



# Empathy Unit

GRADES 6-8



### Unit Essential Question:

## How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

By defining and developing awareness of the positive powers of **empathy**, students will develop social awareness skills to notice when other students are feeling lonely. They will also explore self-empathy by providing themselves strategies for positive talk. Students will examine how empathy plays a factor in many facets of school life by working collaboratively to design a healing centered classroom environment, develop an empathy toolkit, understand how respect is seen heard and felt, and generate ways to be an Upstander to bullying. As a synthesis activity, students will interview a classmate and empathize with them on a tragic event.

## Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Alignment

In this **empathy unit**, students will promote a culture of healing by developing strategies to understand diverse perspectives in order to create safer communities. Here are some steps you can take throughout this unit to implement REDI values and bring awareness to intersectionality in your classroom:

1. Reference the *Know the Signs* community agreement and circle norms and make it an evolving, living collective community agreement.
2. Empower students to bring their authentic selves to the classroom by allowing space for personal identity exploration.
3. Promote an inclusive and safer space that is antiracist and antibias, by encouraging students to uplift and support all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds.
4. Encourage students to be Upstanders and speak up against injustice and victimization.
5. Model celebrating the various aspects of your identity by promoting self-empathy and self-love.
6. Nurture connections between Trusted Adults and students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

# What is REDI and how is it implemented throughout the curriculum?

Sandy Hook Promise strives to develop materials and resources that reflect the values of race, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI). Throughout this curriculum, you will find that our goal is to create a safer community and a just future for students by teaching them to value inclusivity, speak up against injustice and victimization, and get help for those who need it. Additionally, in line with our central belief that children have a right to be safe wherever they are, we commit to ensuring our footprint neither creates nor advances inequitable outcomes as demonstrated by the work we do with and for students and the adult networks around them.



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## Curriculum Overview Guide and Student Workbook



To learn more about the full curriculum components and the various resources associated with the *Start With Hello* curriculum, visit this [guide](#). Here, you will gain access to the curriculum's essential questions, thematic unit rationale, and additional engagement activities. The Unit is also accompanied by a [Student Workbook](#).

# Create a Healing Centered Classroom

## AN EMPATHY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Analyze and unpack the meaning of “well-being.”
- Collaboratively develop a Healing Centered Classroom rubric.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- **Social Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.
- **Relationship Skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

#### Social Justice Standard

- **Diversity 9:** Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#)
- Pencils and crayons

#### Educators:

- Large paper for group drawings.
- Optional: Healing Centered Compass

**Note to Educator:** Prior to teaching the main activity, ground yourself in [Shawn Ginwright](#)’s definition and perspective of healing-centered engagement, a few key points for the educator are listed below:



### Unit Essential Question

How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

### Grades

6–8

### Estimated Time Needed

30 minutes

### Notes

- A shift in thinking from a trauma informed lens to a healing centered lens.
- Trauma is more deficit-modeled whereas healing is more asset-based.
- Healing also takes a “healing the healers” approach and emphasizes the educator as needing space for healing, too.
- Expands how we think about responses to trauma and offers a more holistic approach to fostering well-being.
- Starts with empathy, “building empathy is critical to healing centered engagement. To create this empathy, I encourage adult staff to share their story first, and take an emotional risk by being more vulnerable, honest, and open to young people” (Ginwright, 2018).

## Mindful Minute

Ask students if they’ve heard the term: well-being. Explain:

- *There’s been a lot of information and talk about self-care and well-being.*
- *Well-being can mean different things to different people and can involve your physical, social, mental, and emotional health-fulness.*
- *To “be well” can mean that we feel at ease, healthy, unstressed, and many other things.*

Visualize a well (if possible, project an image of a well on screen). A well holds a vital supply of water that people use for many important daily activities like drinking, farming, cleaning, and caring for animals. Also, students may have heard of “wishing wells.” Wishing wells have a long history and you may have heard or seen ponds, wells, or other bodies of water where people throw in coins and make a wish. Overall, wells hold an important source of life, energy, and vibrancy (water). We don’t want wells to dry up, just like we don’t want our own wellness, well-being, and sources of energy/ life/vibrancy to dry up. We need to keep our personal wells and buckets filled up.

Encourage students to do the following:

- *For this mindful minute, think of three ways you can keep your well from going dry.*



## Student Connector

Display the prompts below on the board, flip-chart paper, or projector. Give students the choice to select one of the prompts, fill in the blanks, and partner up to share and explain their response to their partner.

