

4 Tools For Kids To Help Develop Compassion and Social Change

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It's important to understand the distinction between "empathy" and "compassion." Empathy allows us to sense other people's emotions, like grief or joy, and imagine what someone else might be thinking. Compassion is similar, but also involves a desire to help the person. Earlier this year at a Chicago school, students felt compassion for their teacher — who was battling cancer — and followed up with a thoughtful act. The difference between feeling someone's pain (empathy) and having an urge to help (compassion) is transformational and is an important part of teaching in our classrooms.

Research suggests that children younger than two exhibit greater happiness when giving rather than receiving. With that early foundation in place, teachers can incorporate compassion to create a culture where students are one step closer to making real, positive change in their communities.

Check out these picks to start cultivating compassion and promoting social change in the classroom.

The Wonderment

This global site and community promotes awareness and action as kids explore the world around them. Kids submit creations to the site, and with each submission a “Wondermeter” rises higher. Once it reaches the top, the latest user-picked project — such as a water-sanitation project in a developing country — will be funded by an outside donor. Kids can take their compassion and caring for others and crowdsource community-improvement projects around the world.

Facing History and Ourselves

Use Facing History’s resources to reflect on students’ experiences and beliefs about tough topics such as racism, bullying, human rights, and bigotry. Through focused discussion — and activities like creating and sharing a bio-poem — students’ personal struggles will naturally emerge and may promote deeper empathy and compassion for one another. Students can then work together to make a plan to inspire positive change in their school culture and in the diverse community.

Climate Kids

This resource from NASA can help build compassion by showing students the communities of people and organisms that are affected by climate change. Engaging with the Time Machine, students will find evidence of climate impact and can make predictions about what might happen if we do nothing. Those students moved by the site can use the evidence to justify the need for action — possibly to design solutions such as energy plans for schools or improved desalination systems.

NYT VR

Immersive virtual reality videos from The New York Times engage students in human-interest stories, like one that features the stories of three children whose families were displaced by war and conflict in Africa, the Middle East, and eastern Europe. Other videos take users inside a walk through New York City or on a trip to the U.S.-Mexico border. Afterwards, students can create mock-ups of a 3D film about the historical struggles of their own community, designed to elicit empathy and compassion and a call to action.

Source: <https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2017/06/15/4-tools-for-kids-to-help-develop-compassion-and-social-change/>