

Take Action: Pay it Forward

By: Andrea Cronkite



Identify your concern:

As a teacher, my greatest concern is for children. As I was reading a chapter entitled, "Teaching for Hope" in the textbook The Anthology of Social Studies by Roland Case and Penney Clark, the thought came to me that my greatest concern about children is that all children need to feel valued. So many children around the world feel hopeless and feel that no one truly cares about them. This bothered me and still does and always will. How do I help children everywhere to feel valued? It seemed like such a huge undertaking. I did not know where to begin and then I read the quote by Mother Theresa which states, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one." I can do that, I thought. I decided that I wanted to do something to show the students in my community that they were all valued. My thoughts and ideas then continued to the fact that not only children need to feel valued, but all people great or small. What is my concern? To come up with a plan whereby people old and young feel valued.

Research your concern:

How do I help people to feel valued? Again, even though I was zeroing in on my own community, I still felt like I did not know where to start. It still seemed too big and so I began to ask different teachers and other people around me. If I wanted to show children that they were important, what could I do? I knew of children in the community who had low self-esteem and I knew different aspects about the youth from my involvement in youth initiatives in my community. Different ideas were given to me, but nothing seemed to be what I was looking for. I began with an anti-bullying initiative that was already taking place. I spoke to those involved in that, but felt that they were already doing what needed to be done. I wanted something that showed children that they were valuable. Anti-bullying showed children their value and helped to prevent unkind things, but this still wasn't what I was looking for. Bullying, obviously, has a negative



side to it. I wanted something that was all positive. I began to search the World Wide Web to see if there was anything out there to offer help to my idea. It was here that I stumbled across a site called, “Pay it Forward.”



There was a movie made a few years ago called, “Pay it Forward.” I remembered hearing about the movie and how the movie was about a young boy who wanted to do nice things for three people and in turn those three people were to do nice things for three more people. I knew from that moment what it was that I wanted to do. The site was incredible. It spoke of how there is a special day named “Pay it Forward Day,” **world wide**, every year to celebrate this concept of doing nice things for others. The reason to do it, just to be nice. What a wonderful idea! I began to search to see what was involved in getting my community to jump on board with this day. Who would want to become involved?

Find out who supports you:

It turned out that many people thought the idea was wonderful. I first approached the mayor of my community and she was thrilled. We had been involved in a literacy day together and she had chosen a book about people and buckets. The story was about everyone having a bucket and we could either help fill the bucket with kind things or empty it by doing not so nice things. I spoke with her about the “Pay it Forward Day” and she said she definitely wanted to talk more about it. We spoke again at a later date and she was pleased with the idea. She told me to get the information. I met with the town council on April 2, 2012 to bring the information forward. The presentation was a hit. The Mayor and her councillors wanted to declare our community a part of the “Pay it Forward Day.” This was wonderful.

I did not want to stop there. I then went to meet with the administration of the high school. I spoke with the principal about this idea and she sounded very pleased. She has been working very hard to encourage her students to do things for their community and was already planning a day where the students were to give back to their community. We continued to talk and she wanted to join the Pay it Forward initiative. The high school students that day will be going out into the community and doing odd jobs. The planning is taking place now. Community members will contact the school with their needs and students will be sent that day to help. Why?! Just to be nice.

I then went to speak with the administration of the elementary school. They also agreed with the idea. The school was already looking into ways to encourage the students to do nice things. It was from the book that the mayor read as part of the literacy day that the elementary school began to plan their event. The school will have a huge bucket constructed on a wall where they will be writing on raindrops nice things that the students do for others within the school. They are hoping to fill this huge bucket by the “Pay it Forward Day.” There will be school activities done on April 26 in celebration of “Pay it Forward Day” by the individual classes.

Continuing on, I went to speak with the administration and staff of the middle school. I was able to attend one of their staff meetings and present my proposal. The administration there is in charge of the anti-bullying initiatives going on right now in the community. They were pleased to jump on board and are going to make sure that they are a part of that special day.