- *Whenever I notice someone \_\_\_\_\_ it makes me feel happy.*
- *Whenever I notice someone \_\_\_\_\_ it makes me feel angry.*
- *Suppose there was no \_\_\_\_\_ then we could \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *A day without \_\_\_\_\_ would be like \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *My own prompt: \_\_\_\_\_.*

This student connector is in thanks to the inspired prompts by poet [Tim Seibles](#)



## Main Activity

If available, start the main activity by reviewing the class Know the Signs Agreement and/or Circle Up Norms. Explain that these agreed upon classroom social guidelines are steps towards creating a healing centered classroom. Also, the class's work with the Start With Hello and Say Something programs give students and Trusted Adults knowledge, skills, and tools to nurture a healing environment by:

- *Expressing empathy towards one another, especially for someone who may be feeling isolated or lonely.*
- *Lending a helping hand to one another if there's a challenge or issue we've come across.*
- *Noticing our surroundings and tuning into anything that seems unsafe or not quite right.*
- *Communicating with both classmates and Trusted Adults using "I statements" and active listening skills.*

The next level to building a classroom community that lives up to all our agreements, norms, and prosocial actions is to put healing in the center of our work together. Ask the class:

- *What does healing mean to you?*
- *When and where do you hear the word "healing?"*
- *What are some situations or events that might require some time for healing?*

Continuing with the discussion on healing, inform the class that they'll generate ideas and strategies for going to the next level by working together to dream a healing-centered classroom environment.

Divide the class into groups of four or five. Instruct groups to assign roles:

- **Facilitator:** Guides the group through the guiding questions.
- **Timekeeper:** Informs group members when five minutes, and one minute remains.
- **Notetaker(s):** Jots down the ideas and plans on the grid.
- **Reporter:** Shares aloud one idea, question, action, or the drawing that came out of the group work.

## Healing Centered Classroom Grid

Prompts	Group Responses	What can we do as a classroom community to make sure we meet our wishes and dreams for a healing community
<b>In this class, well-being means:</b>		
<p>We all have lots of strengths.</p> <p><b>Our strengths are:</b></p> <p>Together, we can use our strengths to create a healing centered classroom.</p>		
<b>We want to feel joy when we learn, when we are feeling joyful, we are:</b>		
<b>We want to feel safe when we learn, when we are feeling safe, we are:</b>		
<b>To feel like this is a place of healing and belonging, we will need to:</b>		
Other:		

Lastly, ask groups to draw their interpretation of a healing centered classroom on a large piece of paper. If time permits, ask the presenter to share the drawing and one item on the grid.



## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Make special shout outs about how the groups worked well collaboratively. Send students with an empowerment message:

- *You have the power and agency to dream and shape a healing-centered community and be a positive contributor to communities focused on healing, well-being, empathy, and belonging.*

## Lesson Extension

Compile the Healing Centered Classroom grids and drawings. Inform the class that they'll be taking the "best of" the grid responses and drawings to develop one Healing Centered Classroom Compass. The Compass will provide a visual and guide for the class as they intentionally seek to be more healing as a community.

The compass will be sectioned as follows:

- Center: Class definition of well-being and healing
- Segment 1: Our strengths
- Segment 2: What brings us joy
- Segment 3: What helps us feel safe
- Segment 4: Our actions towards a healing classroom community

## Family Engagement

Give students a Family Table Talk question from the [Start with Hello Family Monthly Activity Guide](#) for an evening when they are with family members during a meal or just hanging out.

## References

1. Ginwright, Shawn. "The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement." Medium, 9 Dec. 2020, <https://medium.com/@ginwright/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c>.



# Practicing Empathy with Yourself

## AN EMPATHY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Evaluate the importance of self-empathy.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Relationship Skills:** Students will engage in social activities to learn how to establish healthy relationships with classmates.
- **Social Awareness:** Students will engage in activities to understand the perspective of and empathize with others.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Identity 4:** Express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
- **Diversity 9:** Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding, and connection.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#)

### Mindful Minute

Allow students 5–10 minutes to color a *Start With Hello* themed mindfulness coloring page located at the end of the [workbook](#). Ask students to leave all thoughts and worries outside the class and focus on coloring.



### Student Connector

#### Continue the Conversation

1. Ask students to choose a conversation starter prompt from



### Unit Essential Question

How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

#### Grades

6–8

### Estimated Time Needed

30 minutes

#### Notes

the list:

- Tell me one thing I don't know about you.
  - What has been the highlight of your week?
  - What's your favorite restaurant?
  - If you had to pick a character from a movie/TV show/book that is most like you, who would you pick? Why?
  - What's the first thing you do after school?
2. Explain to students that they will be having a silent discussion with 1-2 peers about the prompt from the list. One of the challenges of the activity will be sustaining the conversation beyond the first or second responses. Ask students to share a few ways that they can continue conversations, even when it seems like they are running out of things to talk about. (Some suggestions might include asking more questions, sharing similarities or differences, or adding opinions.)
  3. Direct students to pass their silent discussion paper to the next person in their group. The next person in the group should respond as though they are having a real conversation. Then, he/she should pass the silent discussion paper back for a response. Remind students to use some of the tips from their brainstorming in #2 in their silent discussions. Provide enough time for students to go back and forth in silent discussion several times so that they can get real practice in sustaining a conversation.
  4. After the activity, reflect using some or all of the questions below:
    - *What strategies did you use to sustain conversation in your silent discussion?*
    - *How is this silent discussion different from a real-life discussion?*
    - *What lessons can you apply from the silent discussion into a real-life discussion?*
    - *Why should we learn to sustain or continue conversations with one another?*
    - *How do diverse perspectives create a more meaningful and impactful conversation?*
    - *How can holding conversations with others help to create an inclusive and connected classroom and community?*



