



At a glance: Circles of Care (grades 6–8)

Welcome to ThinkGive!

This set of materials provides an overview of our Circles of Care program, designed for students in grades 6–8. The program centers around the concept of Circles of Care, where students identify the people/beings, places, and experiences they value and take positive actions to care for and impact them. Over the course of the program, students reach beyond their comfort zone and extend their care to others in their outer Circles of Care.

Included in this packet:

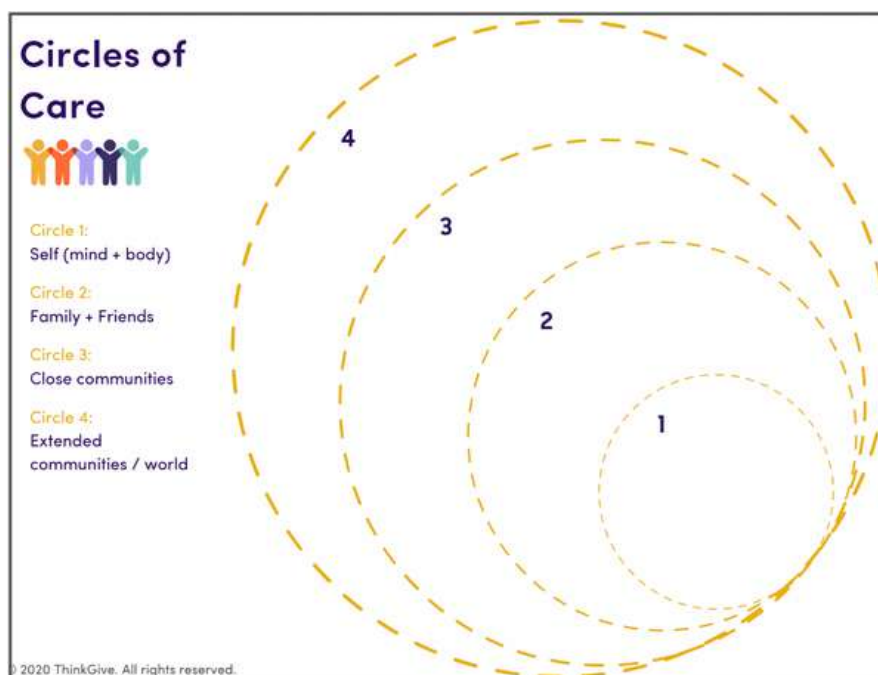
- Scope + Sequence (12 lessons / 16 lessons)
- Sample Lesson Plan (Give to Someone you Admire)
- Program Overview + Impact

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Questions? info@thinkgiveproject.org

We look forward to connecting with you!
– The ThinkGive Team



Scope + Sequence: Circles of Care (ThinkGive® Middle School, grades 6-8)

Students use the Circles of Care to not only identify the people, places, and things that are important to them, but to take action to care for and impact everyone and everything in their lives. Over the course of the program they push beyond their comfort zone and give to others in their outer Circles of Care.