Develop a plan:

The plan will take place on April 26, 2012 to join the world in “Pay it Forward Day.” The mayor declared our community a part of it and we will have cards printed for others to hand out as nice things are done. Some things that are done will be photographed and recorded as a record for success. The greatest thing about this project is that the budget is not large. There will be posters prepared to be put up throughout the community to advertise when the day is and its purpose. There will also be a cake prepared to either be served at the Town Hall or at the community shopping mall for people to come and have in celebration of the day. I am very excited to hear and see what is going to be done for kind deeds. As stated before, the high school will go out into the community to do odd jobs that have been requested and the elementary school will have their “Fill a bucket” celebration. A list of things that the students may wish to do will be given to the classroom teachers of the schools. It is important for the students to know that kind things do not need to cost money. There are many things that can be done no matter where we are or who we are. Teachers may also chose a lesson plan that goes along with this “Pay it Forward Day.” The “Pay it Forward” web site has lots to offer for examples. There are many curricular outcomes that may be covered during this initiative. In elementary, for example, there are those outcomes in Language Arts under the Speaking and Listening outcomes. The students may also cover writing and representing outcomes when reporting on the day’s events at a later date. Math outcomes may be implemented when counting up the kind deeds done or the ripple effect of three people each helping three people and so on. This would definitely cover citizenship outcomes in the Social Studies curriculum. Personal Health and Wellness and how we treat others in You and Your World, the list can go on.

Take action:

April 26, 2012. Pay it Forward Day. Do kind things for others to show that all are valued. Posters were made by some of the local schools and they are all around town in notice of the special day. The radio station 106.9 Capital FM, Fredericton, announced the day on the air around 8:00 a.m. in the morning. Also the local Robins Coffee Shop and The High School billboard announced the day. Business cards with the “Pay it Forward” logo have been given to all of the local schools and businesses around town so that people may take them as they do nice things for each other. Town Hall has two large cakes prepared for any who wish to visit the Town Hall and some of the students from the local schools will be walking down to talk to the mayor and enjoy the special treat. The Nackawic High School students have been sent out with their special assignments and Nackawic Elementary students are in full gear with doing kind things for each other. A car wash by all of the grade five students for the local staff was a highlight of the day. It was a beautiful, sunny day and we all dried fast. ☺



The grade fives also walked down to the Town Hall where they were able to meet and talk with the mayor. She personally served them punch and cake and took a picture with them on the front lawn. We were able to talk about the importance of different community members such as our mayor, police officers, firefighters and road crews. This all connected to our social studies' curriculum where we had been discussing ancient civilizations and how times have changed. The day was a great success and the Town of Nackawic has viewed it as just the beginning, year number one.



Evaluate the Plan:

Looking back on the day, I would say that it was definitely a success. There were people all over the community doing nice things for each other and smiles were to be seen everywhere. The students at the schools felt good about themselves; not only because of nice things being done for them, but also because of the wonderful feelings you get when you help someone else. When asked, the students said they would love to do it again next year.

The one thing I regret is not having someone available to go around and take pictures of the day. A community event needs a community coordinator. This is not something that can be done while you are teaching. All teachers took part, along with their students, but to really watch over the day I would need to be off. I loved seeing what was going on within my own school but I missed many things taking place outside and around town. Another regret I have is that we had asked people to phone Town Hall with any Pay it Forward events that took place and very few phoned in. I know a lot was done but no one wanted to phone in the event. I would like to have been free to go about town and personally record the events, something to look back on. In the end, though, my goal was to have nice things done for others and for others to feel valued and that was achieved. SUCCESS!

Apply your learning:

The Pay it Forward Day was wonderful. The most exciting part was that it was just the beginning. Many people have stated that this was year number one. I can only imagine the day growing and growing each year. It is amazing how many people want to do nice things for others. Sometimes all we need is a little incentive. This activity was easily applied to the classroom and the students learned so much. They learned many things socially and academically. Just creating a list of all of the important people in their community, to thank them, was a learning experience for all. They were able to see just how many people we need everyday that we take for granted. I can't wait for next year.