## Main Activity

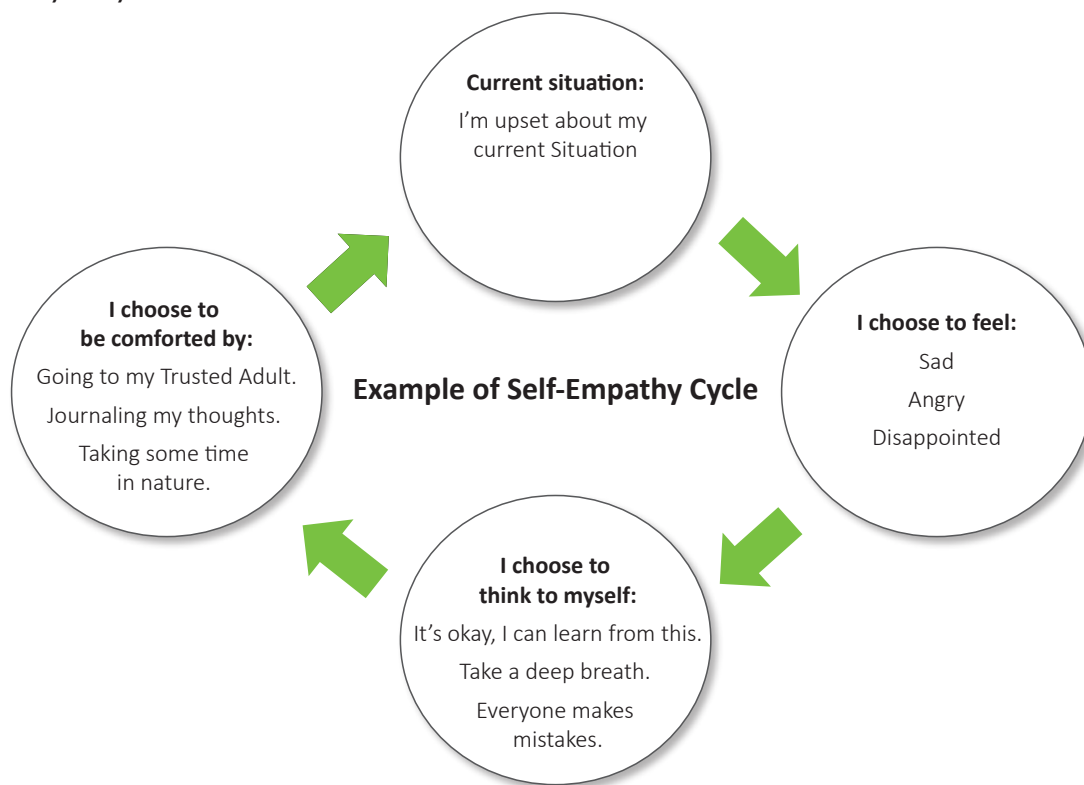
The *Start With Hello* program emphasizes boosting belonging by empathizing with others. This activity will help students better understand the meaning of empathy and how to love themselves by developing a Self-Empathy Cycle with strategies they can use to show empathy.

Begin by explaining the definition and importance of expressing empathy towards others and themselves.

- **Empathy:** Understanding the feelings of another person.
- **Self-Empathy:** Understanding that your own feelings deserve affection.

Now that everyone understands these terms, each student will complete their own Self-Empathy

Cycle, located in the [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#) This cycle helps individuals practice positive self-talk by allowing them the opportunity to develop positive statements about personal situations they may encounter.



## Circle Up

### Opening

Tell your students that they'll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and Know the Signs Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Handout](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use "I statements."
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

## Discussion

Invite students to bring their self-empathy cycles with them to the circle. Engage the class in a discussion about empathy. Here are a few questions to guide the discussion:

- *How can you use these strategies you wrote in your Self-Empathy Cycle for others?*
- *What are some strategies for empathizing with others?*
- *How can these strategies be adapted to specifically empathize with the experiences and perspectives of individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds?*
- *Why should we try to empathize with those who may be socially isolated?*
- *Do you think empathy is natural or do you think it has to be practiced? Explain.*
- *How can understanding your own cultural background and biases help you to have more empathetic and inclusive conversations with people from different cultural backgrounds?*
- *How can these strategies be adapted to specifically empathize with the experiences and perspectives of individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds?*

## Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to provide one word that expresses how they feel about this activity.

## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Remind students to always meet themselves with the same love and respect they would give to the ones they love most. By showing themselves love, they are working towards creating a culture of empathy and healing in our school and community.

*Now that you have learned about and evaluated the importance of self-empathy, how do you think having empathy for ourselves can help create a culture of empathy and healing at our school? What do you think will happen if everyone develops a lot of self-empathy?*

### Promise Challenge

The next time someone is experiencing big emotions, listen to them with an open heart and make it a point to try to understand what is causing these emotions.

