

The Week At WHMS
(parent edition)
Week of March 28, 2022



Thought for the week:

“Learning to stand in somebody else’s shoes, to see through their eyes, that’s how peace begins. And it’s up to you to make that happen. Empathy is a quality of character that can change the world.”

– Barack Obama

Weekly Calendar:

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Sat/Sun</u>
3/28	3/29	3/30	3/31	4/1	4/2-4/3
<i>Day 1</i>	<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Day 1</i>	<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Day 1</i>	
9:30a – Cerrone field trip <i>MS Spring Sports begin</i> Club Meets: ELA review class	7:55a-9:55a – NYS ELA exam (modified 9- period bell schedule) Club Meets: ELA review class	7:55a-9:55a – NYS ELA exam (modified 9- period bell schedule) 1:15p – PST meeting Club Meets: Math review class; Dignity & Tolerance	Club Meets: Math review class; Student Council	8:45a – RTI meeting	

Instructional tips: (from *Positive Psychology*)

7 Kindness Activities for Elementary Students, Preschoolers, and Middle Schoolers by Courtney Ackerman (excerpts)

If you were to ask a child psychologist which character traits are most important for a child’s development, kindness and empathy would likely rank high on the list.

1. How are you?

How Are You? is a very simple activity, but its potential to encourage a positive emotional state should not be underestimated. Integrating it into your lessons is as easy as asking a single question at the beginning of class:

“How are you feeling today?”

Not only will this let the students know that someone cares about how they are feeling, but it also signals to them that sometimes they’ll be feeling something negative—and that there’s nothing wrong with that.

2. Group circle

Another valuable activity to encourage [good listening skills](#) and [empathy](#) is the Group Circle. Before beginning this activity, choose a “talking piece”—this is an object that is passed around the group and signals that the holder has exclusive speaking rights.

Show the class the talking piece and explain that only the individual holding the talking piece may speak.

- First, have the students pass the talking piece around the circle as a way to check in with each student. This is a good opportunity for everyone to practice holding and passing the talking piece, as well as an opportunity for students to say a few quick words about how they are feeling or what is on their mind.
- As the teacher/facilitator of the activity, introduce a topic or ask a question that you would like the circle to respond to. However, after you have sparked the conversation, make sure to take your seat in the circle, and become a member rather than a leader.

The [Group Circle](#) exercise helps students relate to one another, and it can encourage students to accept and share feelings that may be difficult to talk about.

3. Nice things

[This is a quick and easy activity](#) you can try with children of nearly any age. It’s an especially good idea to use this positive, mood-boosting activity to start class (or your day, if you’re at home).

Instruct each student to turn to one of their neighbors and tell him or her something good. Specifically, you can have them finish one of these positive “talking stems,” or prompts:

- *One nice thing in my life is...*
- *Something nice that happened is...*

Encourage the kids to be creative with their “nice thing,” but if they’re having trouble coming up with something, assure them that the nice thing can be as small as eating something they liked for dinner last night.

Sharing the nice thing will put the students in a more positive frame of mind, and sharing something personal and positive with others will make them feel heard and affirmed by others.

4. Silent appreciation

If you’re more interested in getting kids [writing](#) than talking, this is a similar activity that can get everyone in a more positive mood.

First, you will need to put together a handout with sentence stems (or prompts) on it:

- *One cool thing I’ve learned from you is...*
- *I admire your personality because...*
- *I am so grateful that you do/are...*
- *I have confidence in you when...*
- *Some great things about you are...*
- *I think it’s great the way you...*
- *I enjoy spending time with you because...*

Make sure to leave plenty of room for students to finish these sentences, especially if they are younger writers. Next, pass out the handouts and ask each student to write only their name at the top of the paper.

Collect the handouts and pass them out once again, randomly this time.

Make sure each student received a different student’s handout.

Instruct the students to be silent for a few minutes while they write something about the person whose handout they received. They can respond to just one sentence stem or several if they have more good things to say about the person.

5. Thank you post

Another activity that can help students practice their writing while injecting a little positivity into the classroom is called *Thank You Post*.

First, create a “postbox” to leave in the back of the classroom. This can be an opportunity to get creative and make a postbox that reflects the class, or you can have the class help you create the box. For example, you could have the class vote on a theme for the postbox, or each student could pick out one small space on it to decorate however he or she would like.

