



Random Acts of Kindness

Garden-based SEL Lessons

The Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) resource bundle teaches kindness skills through a combination of literacy, science, kindness connections, and project-based activities in the garden that provide students with a chance to explore difficult abstract concepts through a variety of nature-based opportunities. This resource bundle is geared toward grades 3-5.



RAK stands for Random Acts of Kindness. RAK is a 501c3 non-profit organization focused on making kindness the norm. There are 6 RAK core concepts: Respect, Caring, Inclusiveness, Integrity, Responsibility, and Courage. These concepts help students build social-emotional skills and practices to be positive and productive. RAK designed the activities in this collection together with Big Green, to apply RAK concepts in nature, incorporating Big Green Learning Gardens and garden-based learning to integrate kindness concepts into outdoor learning.

What's included in these lesson?

There are 6 sections in this resource bundle that correlate to each of the 6 RAK concepts. Every section includes 4 lessons organized in the following pattern:

<p>Literacy & Conversation Starter Introduce the RAK concept and explore how it applies in a school garden.</p>	<p>Nature & Science Connection Each RAK concept is incorporated into simple opportunities for exploration and observation. All options require minimal preparation.</p>
<p>Kindness Connection This section teaches students how to apply RAK concepts in a school garden.</p>	<p>Garden Connection This section provides longer-term opportunities to apply RAK concepts.</p>

Logistics:

Each activity is short and easy to incorporate into a school day. They should each take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Do as many or as few as you desire and repeat them as part of your routines. The garden connection can take 30-90 minutes depending on the task and time/space available to you. The term “garden space” is used throughout the text, however, these activities can be adapted for ANY outdoor space that your group can utilize.

RAK & Big Green at a Glance

How to Begin

The lessons in this bundle were written to move sequentially and build on each other. However, if you notice certain behaviors in your group that need to be addressed, start with the concepts that are most meaningful to your students.

RAK Concept	Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
RESPECT	What is Respect? How do we respect others and our space?	Nature/Garden Walk- Examples of respect and disrespect	Relaxation Breathing	Soil Analysis
CARING	What are the components of Caring? Self-Care, Gratitude, Compassion, Empathy	Tracking Growth: health vs unhealthy conditions	Garden Gratitude Journal	Garden Mapping
INCLUSIVENESS	What is Inclusiveness? How are things interconnected?	Biodiversity Bingo	Common Ground Game	Plant Companions
INTEGRITY	What are components to integrity? Honesty Perseverance	Cause and Effect: Human choices on life cycle of Bee	Pile of Excuses	Prepare Garden for Pollinator Needs
RESPONSIBILITY	What is Responsibility? Ownership Self-Discipline	Creating and Maintaining a Watering schedule	Outer Order, Inner Calm	Sustainable Watering Cans
COURAGE	What is Courage? How does it take courage to be KIND?	Friend or Foe in the Garden	Outdoor RAKS!	Kindness Garden Rocks





RESPECT

Sub-Concepts Covered: Self-care & Kindness

The first Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) concept is RESPECT. We define respect as treating people, places, and things with kindness. As caretakers of the world around us, we will focus on the importance of respect in the natural world. Respect applies to everything we do, everyone we meet, and everything we interact with.

To help you teach the concept of RESPECT in the natural world, we've provided 4 easy activities that start the conversation, draw your students outside, connect the natural world back to kindness, and ultimately build a practice of applying kindness concepts in nature. This includes your garden, your outdoor play space, and nature in general.

RESPECT UNIT OBJECTIVES

- Develop a better understanding of respect and how it applies to ourselves, others, and the world around us.
- Explain the importance of practicing respect within the natural world as a way to care for plants, insects, animals, and the environment.
- Find value in utilizing the natural world as a method for practicing self-respect.

Breakdown of Respect Unit

Literacy & Conversation Starter

It's important to get your students thinking about, discussing, and developing an understanding of RESPECT. This section strives to spark conversations around respect and how it applies to our daily lives.

Nature & Science Connection

This section allows you to immerse the students in nature as they use their senses to explore HOW to connect RESPECT in a garden setting.

Kindness Connection

This section helps students see how nature and kindness are connected. The natural world easily allows students to focus not only on respect for others but on developing personal tools for SELF-RESPECT.

Garden Connection

This section allows you to put your RESPECT skills into practice in the garden!