## Lesson Extension and Explore More

Check out this blog, written by youth leader, Drew, on embracing empathy: <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/stories/creating-a-more-inclusive-environment/>

## Family Engagement

Have students write five things they love about their parents or guardians on sticky notes and post them around a shared space to brighten their day. If they don't have sticky notes available, they can use scrap pieces of paper and tape or even dry erase markers on mirrors!



# Developing an Empathy Toolkit

## AN EMPATHY LESSON PLAN



### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Construct an empathy toolkit by practicing empathetic responses to a given situation.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Social Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.
- **Relationship Skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

#### Social Justice Standard

- **Diversity 7:** Develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#)

### Mindful Minute

Take a deep breath. Keeping your eyes open or closed, find a comfortable and stable position. Focus on grounding yourself and connecting with your body. Take another deep breath, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Release any tension, anxiety, concern, worry, or hesitation that you might be feeling. Think of your breath as a superpower that you can use when you want to lessen anxiety and unpleasant feelings or boost confidence.

### Unit Essential Question

How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

### Grades

6–8

### Estimated Time Needed

30–45 minutes

### Notes

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## Student Connector

Instruct students to open their workbooks and complete the journal prompt:

- Imagine a toolbox, what do you see inside of it?
- What are these tools used for?
- Why would you need these tools?

Have students share their response to the journal entry by participating in a Turn-and-Learn.



## Main Activity

### Circle Up

#### Opening

Tell your students that they will be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and *Know the Signs* Community Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, have the choice to participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow students to participate however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Handout](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use “I statements.”
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

#### Discussion

Now that we have a good idea of the purpose of a toolbox, engage the class in a discussion about empathy. Here are a few guiding questions:

- *What do you think we can use an Empathy Toolkit for?*
- *What is inside your Empathy Toolkit?*
- *What emotions can you have when you support someone?*



- What phrases can you use?
- How can we promote empathy and understanding among students with different racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds while fostering a sense of unity and belonging in our school community?

### Closing

To close the Circle Up, ask students to give a shoutout to the person sitting on their right.

- I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing with us today.
- Way to go \_\_\_\_\_ I like your idea.
- Thank you for sharing your opinion\_\_\_\_\_.
- Give finger snaps or air high-fives or fist bumps in place of verbal appreciation or affirmation.

### Empathy Toolkit

Remind students that in the lesson prior they created a self-empathy cycle. Today they will develop statements and actions that they can carry around with them in their empathy toolkit that will help them empathize with their peers.

Place students in pairs and provide them with 10 minutes to develop empathy statements and actions in their [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#) that they can use to help connect with others.

### Section 1

Students will work with their partners to come up with an empathy statement as a response to the sentence stem in the first column. Ask students to put themselves in the shoes of the person in the first column. How would they like someone to say to them if they were the ones verbalizing these emotions?

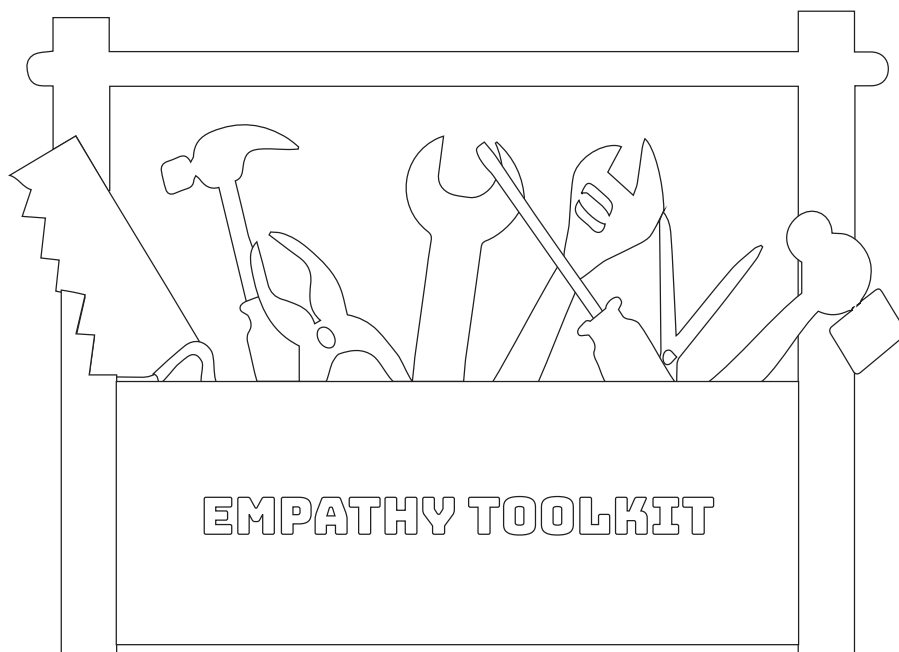
When someone says:	How can you respond? Write an empathy statement below.
I'm so angry...	
I'm very sad...	
I'm proud of myself...	
I'm terrified of...	
I'm so excited...	
How can you show empathy through your words?	