Lesson name	Lesson Summary	Students will Examine	Central Quote	ThinkGive Three	SEL Core Competencies
* Note: rows in grey are not included in the 12-prompt program					
Introduction	Use this lesson to introduce students to the central program theme, Circles of Care. The concept of the Circles of Care helps students identify the people, places, and things that are important to them and empowers them to take action to care for and impact everyone in their lives. In this Introduction, students consider their changing expressions of care as they grow, the idea that we all rely on others for care, and the different ways we see and value communities and the roles of individuals within them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who they depend on in their Circles of Care, and who depends on them. - How their expressions of care change over time. - What is the value of supportive communities and the roles of their members? 	<i>"Tip the world toward kindness."</i> – Dr. Vivek Murthy	N/A	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Social awareness: Interconnectedness Relationship skills: Interdependence
Take Care of Yourself (Circle #1: Yourself)	ThinkGive starts with self-care to reinforce its importance and prepare students to care for others in their Circles of Care. To begin, students consider all that they're grateful for about themselves. They explore the idea that their bodies and emotions are interconnected. Then, they consider specific emotions and what actions they can take to move themselves toward a more regulated emotional state. As students develop their self-awareness, they will learn to care for themselves by paying closer attention to their physiological and emotional responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What they are grateful for about themselves. - The connection between their physical bodies and emotions. - How they can take action to turn uncomfortable emotions into more comfortable emotions. 	<i>"An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly."</i> – Unknown	SMALL	Self-awareness: Identifying emotions Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Self-management: Self-regulation
Be Your Own Coach (Circle #1: Yourself)	It is important that students prioritize self-compassion to boost their physical and emotional well-being and allow them to impact others positively. In this lesson, students explore their inner critic vs. inner coach. They consider how they speak to themselves, how that affects their physical and emotional expressions, and how they ultimately show up in the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do inner critic thoughts impact their physiology and emotions? - How can they be their inner coach rather than inner critic? - How to recognize and manage their emotions by strengthening their inner coach. 	<i>"Whatever you have in between your two ears, make sure it's not your own worst enemy; make it your biggest cheerleader."</i> – Lewis Howes	TRUE	Self-awareness: Authenticity Self-awareness: Growth mindset Self-management: Personal agency Self-management: Self-regulation
Give to a Friend (Circle #2: Family + Friends)	This lesson asks students to focus on friends in their second Circle of Care. Through songs, students learn how to show appreciation to their closest friends. They begin the lesson by considering the qualities of a good friend. They analyze songs to build on their ideas, listening for what qualities the artists chose to write about. Then, they consider what qualities they bring to their friendships and what they can do to foster them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The qualities of a good friend. - What qualities do they bring to their friendships? - How friendships can change as they grow. 	<i>"A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow."</i> – William Shakespeare	TRUE	Relationship skills: Interdependence Relationship skills: Relationship-building Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception

Share with a Family Member (Circle #2: Family + Friends)	Students likely have people in their lives with whom they feel comfortable sharing both tangible and intangible things. Their comfort levels will vary depending on their culture and upbringing. This lesson focuses on family and examines the vulnerability inherent in sharing. Importantly, 'family' can be what we are born into or who we choose. Ultimately, each individual decides who they consider family. Students should think about new ways to share with a family member and step into their courage zone by sharing something that makes them feel vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The possible impact of sharing with a family member. - The power of vulnerability when sharing something about themselves. - How sharing themselves with others in their close circles is an expression of care. 	<p><i>"Family gives you the roots to stand tall and strong."</i> – Anonymous</p>	BRAVE	Self-management: Risk-taking Relationship skills: Relationship-building Social awareness: Interconnectedness
Give to Someone you Admire (Circle #3: Close Communities)	Students analyze what they admire about people. They differentiate between skills and character traits and identify people in their third Circle with admirable traits. Finally, they consider which character traits they want to cultivate to become someone admired by others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do they admire in their third Circle of Care, and for what character trait(s)? - What character traits do people tend to admire in others? - How can they become someone whose traits others admire? 	<p><i>"I have always been an admirer. I regard the gift of admiration as indispensable if one is to amount to something; I don't know where I would be without it."</i> – François de La Rochefoucauld</p>	BRAVE	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Relationship skills: Relationship-building Self-management: Goal setting
Show Curiosity in Someone (Circle #3: Close Communities)	Students analyze people's assumptions about others while acknowledging that assumptions are not inherently negative. They examine the impact of assumptions and how they can create a divide between people, then work on dismantling their assumptions by looking past physical appearances and showing curiosity about others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of assumptions on themselves and others. - How curiosity leads to connection. - The importance of learning about someone's emotional self rather than appearance. 	<p><i>"In Buddha's opinion, to train in staying open and curious – to train in dissolving our assumptions and beliefs – is the best use of our human lives."</i> – Pema Chödrön</p>	TRUE	Self-awareness: Examining biases Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Social awareness: Systemic influence Social awareness: Examining norms
Really See Someone (Circle #3: Close Communities)	This lesson has students reflect on how they see others they don't know well in their third Circle. When we know only one story about someone, we have an incomplete understanding of them. We are all complex individuals with multiple stories. This prompt challenges students to get beyond a single story to see someone for who they are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What it means to really see someone. - How can really seeing people impact their perception of their communities? - How can having empathy help them connect with someone? 	<p><i>"If we could look into each other's hearts and understand the unique challenges each of us faces, I think we would treat each other much more gently, with more love, patience, tolerance, and care."</i> – Marvin J. Ashton</p>	BRAVE	Self-awareness: Examining biases Social awareness: Perspective-taking Social awareness: Examining norms and/or Social awareness: Systemic influence Relationship skills: Relationship-building Self-awareness: Growth mindset
Notice a Kindness Someone Gives to You (Circle #3: Close Communities)	Students begin with a scavenger hunt, reflecting on their actions during the ThinkGive program. This lesson encourages students to notice the good things around them. They consider who and what they might take for granted, how to direct gratitude toward those people/places/things, and how to turn their gratitude into action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The importance of noticing. - How can they recognize what people in their third Circle of Care give to them and who/what they might take for granted? - The importance of receiving and appreciating an act of kindness. 	<p><i>"Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously."</i> – Ralph Waldo Emerson</p>	SMALL	Social awareness: Gratitude Social awareness: Interconnectedness Social awareness: Systemic influence
Give an Invitation (Circle #3: Close Communities)	In this lesson, students better understand what inclusion means and looks like in action. Students consider how—and why—to be more inclusive of people by giving invitations to others in their third Circle of Care. Be sure students understand that they can choose to give many types of invitations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is inclusion? - How offering an invitation is an inclusive action. - What opportunities might students have to give invitations? 	<p><i>"A smile is the universal welcome."</i> – Max Eastman</p>	BRAVE	Relationship skills: Relationship-building Relationship skills: Effective communication Self-management: Self-regulation Self-management: Risk-taking