RESPECT

Unit Overview

Natural RAK Concept:			
Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
What is Respect? Self Respect, Respect for Others, Respect for our Space	Nature Walk	Relaxation Breathing	Soil Analysis
Theme: Self-Respect, Respect for Others and Space, Connecting with Nature			
CASEL Connections: Self-Awareness: Accurate Self-Perception, Self-Confidence Self-Management: Stress Management, Self- Discipline Social Awareness: Respect for Others			



RESPECT

Theme

Self-Respect, Respect for Others and Space, Connecting with Nature

Personal Question

How do I respect our nature/garden space with my actions?

CASEL Connections

Self-Awareness: Accurate Self-Perception, Self-Confidence

Self-Management: Stress Management, Self-Discipline

Social Awareness: Respect for Others

Literacy & Conversation Starter

Although the word RESPECT is likely familiar to them, using it in connection with the natural world might be a new concept.

Try the following ideas when starting the conversation

- Sit in a circle so everyone is included
- Share personal examples to help students better understand the concept
- Use movement and skits to act out WHAT respect looks like, sounds like, etc.



Share

What is RESPECT? Respect is treating people, places, and things with kindness. Respect starts with YOU. If you don't respect yourself, you can't do a very good job of respecting others or our space.

Let's brainstorm what respect LOOKS LIKE

- *How do you respect yourself?*
 - Eat breakfast, wear clean clothes, get sleep, etc.
- *How do you respect others?*
 - Kind words/gestures, no bullying, help others, respect boundaries, etc.
- *How do you respect our nature/garden space?*
 - Kind actions, be aware of the space, give the plants/insects what they need, etc.

Nature & Science Connection

Focus on connecting our senses to the natural world. HOW do we experience RESPECT when we are outdoors or in the garden? If desired, write or draw the connections they make down on paper to display inside for future reference.



Inspire

Nature Walk

As a group, go on a nature walk through your garden, schoolyard, or community. Have the students use their senses to explore HOW they can respect this space. After your walk, gather together and create a list of how to show respect using each sense.

Examples

- SIGHT/HEARING: Pay attention to where we tread, look for animal tracks, listen to birds, and identify by name all that you are able to.
- TASTE/SMELL: Check garden vegetables for ripeness before harvesting, smell flowers, and herbs without hurting the plant.
- TOUCH: Notice plants that have holes and discuss animals that depend on the garden, gently touch soft leaves and soil.

Closing Reflection

1. *What is something new you noticed on our walk?*
2. *How can you use (insert sense here) to help you to RESPECT (insert plant, animal, insect, soil here) in our garden?*
3. *What might happen if we do not choose RESPECT in our outdoor space?*

Kindness Connection

This section focuses on individual and 1-on-1 kindness skills. The outdoor world is a natural place to focus on kindness for ourselves and others. Make sure you give students 10-15 minutes to truly experience this section and plan to repeat it as part of your routine. This activity can be a coping skill across multiple settings in the future.



Empower Relaxation Breathing

Explain that the outdoors is a natural connection for us to explore kindness both within ourselves and with others and our space. Demonstrate how to use breathing to relax. After students are familiar with the technique (see below) have them choose a space outdoors away from others and practice calmly breathing.

Relaxation Breathing

1. Find a quiet place and get comfortable (standing, sitting, leaning on a tree, etc.).
2. Look all around you to observe where you are and who/what is near you.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose, counting slowly to 3 in your mind.
5. Pause and hold your breath for 1-2 seconds.
6. Breathe out slowly through your mouth counting slowly to 6.
7. Focus on your breath to help quiet your mind.
8. After several minutes when the class is ready, open your eyes and return your attention to the place around you.

Closing Reflection

*How does it feel to find a personal space outside?
How does slow deep breathing help you show RESPECT for yourself and others?
Do you remember any changes or observations you experienced while focusing on your breath?*

Garden Connection

This project specifically allows your group to practice RESPECT in your garden space in a productive and meaningful way. You may wish to break students into small, task-focused groups to promote respect on a more personal level, even though this project can easily take the entire group to complete.



Project Soil Investigation

One way to care for your garden is to better understand what type of soil you have before planting. Let's identify our soil!

1. Dig up soil from your garden space. Make sure to go down at least 6 inches.
2. Sift the soil using a colander or sifter. Discard rocks, leaves, sticks, and other debris.
3. Get the remaining soil wet.
4. Follow these links to analyze your soil and identify which type you have:
 - [Big Green's Soil Investigation Resource](#)
5. You can use the information you discover about your soil to help research and learn more about caring for the soil in your garden.