## Section 2

Students will respond to the second section by responding with the actions they can take to support someone's expressions. Ask students to put themselves in the shoes of the person in the first column. How would they like someone to react to them if they were the ones displaying these emotions?

When someone looks:	What actions can you show to support them? Write the actions below.
Angry	
Sad	
Happy	
Nervous	
Scared	
How can you show empathy through your actions?	

Now that students have developed their empathy statements and actions, they will put them in their empathy toolkit. Have students write words or draw emojis to highlight the statements they developed with their partner inside the toolkit image in their workbooks. Let students know that these are tools they should carry around with them every day to help them better understand their peers.



## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Remind students to tap into their empathy toolkit whenever they engage in a conversation where they are trying to understand the person's emotions. By carrying around their empathy toolkit, they are actively working towards creating a culture of empathy and healing in their school and community.

### Promise Challenge

Challenge students to use their empathy statements and actions in at least three different situations this week.

### Lesson Extensions and Explore More

As an extension to this lesson, have the class come together to agree upon the empathy statements they want to see used in the classroom. Then, record these statements on anchor chart paper and place them in a highly visible place in the classroom. This will allow students to always reference these statements whenever they may be in a situation that requires them to show empathy.

### Family Engagement

Have families to develop their own empathy statements together and encourage them to practice using these whenever they are trying to connect with one another.



# Busting Biased-Based Bullying

## AN EMPATHY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Formulate and explain their own definition of biased-based bullying.
- Collaboratively evaluate an EQUITY Check tool to assess how they are building awareness and intervening when biased-based bullying occurs.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- **Social Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.
- **Relationship Skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Identity 2:** Develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups.
- **Identity 4:** Express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
- **Diversity 7:** Develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
- **Diversity 9:** Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.



### Unit Essential Question

How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

### Grades

6-8

### Estimated Time Needed

30-45 minutes

### Notes

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- **Justice 12:** Recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination).
- **Justice 13:** Analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.
- **Action 18:** Speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias.

## Materials and Resources

### Students:

- [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#)

## Mindful Minute

Think of an item that you cherish or hold close to your heart.

As you think of the item, what feelings come up for you? Happiness, sadness, excitement, or another emotion? Keep thinking of that item and smile to yourself. This object, memory, trinket, photo, or other item is of value and importance to you. Hold this close to your heart and take a gentle breath in and a gentle breath out.



## Student Connector

### “Because the haters can’t see me.”

This activity is inspired by [Sandy Hook Promise National Youth Advisory Board](#) member, Jade, from Northern California.

If available, provide or ask students to put on sunglasses for this activity. Encourage students to think about the following statement and how they would respond:

- Sometimes, we may hide behind “masks,” “sunglasses,” or “hoods.” By hiding behind certain items, we may or may not be covering important aspects of our identity. We may also use items, like sunglasses, to hide our feelings and emotions from others who may be hurting us with their words or looks/stares.

Put on or pretend to put on a pair of sunglasses. Ask students to **THINK-REFLECT** about the following questions and take pauses after each question to allow for ample wait time:

- *What layers of protection, support, or security do these sunglasses give you?*
- *Is there anything you don’t want people to see in yourself?*
- *Do you hide a special talent that you have?*
- *Do you hide a part of your identity?*
- *Have you ever put on sunglasses to build up an emotional wall so the perceived “haters” can’t see, stereotype, harm, or threaten you?*

## Connect

Next, focusing on the question listed below, begin the connection part of the activity:

- **Question:** What special, unique quality about yourself do you like to keep close and hide behind sunglasses?
- **Activity:** 3-minute Speed HELLO-ing. For the next three minutes, circulate the room, pause, say “hello,” and share a special quality or characteristic about yourself that your classmates may not know about you. If comfortable, you may want to share a special quality or characteristic that you hide behind “sunglasses.”



## Main Activity

The purpose of this activity is to consider a subset and very harmful type of bullying called **biased-based bullying**. This type of bullying may also be referred to as identity-based bullying and stigma-based bullying. Introduce students to the new term and unpack the term by introducing the key components:

**Bullying** is unwanted aggressive behavior that involves a power imbalance, is repeated, or is likely to be repeated, and may cause harm to the targeted youth (Centers for Disease Control). Bullying is repeated, targeted verbal, physical, or online harassment.

*For example: A student who is afraid to take the bus to school because they're made fun of and harassed by a group of sixth graders about the clothes that they wear.*

**Discrimination** is unfair treatment of one person or group of people because of the person or group's identity (e.g., race, gender, ability, religion, culture, etc.). Discrimination is an action that can come from prejudice (Anti-Defamation League).

**Stigma** is a set of negative and unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

*For example: When someone says teenagers are lazy or they exaggerate their problems and are over-dramatic.*

Stigma-based bullying targets individuals because of stigmatized identities and characteristics (Ramirez et al., 2022). Stigmatized identities may include: distinct behaviors, such as sexual harassment directed at girls, homophobic epithets directed at LGBTQ youth and youth presumed to be LGBTQ, or racial slurs directed at racial and ethnic minority youth (Earnshaw, 2018).