Wherever you place the postbox, make sure to leave small slips of paper or sticky notes nearby. Tell students that they can use the box to write down positive messages, thank-you notes, or messages of appreciation or encouragement to their fellow students or the teacher, teaching assistant, or another adult in the classroom.

6. Here's to...

Your students will likely need some modeling to get comfortable with this activity, especially if you have a lot of shy kids in your class. Plan at least a couple of weeks of modeling these mini “toasts” before encouraging your students to join in.

There are many ways to start a *Here's To* (Student) toast, but three positive sentence stems might include:

1. *I truly enjoy how . . .*
2. *Here's to ____, for their amazing. . .*
3. *I'd like to give a mention to . . .*

Use sentiments like these to thank students for their contributions, praise them for a job well-done, or call out an [act of kindness](#).

7. Partner up

This fun and easy activity will encourage your students to help one another.

It's as simple as assigning each student a partner—you can let the students pick their own partners, you can choose a companion for them, or you can alternate between both methods.

Whatever terminology you choose, the activity is the same—students will work with their partners and turn to their partners first when they need help.

For example, if a student missed a day of class and needs copies of handouts or lecture notes, she should first ask her partner.

Or, if a student is having trouble with a concept that's being taught, he should first check in with his partner to see whether he or she can explain it before asking another person.

To make sure students get a chance to work on their relationship skills with a wide range of people and personalities, have them switch buddies regularly. They can find a new partner each week, every other week, every month, or any period of time that works for your class.

This activity will give your students ample opportunity to build [communication skills](#), practice accountability, and be kind to one another.

For full article see <https://positivepsychology.com/kindness-activities-empathy-worksheets/>

Items of importance:

- **WEATHER NOTICE:** we have outdoor recess, outdoor AM line-up, and outdoor PE daily unless it is raining. Please make sure your child has appropriate clothing and outerwear. We only stay indoors if the temperature falls below 30° or the wind chill falls below 28°
- **Have you downloaded the West Hempstead App yet?** It is available in the App Store and Google Play, just search “West Hempstead.” This will let you keep track of everything happening in our school and access documents such as this “Week @ WHMS” newsletter.
- *Let me know when you have exciting learning taking place that I can tweet out and be sure to tag @WH_MSRRAMS if you tweet yourself*

Items of interest:

- Our club calendar is available on the website at: <https://www.whufsd.com/o/whms/browse/221769>. Students should listen to AM announcements for the most up-to-date information about meeting dates and locations.
- The **extra help schedule** can be found at: https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1553808/Extra-Help_Schedule_MS_21-22.pdf. Students should take advantage of teachers’ availability to do their best work.
- The Homework Center is open after school on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. See details below:

Homework Center Information: 21-22

Homework Center is open 2:45-3:45 on the following days

<u>Day</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Monday	Ms. Elezi	257	Support available for any subject, or just a quiet place to work after school.
Wednesday	Ms. Geiger	17	
Thursday	Ms. Rogan	16	

“COVID Corner” Information:

- NYS has removed the “mask mandate” from public schools and the decision to wear a mask is a personal/family choice. We will ensure that regardless of your family decision, students are treated with dignity and civility.
- **ESPECIALLY in light of the reduced mask use, I cannot say how vital it is that if your child, or anyone in your home, feels sick, your child MUST REMAIN HOME FROM SCHOOL.** Call the nurse or Mr. Murray for advice on when it is okay to return to school.

- **Please send your child to school with a refillable water bottle.** Our water fountains are “COVID-safe” and only the water bottle filler function is available.

Looking ahead:

Monday, April 4: *Day 2*

- Admin PD, 10:00am

Tuesday, April 5: *Day 1*

- X-day activity – *Building Empathy* – schedule and details to follow
- Faculty meeting, 3:00pm

Wednesday, April 6: *Day 2*

- JVE Trade Show – select students @ LIU Brooklyn, all day
- PST meeting, 1:15pm

Thursday, April 7: *Day 1*

- Schools to Watch Committee meeting, 3:00pm
- PTSA Social, 7:00pm @ Stewart Manor Country Club

Friday, April 8: *Day 2*

- RTI meeting, 8:45am