Closing Reflection

1. *How does it feel to find a personal space outside?*
2. *How does slow deep breathing help you show RESPECT for yourself and others?*
3. *Do you remember any changes or observations you experienced while focusing on your breath?*



CARING

Sub-Concepts Covered: Self-Care, Gratitude, Helpfulness, Compassion, & Kindness

Our second Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) concept is CARING. We define caring as feeling and showing concern for others. In this unit, we are going to focus on the importance of caring and what that looks like connected to the garden. Caring starts with ourselves and naturally extends out to everyone we meet and everywhere we go. When we take time to really think about the world around us and how we treat it, we can really see the need for caring as we continue to grow in kindness. Practicing CARE when working with others encourages gratitude, helpfulness, compassion, and empathy.

To help you teach the concept of CARING in nature, we've provided 4 easy activities that start the conversation, draw your students outside, connect the natural world back to kindness, and ultimately build a practice of applying kindness concepts in nature. This includes your garden, your outdoor play space, and nature in general.

CARING UNIT OBJECTIVES

- Develop a better understanding of CARING and how it applies to ourselves, others, and the world around us.
- Explain the importance of caring for plants, insects, and animals in the environment as a way to promote kindness in ourselves.
- Find value in utilizing nature as a method for practicing self-care, gratitude, and helpfulness.

Breakdown of Caring Unit

Literacy & Conversation Starter

It's important to get your students thinking about, discussing, and developing an understanding of CARING. This section strives to spark conversations around the concept of caring and how it applies to our daily lives.

Nature & Science Connection

This section allows you to immerse the students in nature as they use their senses to explore HOW to connect CARING in a garden setting.

Kindness Connection

This section helps students see how nature and kindness are connected. The natural world easily allows students to focus not only on CARING but on developing personal tools for SELF-CARE and GRATITUDE.

Garden Connection

This section allows you to put your CARING skills into practice!

CARING

Unit Overview

Natural RAK Concept:			
Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
What are components of caring? Self-Care, Gratitude, Compassion, Empathy	Tracking Growth	Garden Gratitude Journal	Garden Mapping
Theme: Self-Care, Caring for yourself and your space, Gratitude for the outdoors			
CASEL Connections: Self-Management: Stress Management, Impulse Control Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective Taking Relationship Skills: Communication, Teamwork			



CARING

Theme

Self-Care, Caring for yourself and your space, Gratitude for the outdoors

Personal Question

How do I care for our nature/garden space with my actions?

CASEL Connections

Self-Management: Stress Management, Impulse Control
 Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective Taking
 Relationship Skills: Communication, Teamwork

Literacy & Conversation Starter

Although the word CARING is familiar to them, using it in connection with the natural world is a new concept.

Try the following ideas when starting the conversation

- Sit in a circle so everyone feels included
- Share personal examples to help students better understand the concept
- Use movement and skits to act out WHAT caring looks like, sounds like, etc.



Share

What is CARING? Caring is feeling and showing concern for others. Caring starts with YOU. If you don't care for yourself, you can't do a very good job of caring for others or our space.

Let's brainstorm what caring LOOKS like

- *How do you care for yourself?*
 - Take care of my body, build myself up, etc.
- *How do you care for others?*
 - Offer assistance, teamwork, etc.
- *How do you care for our nature/garden space?*
 - Water the plants, clean space, etc.

Nature & Science Connection

Focus on connecting our senses to the natural world. HOW do we integrate CARING when we are outdoors or in the garden? If desired, write or draw the connections students make down on paper and display them to share the work.



Inspire

Nature Walk

Outside in the garden plant a fast-growing crop (peas, beans, sunflowers, and squash are great options for this activity) that students can care for and monitor growth at least every 2 days. Alternatively, inside the classroom, plant beans or peas in paper cups with potting soil and track their growth daily. Use a ruler and have students measure how much growth occurred each day using a simple calendar.

Options to increase complexity and learning

- Create different graphs documenting your bean's growth.
- Compare the growth in different areas (indoor/outdoor, near a window, in the shade, etc.)
- Discuss different factors that affect growth: temperature, humidity, shade vs. sunlight, watering (too little and too much), etc. Use this [Big Green guide](#) to help.
- Compare the growth of all plants in the experiment to see if there are trends.