**Biased-based bullying** is bullying that targets race, ethnicity, religion, culture, ancestry, national origin, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability status, family status, or any other characteristic. Biased-based bullying can be offensive jokes, stereotypes and stigmas, hurtful comments, and hate crimes.

*For example: A student is made fun of and disrespected continuously because the language that they speak isn't English.*

**Equity** is everyone getting what they need to have access to opportunities and a fair chance to succeed. It recognizes that the same for everyone (equality) doesn't truly address needs and therefore, specific solutions and remedies, which may be different, are necessary. **The quality of being fair or just.**

Ask the class to think about the following questions:

- Can you think of specific examples of biased-based bullying in our community or that you've seen in the news?
- Have you or someone close to you been the victim of biased-based bullying?

After unpacking the meaning of biased-based bullying, inform students that to have a connected, joyful environment for everyone, we all must feel safe from biased-based bullying and treat everyone fairly and equitably.

To assess or measure how the class is doing when it comes to biased-based bullying and building an equitable classroom environment, students will work in groups to do an [EQUITY Check](#).

### Instructions

**Step 1:** Divide into groups of three.

**Step 2:** Take out the EQUITY Check Worksheet. Read and rate the criteria aloud. Use the *Know the Signs* Community Agreement to ensure everyone's voices are heard and feel they can add value to the conversation.

	Criteria	How are we doing?	What's an action we can do to improve?
		<b>1</b> - Very poorly, we need to work on this! <b>2</b> - OK, there's room for improvement. <b>3</b> - Excellent, this is an area where we really shine!	
<b>E</b>	<b>Empathy for Everyone:</b> We're making sure everyone feels like they belong.		
<b>Q</b>	<b>Questions:</b> We're comfortable asking questions to learn about different identities.		
<b>U</b>	<b>Upstander Actions:</b> We move from being bystanders to Upstanders when anyone bullies others because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, ability, religion, or other characteristic.		
<b>I</b>	<b>Including:</b> We notice when someone is feeling left out or excluded. We make sure we include classmates of all identities in activities. We understand and appreciate uniqueness and differences		

<b>T</b>	<b>Treat:</b> We treat each other with kindness and respect.		
<b>Y</b>	<b>Yourself:</b> You give yourself recognition, space, and grace for being the wonderful human being that you are.		

**Step 3:** Identify one area on the EQUITY Check that your group feels they can work on and improve upon. Then, create one action that your group members can do to improve on the criteria.

*Example:*

**Criteria for Improvement:** The group gave a 1 for “I.”

**Action:** Start to intentionally, proactively reach out to classmates that you notice sitting alone or being left out activities and invite them to join the activity you’re doing.

**Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge**

Encourage students to continue to use the EQUITY Check to ensure that no one is singled out or discriminated against due to their identities. Revisit the Know the Signs Community Agreement, if available, and close the lesson by stating:

- *As part of our agreement, a goal is to make sure we build an inclusive and healing centered classroom culture. We want everyone to feel that they belong. We want to make sure “othering” doesn’t happen and we are equitable so that everyone feels safe, secure, and joyful when they are here.*

**Lesson Extensions and Explore More**

Assign students a project to research groups that have been victims of biased-based bullying historically. Instruct groups to create an infographic, by drawing or using the computer, that shows how to stop biased-based bullying for that targeted group.

**Family Engagement**

Encourage families to participate in an activity located for this month in the [Start With Hello Family Monthly Activity Guide](#).

**References**

The Anti-Defamation League Education Glossary: [Education Glossary Terms | ADL](#)

Earnshaw, Valerie A., et al. “Stigma-Based Bullying Interventions: A Systematic Review.” *Developmental Review*, vol. 48, June 2018, pp. 178–200. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2018.02.001>.

Ramirez, Marizen R., et al. “How Do Schools Respond to Biased-Based Bullying? A Qualitative Study of Management and Prevention Strategies in Schools.” *School Mental Health*, Dec. 2022. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-022-09565-8>.



# Respect is Seen, Heard, and Felt

## AN EMPATHY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Evaluate how respect is seen, heard, and felt in various situations.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competencies

- **Responsible Decision-Making:** The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.
- **Relationship Skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

#### Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 6:** Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
- **Diversity 9:** Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding, and connection.

### Materials and Resources

#### Students:

- Chart paper
- Markers

### Mindful Minute

Breathe in and out slowly for a total of three breaths. As you inhale imagine you are breathing in calm, and as you breathe out, you release the distractions from your mind. When you are done take a few seconds to consider your surroundings, where you are, who else is around you, the time and activity.



### Unit Essential Question

How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

### Grades

6–8

### Estimated Time Needed

30–45 minutes

### Notes



## Student Connector

In two lines, have students face one another so that every person has a partner. If you have an odd number of students, feel free to participate in this exercise or you can have a group of three. Give students 30 seconds to analyze each other. Then, have one row turn around facing away from their partner while the other row changes something about themselves. This change can be something small such as untying their shoelace or completely removing their sweater. After the 30 seconds are up, have them face their partner again and guess what their partner changed. Then, switch and let the other row go.