<p>Give to Someone You've Never Met in an Extended Community</p> <p>(Circle #4: Extended Communities/World)</p>	<p>Students define their extended communities and then consider the variety of people who make up their extended communities. Focus on examining how our extended communities impact our identities and the care we can offer to others in our extended communities. Finally, allow time to brainstorm ways students might impact someone they might not know. This action will likely take bravery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What groups and individuals make up their extended communities? - How do their extended communities influence their identities? - How can their actions connect them with others in their extended communities? 	<p><i>"We never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness."</i></p> <p>– Grace Lee Boggs</p>	BRAVE	<p>Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception</p> <p>Social awareness: Interconnectedness</p> <p>Social awareness: Systemic influence</p>
<p>Support an Extended Community</p> <p>(Circle #4: Extended Communities/World)</p>	<p>In this lesson, students reflect on human rights challenges that impact people globally. They find causes they connect with and brainstorm opportunities to support an extended community (an individual, group, or cause). The emphasis is on taking small-scale action to impact large-scale issues and the power of the collective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What issues do we face as a global community? - How small-scale consistent actions can have a profound impact. - Larger scale impact comes from the collaborative actions of many. 	<p><i>"In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it."</i></p> <p>– Marianne Williamson</p>	SMALL	<p>Responsible decision-making: Advocacy</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking</p> <p>Self-management: Personal agency</p>
<p>Give to the Environment</p> <p>(Circle #4: Extended Communities/World)</p>	<p>Students consider how they depend on the environment and how they might care for it in return. They explore environmental justice and learn about youth activists working to make a difference in under-resourced communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How having gratitude for the environment can lead to one taking action. - How does environmental justice connect to social justice? - How small actions can add up to tackle significant issues. 	<p><i>"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."</i></p> <p>– Native American Proverb</p>	SMALL	<p>Social awareness: Examining norms</p> <p>Social awareness: Systemic influence</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking</p>
<p>Give Anonymously</p> <p>(Circle #4: Extended Communities/World)</p>	<p>This lesson helps students understand the possible impact of an anonymous gift even if they don't witness the immediate results. Students consider their care for people and places in their fourth Circle. Students will need to be on the lookout for opportunities to take action and consider how they observe the people and places around them in their wider world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difference between acting anonymously and being acknowledged. - The power of taking action with no expectation of recognition or reward. - What does "Pay it forward" mean? 	<p><i>"The truest test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching."</i></p> <p>– John Wooden</p>	TRUE	<p>Social awareness: Gratitude</p> <p>Social awareness: Interconnectedness</p> <p>Self-management: Risk-taking</p>
<p>Give your Gratitude</p>	<p>This lesson asks students to reflect on and celebrate the gratuities they've been recording throughout the program. Students can give their gratitude to anyone in any of their Circles. Focus on turning their feeling of gratitude for a person/being, place, or experience into an action. This action is the final one of the program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The power of practicing gratitude. - The connection between gratitude and wellness. - How to turn gratitude into an action. 	<p><i>"Good morning. Lead with gratitude. The air in your lungs, the sky above you. Proceed from there."</i></p> <p>– Lin-Manuel Miranda</p>	TRUE	<p>Social awareness: Gratitude</p> <p>Social awareness: Interconnectedness</p> <p>Self-management: Personal agency</p>
<p>Wrap-up</p>	<p>This lesson focuses on the student's journey through ThinkGive. Students use a Scavenger Hunt to reflect on their actions and discuss ways to continue giving to others in their Circles of Care. An interview and share will help students process their experience and look ahead.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why kindness/care and the ThinkGive Three matter. - How did the Circles of Care impact their understanding of kindness/care? - How can they keep ThinkGive going to create an even more significant impact? 	<p><i>"If you have the chance to be exposed to a loving, understanding environment where the seed of compassion, loving kindness, can be watered every day, then you become a more loving person."</i></p> <p>– Thich Nhat Hahn</p>	N/A	<p>Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception</p> <p>Self-awareness: Growth mindset</p> <p>Social awareness: Gratitude</p>