Closing Reflection

1. Which days saw the most growth for your plant? Was that similar to other plants in class?
2. Were you ever unable to CARE for your plant either yourself or as a whole class (forgot, sick, field trip, etc.) If so, how did it affect the growth?
3. What might happen if we do not pay attention to the needs of our plants?
4. How are we like plants? How are we different?
5. How does caring for ourselves help us care for our plants (and others)?
6. How do our plants care for us?

Kindness Connection

This section focuses on individual and 1-on-1 kindness skills. The outdoor world is a natural place to focus on kindness for ourselves and others. Make sure you give students 10-15 minutes to truly experience this section and plan to repeat it as part of your routine. This activity can be a coping skill across multiple settings in the future.



Empower

Garden Gratitude Journal

Explain that one part of CARING is something called GRATITUDE. Gratitude is being thankful. We can be thankful for people, for things, and for the space around us. Today we will practice highlighting gratitude in our garden journal.

- Have every student find a space to be alone and quiet.
- Instruct them to take 3 slow, deep breaths to relax.
- Ask the following questions to help them identify 3 garden gratitudes and document them in their garden journals:
 - *How does our garden help you feel calm and peaceful?*
 - *What part of the garden brings you the most joy?*
 - *Which part of the garden shows just how much you care for it?*

Closing Reflection

1. *What are you most thankful for in our garden space?*
2. *How does CARING for the garden make you feel?*

Garden Connection

This project specifically allows your group to practice CARING for your garden in a productive and meaningful way. You may wish to break students into small, task-focused groups to promote caring on a more personal level, even though this project can easily take the entire group to complete.



Project

Garden Mapping

If your outdoor space allows you to plant, work together to map out your garden. Discuss the importance of spacing and plant companions before mapping.

- **SPACING:** plants have different spacing needs. Some can be planted close together (such as lettuce) and others need a lot of space (10 feet for watermelons!). Your class will need to measure out the space before mapping. Use Big Green's [Garden Map Template](#) for help.
- **Plant Companions:** Some plants grow better together, such as beans and basil. Use this [Guide to Companion Planting](#) to learn more.
- Use [this resource](#) for Sample Garden Map using spacing AND companions (scroll to Lesson 4 Activity 2. p. 125)

Closing Reflection

1. *What was the hardest part of mapping out our garden?*
2. *How could garden mapping help you CARE for the plants in our garden?*
3. *How could garden mapping help you CARE for the people in your school/community?*



INCLUSIVENESS

Sub-Concepts Covered: Fairness & Kindness

The third Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) concept is INCLUSIVENESS. We define inclusiveness as including others, inviting them in, and welcoming them with open arms. In this unit, we focus on the importance of inclusiveness in the garden and how it is represented in nature. The amazing truth is that sustainable systems in nature are inherently inclusive, and if we pay attention, we can learn a lot about how to be more inclusive by observing these relationships and patterns in nature and reflecting on what they mean for us!

To help you teach the concept of INCLUSIVENESS, we’ve provided 4 easy activities that start the conversation, draw your students outside, connect nature back to kindness and build a practice of applying inclusive concepts in our lives. These activities include opportunities in the garden, outdoor play space, and nature in general.

INCLUSIVENESS UNIT OBJECTIVES

- Develop a better understanding of inclusiveness and how it applies to ourselves and others.
- Observe and explain the importance of inclusiveness in nature and how it is an integral part of plant and animal interactions in a thriving ecosystem.
- Find value in utilizing the natural world as a method for practicing inclusiveness.

Breakdown of Inclusive Unit

Literacy & Conversation Starter

It’s important to get your students thinking about, discussing, and developing an understanding of INCLUSIVENESS. This section strives to spark conversations around about inclusiveness and how it applies to our daily lives.

Nature & Science Connection

This section allows you to immerse the students in nature as they use their senses to explore HOW to connect INCLUSIVENESS in a garden setting.

Kindness Connection

This section helps students see how nature and kindness are connected. The natural world easily allows students to focus not only on inclusiveness but on developing personal tools for promoting INCLUSIVENESS with others as well.

Garden Connection

This section allows you to put your INCLUSIVENESS skills into practice!