Once the exercise is over, tell students the importance of recognizing and noticing one another. This would be a great place to revisit the first step in the *Start With Hello* program: See Someone Alone, Reach Out and Help, “Start With Hello.”



## Main Activity

Remind students of the definition of respect. Divide students up so that there is a total of four groups. Hand out a sheet of anchor chart paper to each group and have them split it up into three different sections. Each section will highlight a different category such as how respect is seen, heard, and felt in various settings listed below. Place emphasis on finding peaceful solutions in these settings.

Groups:

1. How respect is seen, heard, and felt at **school**.
2. How respect is seen, heard, and felt in the **community**.
3. How respect is seen, heard, and felt with your **friends**.
4. How respect is seen, heard, and felt at **home**.

Once all groups have completed their posters, hang them up and conduct a gallery walk. Students will check out and read what their peers created. Then, bring the class together to discuss what all these posters have in common.

## Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Thank students for working together as a team and respecting one another. Remind them that treating your classmates with respect contributes to a culture of empathy and healing at your school.

### Promise Challenge

Challenge students to show respect to peers this week by participating in random acts of kindness around the school.

## Lesson Extensions and Explore More

### Journal Time

Give students time to **think-reflect-react** on the following prompt in their journals:

- How does showing respect relate to the steps of *Start With Hello*?

Remind students about the protocols for a **think-reflect-react**:

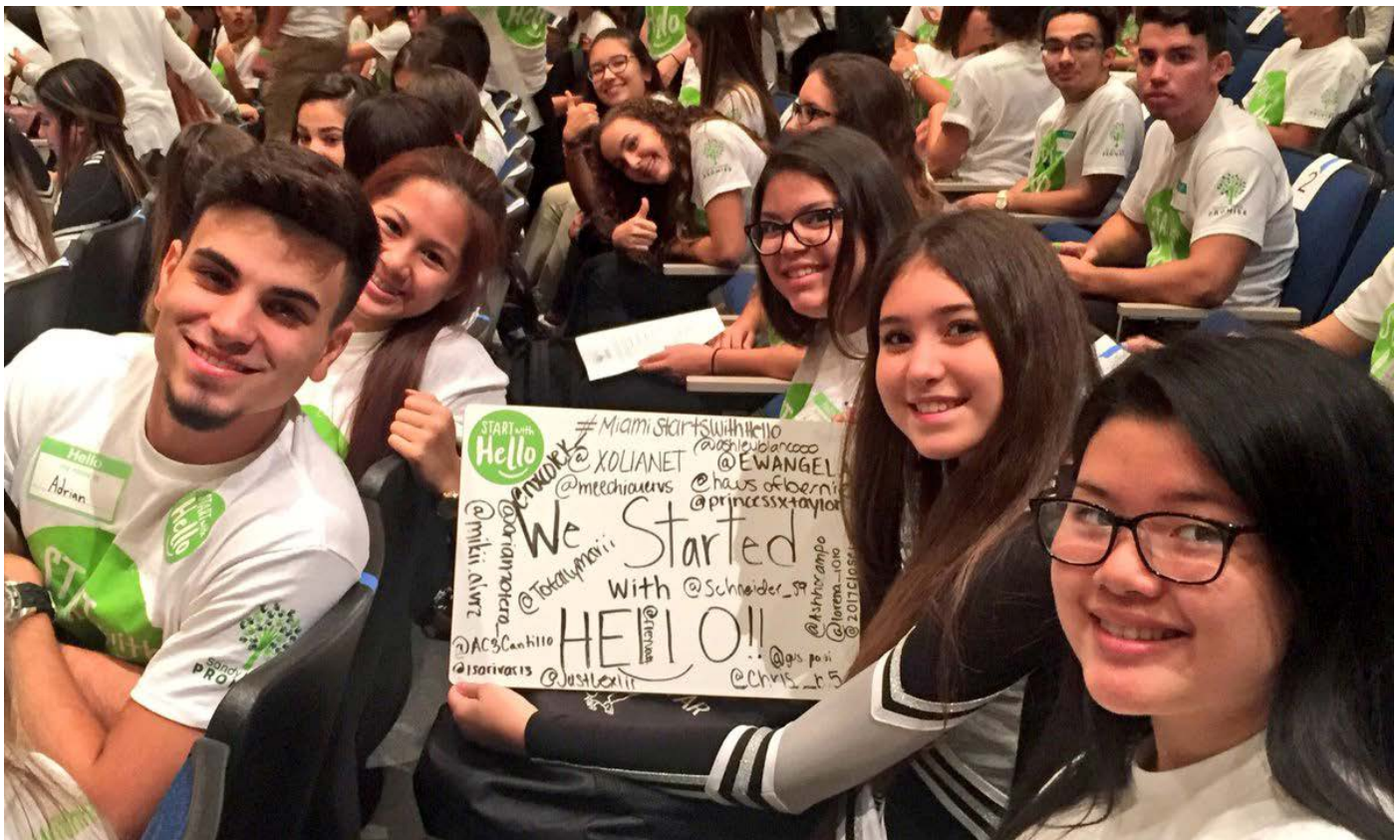
**Think:** *Think about the steps: see someone alone, reach out and help, “start with hello.”*

