who might be socially isolated or going through a difficult time (a list of possible recipients is provided on page 56).
- Tell the students that they will each be creating two cards—one for a group of people they will determine before they begin, and one for someone of their choosing.
- As a class, decide which group will be the focus of your card-writing campaign.
- Read through the organization's guidelines for writing and sending the cards.
  - Several organizations have specific topics and ideas for students to write, be sure to check those out!
- If the organization you picked does not have examples, brainstorm a list of sentences students might use in their card writing.

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INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

- Have students write a rough draft. Check the rough draft for accuracy or have students peer edit.
- Write final drafts of cards.
- Send cards/letters based on the organization's guidelines.
- Tell the students that they will each receive a Project Heart sticker at the end of today's lesson. They can put this sticker on a water bottle, the front of a folder—anywhere that will help them remember to think of others.

WEBSITE RESOURCES:

- Possible places to send cards to:
  - DOROT—older adults
    - bit.ly/3ZFHdhl
  - Love for our Elders—older adults
    - bit.ly/41BrBxR
  - GladysLoveProject—seniors and caregivers
    - bit.ly/3Boeeqn
  - Letters Against Isolation—seniors
    - bit.ly/3DfCETi
  - Miry's List—welcome letters for new arrival refugee families.
    - bit.ly/4iE26SJ
  - Letters of Love—kids in children's hospitals battling chronic illnesses.
    - bit.ly/4iHXuuY
  - Cards for Hospitalized Kids
    - bit.ly/3VKP4ZU
  - Operation Gratitude—military
    - bit.ly/4ghTDmx
  - Project Smile—seniors, veterans, and frontline workers.
    - bit.ly/3P0Pdo8

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WEBSITE RESOURCES CONTINUED

- Color a Smile—Anyone in need of a smile
  - bit.ly/3VE9yTR
- A Little Help
  - bit.ly/3ZW1bpw
- Meals on Wheels
  - bit.ly/3VFEpQb
- Your local nursing home or senior center.

WRITING PROMPTS OR IDEAS

- You are amazing! Remember that!
- You are wonderful! Yes, you!
- You are capable of amazing things!
- YOU are amazing! YOU are important! YOU are special!
- ANIMALS: Tell the person about your pets and ask if their family has/had any pets. Mention your favorite animal or share a fun fact (giraffes have the highest blood pressure of any animal, zebras are white with black stripes, and pigeons can recognize human faces).
- MAKE 'EM LAUGH: Include simple riddles or jokes.
- SHARE A QUOTE: Find and share a positive quote.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- This project kicked off with a note from your teacher. How did that personal touch make you feel?
- What thoughts and emotions did you have about the project and your card/letter writing?
- How do you think the person who received your card/letter felt when they got it?
- How would you feel if you received a letter from someone out of the blue?
- Thinking about the loneliness that isolation can bring, how do you think your card/letter helped the recipient feel more connected?

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- Have you ever thought of doing a kind thing for a neighbor or friend but decided not to out of nervousness? How could you overcome your shyness in the future?

EXTENTION OPPORTUNITY

- If you'd like to give students the opportunity to make more cards, feel free to use our kindness cards template on our website, or have students design their own!

SKILLS ALIGNMENT

Entrepreneurial Skills:

- Creativity/Innovation: Demonstrate curiosity, imagination, and eagerness to learn more, build on personal experience to specify a challenging problem to investigate, and engage in novel approaches, moves, directions, ideas, and/or perspectives, and synthesize ideas in original and surprising ways.

Personal Skills:

- Initiative/ Self-Direction: Demonstrate personal skills through self-awareness, initiative and self-direction, personal responsibility and self-management, adaptability and flexibility, and perseverance and resilience to pursue opportunities to engage and learn interests.

Civic/Interpersonal Skills:

- Civic Engagement: The student demonstrates civic/interpersonal skills through collaboration and teamwork, strong communication skills, global and cultural awareness, civic engagement, and strong character, and can recognize how members of a community rely on each other, considering personal contributions as applicable.