INCLUSIVENESS

Unit Overview

Natural RAK Concept:			
Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
What are is inclusiveness? How are things interconnected?	Biodiversity Bingo	Common Ground Game	Plant Companion
Theme: Inclusiveness, Embracing diversity, Interdependence in nature			
CASEL Connections: Responsible Decision Making: Problem Solving, Analyzing Situations Social Awareness: Appreciating Diversity, Social Engagement Relationship Skills: Relationship Building, Teamwork			



INCLUSIVENESS

Theme

Inclusiveness, Embracing diversity, Interdependence in nature

CASEL Connections

Responsible Decision Making: Problem Solving, Analyzing Situations,
Social Awareness: Appreciating Diversity, Social Engagement Relationship
Skills: Relationship Building, Teamwork

Literacy & Conversation Starter

Although the root of this word is familiar (to include), the word INCLUSIVENESS might not be. In addition, using it in connection with the natural world is also a new concept.

Try the following ideas when starting the conversation

- Sit in a circle so everyone is included
- Share personal examples to help students better understand the concept
- Use movement and skits to act out WHAT inclusiveness looks like, sounds like, etc.



Share

What is INCLUSIVENESS? Inclusiveness is including others, inviting them in, and welcoming them with open arms. Inclusiveness is super important when working in a group. Every person here has value and is an important part of our class. We all have at least one thing in common, but we also have unique differences that make us special!

Let's look at way each of us our special!

- *What do you like most about yourself?*
 - Personal attributes, skills, etc.
- *What activities do you really enjoy?*
 - No right or wrong answers!
- *What do you enjoy most about being outside and in nature?*

Nature & Science Connection

Focus on connecting our senses to the natural world. HOW do we experience INCLUSIVENESS when we are outdoors or in the garden? If desired, write or draw the connections students make down on paper to display them and share the work.



Inspire

Biodiversity Bingo

Biodiversity is the natural occurrence of different animals, plants, and insects that occur in nature. All of the organisms present in your garden space help each other, even though they are very different. INCLUSIVENESS in your garden helps to promote a happy garden! As a class, play biodiversity bingo.

Play Biodiversity Bingo

1. Print the [bingo cards](#).
2. Head outside and start hunting!
3. See how many squares each student or team can mark off.
4. Compare your results after 15-20 minutes of observations.
5. EXTRA: You can also do this [nature scavenger hunt from Big Green](#)

Closing Reflection

1. *What might happen if we get rid of all insects from our garden?*
2. *How do the insects you observe help and/or harm the plants?*
3. *Why is it important to INCLUDE many different plants, insects, and animals in the garden?*
4. *How do the choices we make in the garden impact the ecosystem?*

Kindness Connection

This section focuses on individual and 1-on-1 kindness skills. The outdoor world is a natural place to focus on kindness for ourselves and others. Make sure you give students 10-15 minutes to truly experience this practice and plan to repeat it as part of your routine. Connecting with others and practicing inclusive behaviors can be a coping skill across multiple settings in the future.



Empower

Common Ground Game

Explain that the outdoors is a natural connection for us to explore kindness both within ourselves and with others and our space. Today we will focus on finding common ground with different people in our group. Have the class line up in two rows, facing each other. If there is an odd number, have the teacher/an adult join as well. Have each student answer the following questions with the person they are facing:

1. *What is one thing we have in common? (both students provide an answer)*
2. *What is one thing that makes me unique?*

Have one row of students take a step to the left so they are in front of a new person. The last student in the row will need to circle back to the beginning of the line for their new person. Repeat the above activity until every student in the first line has rotated all the way through.

Closing Reflection

1. *How hard was it for you to find common ground with EVERYONE?*
2. *What was one unique skill shared that you yourself do not also have?*
3. *What are some benefits of having a diverse group of individuals in our classroom? How does finding common ground help us practice INCLUSIVENESS?*

Garden Connection

This project specifically allows your group to practice INCLUSIVENESS in your garden in a productive and meaningful way. You may wish to break students into small, task-focused groups to promote inclusiveness on a more personal level, even though this project can easily take the entire group to complete.



Project

Plant Companions

In your outdoor space, work together to identify WHAT you want to plant and how plant companions help to promote a healthier garden.