**Reflect:** *Consider the importance of respect when reaching out to someone.*

**React:** *Share or show your reflections.*

### Family Engagement

Encourage families to have a Circle Up style discussion about how every member of the household would like to see, hear, and feel respect. This type of discussion can be done in the living room, around the dinner table, or in the car. Families can reference the [Start with Hello Family Monthly Activity Guide](#) for more information on how to conduct a Circle Up discussion.



# Interview a Classmate

## AN EMPATHY LESSON PLAN

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

- Demonstrate empathy by conducting an interview with a classmate and summarizing their perspective of a tragic event.

### Standard Alignment

#### CASEL Competency:

- **Social-Awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

#### Social Justice Standards:

- **Diversity 6:** Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
- **Diversity 8:** Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
- **Diversity10:** Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

### Materials and Resources

- [Start With Hello Empathy Workbook](#)

**Notes to Educator:** The Student Connector activity must be completed in order to move on to the remainder of the lesson.

### Mindful Minute

#### Feelings Check In

Encourage students to check in with the classroom emotions tool, such as the Mood Meter or Feelings Wheel. Invite students to self-evaluate their emotions now or in this moment. Prompt students with a few questions to guide their self-assessment



### Unit Essential Question

How can we create a culture of empathy and healing at our school?

#### Grades:

6-8

### Estimated Time Needed

45-60 minutes

### Notes

and emotions management. Allow for a quiet minute of reflection before moving to the student connector.

- Is there anything you'll need to do to be present and participate in today's lesson?
- If you're feeling happy, joyful, content, calm, peaceful, or enthusiastic, what led you to feel these feelings? How can you stay in this emotional space today?
- Are there any unpleasant feelings or emotions that you can let go of right now?



## Student Connector

Spend about 10–15 minutes educating students about a current event that has resulted in tragedy. This can range from a local news story, the latest school shooting, or an issue that is currently impacting your community.



## Main Activity

Let students know that for this activity they will be interviewing a classmate to find out their reactions to the event you shared with them in today's student connector. Then, allow students to choose their partners, as this can be a personal discussion and we want students to feel safe in this space. Additionally, encourage students to interview a classmate that may have different identities from them in order to gain knowledge on how this event affected them from that lens.

Before they begin to interview their partner, allow students 10 minutes to write down 5–7 questions on the **Interview Planner** that they would like to ask their partner. Encourage students to develop probing questions that can help them better understand their partner's perspective. Here are some sample questions to help out students who may not know where to start:

- *How do think your experience as a (young person, person of color, person with a disability, cisgender, genderqueer, etc.) changes the way you see the event?*
- *How do you think our experiences with the event might be different than the perspectives and experiences of individuals from diverse racial backgrounds or ethnicities?*

Perhaps allow students to take a walk with their partners for 10 minutes and ask them questions to help them gain some insight into the other's perspective. Encourage students to engage in a discussion beyond the questions, if time permits. Once all students completed the interview, have everyone come together for a Circle Up.

## Circle Up

### Opening

Tell your students that they will be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Norms](#) and *Know the Signs* Community Agreement when available as reminders to practice speaking and listening skills. Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, have the choice to participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow

students to participate however they feel comfortable and encourage them to use the [Circle Up Handout](#), located in their [workbooks](#). Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use “I statements.”
- Use a talking piece.
- Check-in with participants.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

### **Discussion**

Invite partners to engage the class in a discussion about their interviews. Here are a few guiding questions:

- What did you learn about the person you interviewed?
- Did they surprise you at all?
- What did you learn about yourself in this process?
- Did you find it difficult to understand their perspective or lens?

### **Closing**

To close the Circle Up, ask students to give a shoutout to their partner.

- I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing with us today.
- Way to go \_\_\_\_\_ I like your idea.
- Thank you for sharing your opinion\_\_\_\_\_.
- Give finger snaps or air high-fives or fist bumps in place of verbal appreciation or affirmation.

## **Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge**

Thank students for engaging in an activity that required them to be vulnerable and empathize with their partner. Challenge students to consider different lenses and perspectives when thinking about future tragic events and historical events as well. By taking the time to understand their partner’s perspective, students are taking a big step forward in creating a culture of healing and empathy in the classroom.

## **Lesson Extensions and Explore More**

Encourage students to present their interviews in a creative manner. Perhaps they can record the interview on an electronic device, as long as both individuals feel comfortable. Maybe they can draw their responses and have their interview be reflected in a form of art, collage, or poem.

# Family Engagement

Have students interview family members about the same tragic event and encourage them to broaden their lenses even further by getting a better understanding of their family members' perspectives.





# Sandy Hook **PROMISE**