Give to Someone you Admire



grades 6-8



30 minutes

“I have always been an admirer. I regard the gift of admiration as indispensable if one is to amount to something; I don't know where I would be without it.” – François de La Rochefoucauld

Lesson Summary

This prompt focuses on Circle of Care #3: Close Communities.

Students analyze what they admire about people. They differentiate between skills and character traits and identify people in their third Circle with admirable traits. Finally, they think about their identity; and consider which traits they want to cultivate to become someone admired by others.

Students will Examine

- Who do they admire in their third Circle of Care, and for what character trait(s)?
- What character traits do people tend to admire in others?
- How can they become someone whose traits others admire?

Pre-Activity Prep

- Ensure students have access to their Worksheet: Circles of Care ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) from the Introduction (1/student) (SHARE section).
- Print or digitally share the Worksheet: Skill or Character Trait? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print or digitally share the Worksheet: Who Are You? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (REFLECT section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share the Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).



MATERIALS

Student Journals
 Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: Circles of Care ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
 Chart paper
 Worksheet: Skill or Character Trait? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
 (Digging Deeper) Worksheet: Who Are You? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
 Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Give to Someone you Admire](#)
 (Digging Deeper) Video: [The Science of Character](#) (8:05)

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

GRATITUDES

Students record one specific thing they're grateful for about someone they admire on their Worksheet: My Gratitudes ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (e.g., "I am grateful for the way my tutor patiently explained the math assignment to me without making me feel bad" vs. "I am grateful for my tutor").

GROUP SHARE

When they're ready, they reflect on how they shared with their family.

NOTE: If students feel dissatisfied with their actions or have yet to act, remind them that small, consistent actions help develop kindness muscles (ThinkGive Three), so keep trying!



TEACHER TIP

Students will use the Worksheet: My Gratitudes ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) throughout the program; this exercise will be part of the final "Give Your Gratitude" prompt. Read more here: Practicing Gratitude ([PDF](#)).

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Ask: What does it mean to admire someone?

Discuss:

- What's the difference between admiring someone for character traits and skills?
- What is the difference between admiration and respect?
- Why is it important to acknowledge people we admire in our communities?

Explain: We all admire someone. Chances are we admire them not for something they have or something they can do but because of their character—who they are and how they treat others. Maybe they're honest, kind, courageous, firm, generous, or gentle. A person's character most often earns admiration.

Who Do You Admire?

As a class, list admirable character traits (e.g., intelligence, kindness, leadership) on the board/whiteboard/chart paper. Encourage students to focus on other people's actions, character, and choices rather than their physical appearance or skills (e.g., one might admire a singer's voice, but that is likely the result of much practice, determination, and resilience).