- WHAT WORKS TOGETHER
 - Explore the WHY behind plant companionship. Use this resource to better understand how plant companions work together: <https://littlesproutslearning.co/9-benefits-companion-planting/> . <https://awaytogarden.com/science-based-companion-planting-plant-partners-with-jessica-walliser/>
- WHAT DOESN'T WORK
 - Investigate poor plant companion choices. How do they work against each other? Use this resource to better understand this concept: <https://www.farmersalmanac.com/companion-planting-guide>

Closing Reflection

1. *Which plant companions surprised you the most?*
2. *How does plant companionship help promote INCLUSIVENESS in our garden?*
3. *What might happen to the health of the garden if plants grow alone versus alongside diverse companions?*



INTEGRITY

Sub-Concepts Covered: Perseverance & Kindness

The fourth Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) concept is INTEGRITY. We define integrity as acting in a way you know to be right and kind in all situations. There are many ways for us to learn about and practice integrity in the garden. In nature, we are never truly alone and every action we do actually affects the world around us. When we take time to really think about the world around us and how we treat it, we can really see just how important integrity is to treating our space with kindness.

To help you teach the concept of INTEGRITY in the natural world, we’ve provided 4 easily executed activities that start the conversation, draw your students outside, connect the natural world back to kindness, and ultimately work towards being true to ourselves and the people and places around us. This includes how we relate to the garden, outdoor play spaces, and nature in general.

INTEGRITY UNIT OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a better understanding of integrity and how it applies to ourselves, others, and the world around us. • Explain the importance of practicing integrity within nature as a way to care for plants, insects, animals, and the environment. • Find value in utilizing nature as a method for practicing integrity and perseverance.

Breakdown of Inclusive Unit

Literacy & Conversation Starter

It’s important to get your students thinking about, discussing, and developing an understanding of INTEGRITY This section strives to spark conversations around integrity and how it applies to our daily lives.

Nature & Science Connection

This section allows you to immerse the students in nature as they use their senses to explore HOW to connect INTEGRITY in a garden setting.

Kindness Connection

This section helps students see how nature and kindness are connected. The natural world easily allows students to focus not only on integrity but on developing personal tools for perseverance as well.

Garden Connection

This section allows you to put your skills of INTEGRITY into practice!

INCLUSIVENESS

Unit Overview

Natural RAK Concept:			
Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
What the components of integrity? Honesty and Perseverance	Cause and Effect- Life Cycle of a Bee	Pile of Excuses	Prepare Garden for Pollinator Needs
Theme: Honesty, Integrity, Perseverance in Nature			
CASEL Connections: Self-Awareness: Recognizing Strengths Self-Management: Self- Motivation, Goal Setting Responsible Decision Making: Ethical Responsibility			

INTEGRITY

Theme

Honesty, Integrity, Perseverance in nature

CASEL Connections

Self-Awareness: Recognizing Strengths

Self-Management: Self- Motivation, Goal Setting

Responsible Decision Making: Ethical Responsibility

Literacy & Conversation Starter

Although the root of this word is familiar (to include), the word INCLUSIVENESS might not be. In addition, using it in connection with the natural world is also a new concept.

Try the following ideas when starting the conversation

- Sit in a circle so everyone is included
- Share personal examples to help students better understand the concept
- Use movement and skits to act out WHAT inclusiveness looks like, sounds like, etc.



Share

What is INTEGRITY? Integrity is acting in a way you know to be right and kind in all situations. Your words and actions have power! Every time you tell the truth, you earn a little bit of trust from others. When people trust us, they can rely on us in both little and big situations. Integrity pushes us to make the right choice even when no one is around. Our choices always affect others, even when we don't think they do. This is especially true in nature.

Let's look at how integrity affects the outside world!

- *How do choices to water or not water a plant affect it?*
- *How does a choice to leave garbage on the bench affect the animals?*
- *How does a choice to respond to an accident like pulling out a plant you didn't mean to or spilling soap on the soil affect the plants and those around you?*

Nature & Science Connection

Focus on connecting our senses to the natural world. HOW do we experience INTEGRITY when we are outdoors or in the garden? If desired, write or draw the connections they make down on paper and display them to share the work.



Inspire

Cause and Effect: Life Cycle of a Bee

As a group, discuss the importance of our choices on the life cycle of a honey bee. Here is a [simple life cycle video](#). Here is [another video](#) that discusses the importance of bees as pollinators. Some bees can sting and it can be tempting to want to eliminate all of them from our garden out of fear of being stung or being annoyed by their presence.

