

## Doodle Stones

### Lesson Plan

Adapt this one-period **lesson plan** for any grade level and follow it with a simple and powerful **service project**. The **reflection** brings learning and service impact together.

**Anticipatory Set:** (10 minutes) Write on the board, “What is philanthropy?” Ask students to say the word. Break it down into three chunks: phil-an-thropy. Assign a chunk to each third of the classroom, and point to the student groups to have them say their chunk of the word in order. Have fun saying it in the correct order and mixed up order.

Show this one-minute video, “What Is Philanthropy?”: <https://youtu.be/FG6SI9LOyMo>

- Have students write a definition of philanthropy in their own words.
- Ask for students to share their definitions with the group.
- Come up with one definition to write on the board. Sample: “Giving time, talent, or treasure or taking voluntary action for the common good.”

**Part One:** (15 minutes) Tell the students that they are going to come up with ideas for ways to “take action for the common good” for the classroom and then for the whole school. They will each have a chance to add an idea and be heard by everyone.

- Pose this question: What are some things we can say to others to bring a smile to their faces, help them when they are struggling with a problem, or make the classroom a cooperative place?
- You will pass a medium-size stone around the room. Explain that they may only speak when they are holding the stone. The others will show respect by listening to the speaker.
- The teacher then holds the stone and says something like. “You are worth my time.” Pass the stone to a student. That student adds an idea (e.g., “Will you play with me? Everyone gets a turn. You can do it.”) and passes on the stone. (Someone should take notes.)
- Reflect with students about how it makes them feel to say or hear these words. Tell students they will be writing encouraging messages like these on stones to be placed around the inside and outside of the school to spread a spirit of positive action for the common good.
- Tell the students the name of their project is STONES: Sharing Thoughtful, Optimistic Notes of Encouragement Successfully. Go over each word and discuss. Teach the term *acronym*.

**Variation for older students:**

Middle and high school students could put notes of encouragement on the lockers of their peers or write problem-solving tips on posters around the school halls.

**Variation for younger students:**

Elementary students could make a video with each student saying an encouraging phrase to build a positive school culture: Be brave, Never give up, Always do your best



**Part Two:** (10 minutes)

Tell the students that written or spoken word can be a powerful instrument of change. Give examples from history or literature (in your curriculum), such as the Declaration of Independence, speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr., or the words of characters in a book, like *The Lorax*. Show the students some quotes and discuss how words can move people to have courage, do the right thing, or act for the common good.

|   |
|---|
| "Whatever the problem, be a part of the solution." — Tina Fey   |
| "In a world where you can be anything, be kind." - unknown  |
| "Be the change you want to see in the world." — Gandhi  |
| "The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope." — Barack Obama |
| "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." — <i>The Lorax</i>   |

Students may work in small groups with laptops to find encouraging quotes or words from leaders and literature. These may be related to issues they care about, community building at school, encouraging people who feel lonely, challenging people to be brave or open-minded, or simply kind words. Have students decide what they want to write on their stone, and use paper to make a model of what they want their stone to look like – words and decoration.

## Service Project

*This service project may be started in class and completed in subsequent days, either with the class, or with friends and family.*

**Project Overview:** Students decorate a stone with a positive quote or encouraging word that is placed inside or outside of the school for others to find and get encouragement from.

**Materials:** Teacher and students collect stones before the project. Look for stones that have a flat area that can easily be written on. You may spray paint the stones with various bright colors first or simply use permanent markers. Students may use Mod Podge to adhere paper designs to stones.

**Action:** Decorate and place the stones in strategic places where the words may be helpful. Have the students brainstorm good spots in the lunchroom, on the outside campus, or in other gathering places.

## Reflection:

Follow the project with a brief reflection.

1. Write a paragraph about a time when you read or heard words of encouragement or positive wisdom at the right time.
2. How did you decide what to write on your stone? What do those words mean to you?
3. How do you think others will feel when they read what you have written?
4. How do you feel when you see your positive message placed strategically at school?

**Follow-up:** Discuss what they'd like to do next to continue sharing positive thoughts in their school community.