TEACHER TIP

Third Circle of Care: People in close communities beyond our friends and family (e.g., classmates, acquaintances, extended family).



VOCAB

Admire: verb; to regard (an object, quality, or person) with respect or warm approval.

Respect: verb; to regard the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others.

Skill: noun; a particular ability to do something well; expertise.

Character trait: individual parts of your personality and behavior that make up your personality and express who you are.

DIGGING DEEPER

Video: [The Science of Character](#) (8:05) (segments). Two psychologists mapped existing character strengths into 24 virtues/strengths. Everyone has a unique combination of these strengths. They found that we'd be happy if we focused on our strengths. And if we admire strengths in others, that strengthens our relationships.

NOTE: Update this video by sharing with students that the world human population is now 8+ billion.

- Minute 2:00–2:45: The question asked: “Who do you admire and why?” Students do the exercise and use the hashtag (#love, #courage, etc).
- Minute 6:30–7:36: The question asked: “If you can be a better version of yourself, who do you want to be?” Write “I want to be _____.” Students fill in the blank with the character strength they most treasure in themselves or aspire to develop.



TEACHER TIP

Encourage students to consider people who inspire them to be their best selves. Consider community heroes, family, friends, historical figures, fictional characters, etc.

REFLECT

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Skill or Character Trait?

Hand out the Worksheet: Skill or Character Trait? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student). Students use their list of character traits to help them think about people in their third Circle of Care who possess certain traits. Use the questions below to help brainstorm people in their third Circle.

NOTE: Students do not need to use names (e.g., if the quality is leadership, a student might write about someone who started a community garden).

Questions for brainstorming:

- Who serves you at a restaurant?
- Who is passionate about a cause (e.g., human/civil rights, climate)?
- Who cleans your school? Your streets?
- Who helps and supports you?

Discuss (as a class):

- What character traits do you want to cultivate?
- What actions could you take to cultivate these character traits?

DIGGING DEEPER

Who Are You?

Using their same list of character traits, students complete the Worksheet: Who Are You? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)), writing admirable characteristics that they possess. To brainstorm, they should consider compliments they've received (for skills or character traits) from others. The goal is for students to understand that by intentionally cultivating admirable qualities in themselves, they can be or become someone others admire.



TEACHER TIP

If time allows, have students reflect on these questions in their ThinkGive Journals before class discussion.

Journal

Required questions:

- What character traits do you want to cultivate?
- What actions could you take to cultivate the character traits you listed?

Optional questions:

- If you knew people admired something you were doing, would you act differently?
 - What traits do you have that could help people who aren't often supported in your community?
-

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date], take action to impact someone you admire (outside your family and friends). Recognize someone you admire within your third Circle of Care—your close communities—then make your admiration known so that the person feels appreciated.

Brainstorm

Students brainstorm a way to give to someone they admire. Remind them that they don't have to give the gifts they have brainstormed.

Things to Consider

- The ThinkGive Three focus for this gift is on being Brave.
- How can you make your admiration known? What might make someone feel appreciated?
- People are most respected for who they are rather than what they can do. Who are you? Does your character earn the admiration of others?

Closing Quote

Use this quote and questions as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) or a quick way to wrap up the lesson.

"I have always been an admirer. I regard the gift of admiration as indispensable if one is to amount to something; I don't know where I would be without it." – François de La Rochefoucauld

- What does this quote mean to you?
-

★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone

★ CONNECTION

François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680). A French classical author who was one of the most active rebels of the French civil wars, the Fronde.

Sample Actions

- I thanked my piano teacher for having such a big influence on my life. He has been a huge role model for me.
- I told my neighbor I learned from her every day, which made her happy. I don't think she was expecting me to say something like that so randomly, and I'm glad I did.
- I wrote a letter to an author and told her how much I admire her writing and appreciate her stories.

Student Journal Questions



What character trait(s) would you like to nurture? Why?



Is it more common to admire someone you know well or someone in an outer circle of your life? How does your admiration of people vary between the different circles?



Think of a time you admired someone but did not express your admiration. What stopped you?



How are the terms respect, admire, and role model related?

