

Acrostic Poem – Compassion

EXPLANATION:

Understanding and feeling compassion is essential for healthy relationships and contributes to reducing incidents of bullying in classrooms. Exploring what compassion means through creating acrostic poems will provide students the opportunity to explore a word and its meaning.

GRADE LEVELS: 4–6

STUDENT GROUPING: Group discussion and individual creations

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 40–60 minutes

CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *SOCIAL AWARENESS*

- Taking others' perspectives
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

SCOPE OF TASK:

Stopbullying.gov (2020) defines bullying as aggressive, repeated, unwanted behavior toward another that involves an imbalance of power, including verbal, social, and/or physical actions. As reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey found that 20% of students between 12 and 18 had been bullied at school in 2017.

Bullying can be physical (kicking, hitting, punching, hurting), verbal (teasing, derogatory remarks, name calling), social (excluding, embarrassing others in public, spreading untruths and rumors), or cyber (using technology to denigrate others). Building students' understanding and practice of compassionate behaviors will support more empathetic behaviors.

1. Explore with the students the meaning of compassion. Ask students questions to elicit their understanding:

- What is "compassion"?
- What are synonyms of "compassion"? (Examples might include empathy, kindness, support, understanding, fairness, care, and consideration.)
- Why is compassion important?

If students have limited understanding, ask them to find definitions in print or online dictionaries.

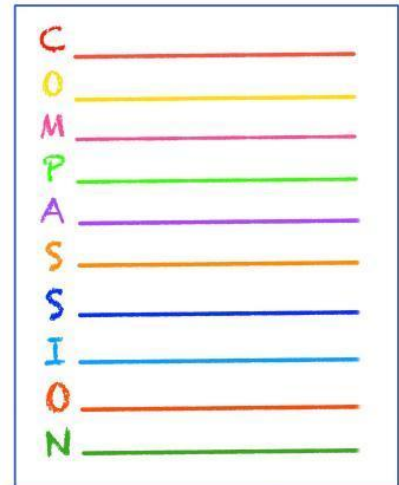
2. Record students' ideas and findings on the board, or make a word wall to display the associated vocabulary. This step in the activity will assist the students with words they can choose for their poems.

3. Explain to the students that they are going to make acrostic poems about compassion, demonstrating all the ideas they have about compassion.

4. Provide instructions on how to make an acrostic poem.
(The level of detail in the instruction will be dependent on the students' prior knowledge of acrostic poems.)

- Write your word down vertically, usually using capital letters.
- Brainstorm words or phrases that describe compassion.
- All lines of the poem should relate to compassion.
- Write the brainstormed words or phrases on the lines that begin with the same letters.
- Remember that acrostics don't need to rhyme!

5. Once students have completed their acrostic poems, make time for students to share their poems with the group.



6. Discuss behaviors that compassion might reduce (e.g., bullying, teasing, etc.).
 - Ask students why compassion is important in their classroom and community.
7. Acrostic poems can be displayed on the classroom walls.
8. Share the activity in messages and newsletters to parents and guardians, who can reinforce ideas of compassion in the home environment.

RESOURCES:

- Poster paper
- Colorful pens or markers
- Alternatively, students can create their poems on computers

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019, April). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: Indicator 10: Bullying at School and Electronic Bullying*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/ind_10.asp

Stopbullying.gov. (2020, July 21). *What is Bullying*. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/what-is-bullying>

Additional online resource about cyberbullying: The Cybersmile Foundation website, <https://www.cybersmile.org/>