Extensions

DO

Empathy Extension

With the class or in small groups, brainstorm a list of people you admire in your community. Students choose one person and create a message of appreciation for that person—a card, a video message, a poem, etc.

The Gift I See in You

Turn on some music (without lyrics). Students stand and mill about the room. Stop the music. Students partner with the person nearest to them and use the prompt “The gift I see in you is...” to share an appreciation for the other person. They should be sure their appreciation is related to actions or characteristics (rather than physical appearance or material possessions). Repeat two or more times. Encourage students to stop in front of people they haven't matched up with yet.

WATCH

Video: [Wonder](#) (4:45). Scene when Auggie gets his award.

Discuss:

- “Greatness lies not in being strong but in the right using of strength. He or she is the greatest whose strength carries up the most hearts by the attraction of his own.” What does this quote mean?
- In what ways is Auggie admired?
- What did Auggie do to receive admiration?
- Do you think he made an impact on others at school? If so, how?

Video: [Mothers and Daughters Ages 6 to 89: What Do You Admire About Each Other?](#) (6:06).

Mothers and daughters ages 6 to 89 answer the question: “What do you admire about each other?”

Discuss:

- What thoughts and feelings came up for you while watching the interviews?
- Are there family members that you admire? Why?

READ/LISTEN

Article: “Black History Month: The community member I admired most as a kid” ([PDF](#) | [website](#)). Three high-achieving Champaign-Urbana natives answer: “Which community member did you admire most as a kid?”

Discuss:

- What are the common traits of the community members in this article?
- What is the value of spotlighting people in your communities?
- How would you feel if someone spotlighted you as someone to admire in the community?

Song: [You Raise Me Up](#) (4:09). Two sisters sing a cover of Josh Groban’s “You Raise Me Up.” The video includes lyrics.

Discuss:

- What is the message of this song?
- Does this song remind you of anyone? Why?
- In what ways does someone you admire raise you up?



ThinkGive partners with educators to bring social and emotional learning (SEL) to K-8 youth.

Our mission is to empower youth to take actions that positively impact themselves and others; building character, confidence, and connection. Our programs explore inclusion, identity, empathy, and equity to help youth cultivate self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Why ThinkGive? _____

Unique emphasis on action. Our programs are designed to empower youth to take self-directed and authentic actions that positively impact themselves and others.

We increase access to SEL. We focus on engaging youth who might otherwise not have access to programs like ours. 75% of our partner educators serve under-resourced youth.



Check if your school or organization qualifies for free programming funded by our SEL for Every Child Fund at thinkgiveproject.org/fund

Impressive Impact. Programs develop prosocial skills, including connection (with peers, friends, family, teachers, and community), belonging, confidence, and empowerment.

Easy to implement. Our programs are highly adaptable to fit your schedule, goals, and classroom needs. They can be taught as standalone or used to complement and enhance broader SEL initiatives in any environment.

Grounded in research. ThinkGive aligns with state and common core standards and CASEL core competencies.

Exceptional support. To maximize impact on young people, the ThinkGive team partners with educators and provides hands-on support.

Why Now?

Youth mental health has deteriorated nationwide, and this crisis is disproportionately impacting under-resourced youth. In May 2023, the Surgeon General declared loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection a new public health epidemic in the United States. Research shows how teaching youth prosocial behavior is directly associated with positive emotional, social, and academic growth.



OUR IMPACT

STUDENTS REPORT...

84%

will be kinder
to others

81%

will be a force of good
in their schools and
communities

71%

are more willing
to stand up for
what's right

76%

feel more confident to
make a positive impact
on their world

84% felt more connected with family, **78%** with community, **77%** with friends

EDUCATORS REPORT...

100%

students feel more
empowered that they can
be agents of change

85%

students seem
more inclusive

75%

students seem
kinder to each other



“ThinkGive is a revolutionary SEL program that empowers students to immaterially gift kindness. It strengthens their connections to each other and their communities, shapes them as young citizens, and helps them see the impact of their actions.”

– Dana Meyer, educator, Carlisle Public School

“ThinkGive has and will help me be a more considerate, thoughtful, and compassionate person. Knowing the positive effects I can have on a person is truly amazing.”

– 7th grade student