- Honey bees have a 6-week life cycle in the summer. From the time they hatch until the time they die a working honey bee will live for approximately 6 weeks. They live in the winter, but they are hibernating!
- Honey Bees spend the first 3 weeks in the hive. Bees must mature before they leave the hive and become pollinators. They develop glands to store nectar and hair on their bodies to transfer pollen from plant to plant.
- Killing worker bees disrupts the hive. When we kill a lot of bees, it forces the hive to send out immature worker bees to replace those we have killed. They are not ready- they have smaller glands and less hair on their bodies. They cannot pollinate as well. This means fewer plants for us! [Learn more](#).

Closing Reflection

1. *How do our actions affect bees?*
2. *If we know bees are important for our environment what might we do in the garden to help protect them (even if we are afraid of them)?*
3. *Why is it important to choose INTEGRITY in our garden?*

Kindness Connection

This section focuses on individual and 1-on-1 kindness skills. The outdoor world is a natural place to focus on kindness for ourselves and others. Make sure you give students 10-15 minutes to fully experience this activity. Building integrity is a powerful coping skill across multiple settings in the future.



Empower

Common Ground Game

Discuss the importance of following through with your promises, especially in garden spaces that rely on human interactions to survive during certain seasons (we need to water, weed, protect from predators, etc.). Place a watering can on the ground. Explain that this tool represents a promise to water the plants daily.

Now let's explore what happens when we make excuses:

- Have students come up with excuses on why they couldn't water (too tired, not enough time, etc.) Every student should have a chance to provide at least one.
- After every excuse, have students cover the watering can with a scoop of sand, dirt, or leaves
- Discuss how each excuse builds upon each other until the can is buried and no watering could happen until we start over from scratch. Help students make the connection between making excuses and people losing trust. People cannot trust you if you constantly make excuses for your behavior.

Closing Reflection

1. How do you push through when your parents give you a task that you do not like to do?
2. What choices can you make in our garden to show INTEGRITY?
3. What can you do when you find yourself making excuses instead of doing a chore/task?

Garden Connection

This activity specifically allows your group to practice INTEGRITY in your garden in a productive and meaningful way. You may wish to break students into small, task-focused groups to promote integrity on a more personal level, even though this project can easily take the entire group to complete.



Project

Preparing the Garden for Pollinators Needs

Using observations (and the garden map you might have made in the Caring section of this lesson bundle) make a list of the plants you have in the garden.. Both from student's observations and research chart out the flower color, and time of year each plant is in bloom. Next, review which colors or times of year might be missing flowers that will support pollinators. You can then think about how to dedicate your efforts in the coming seasons to make the garden a more inclusive space and act with integrity to follow through and create a habitat for the pollinators in your community. What type of plants will attract more of the pollinators we left out (butterflies, bats, bees, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, and birds)

- Which plants can we add to the garden based on our available space and the needs of the other plants already present?

Note: Make sure to verify that the plants your class wants to add are appropriate for your planting zone. Example: You do not want to plant desert plants in an extremely moist environment with a lot of rainfall, even if the plant may attract a new pollinator.

Closing Reflection

1. Why do we need pollinators in our garden?
2. How does increasing the variety of plants in our garden help both the insects/birds and ourselves?
3. How does choosing what to plant in the garden connect with our building integrity?



RESPONSIBILITY

Sub-Concepts Covered: Self-Discipline & Kindness

Our fifth Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) concept is RESPONSIBILITY. We define responsibility as being reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you. A school garden requires us to take on many responsibilities. Most of all we are taking on the responsibility of being caretakers of the Earth and its inhabitants. Responsibility applies to our entire lives. We make decisions every day that affect us, others, and the world around us. We are responsible for these decisions. When we take time to really think about the world around us and how we treat it, we can really see just how important responsibility is to live in kindness.

To help you teach the concept of RESPONSIBILITY we've provided 4 easily executed activities that start the conversation, draw your students outside, connect the natural world back to kindness, and ultimately work towards an understanding and practice of RESPONSIBILITY as an application of kindness concepts in nature. This includes the garden, outdoor play space, and nature in general.

RESPONSIBILITY UNIT OBJECTIVES

- Develop a better understanding of responsibility and how it applies to ourselves, others, and the world around us.
- Explain the importance of practicing responsibility within nature as a way to care for plants, insects, animals, and the environment.
- Find value in utilizing nature as a method for practicing self-discipline.

Breakdown of Inclusive Unit

Literacy & Conversation Starter

It's important to get your students thinking about, discussing, and developing an understanding of RESPONSIBILITY. This section strives to spark conversations around the concept of responsibility and how it applies to our daily lives.

Nature & Science Connection

This section allows you to immerse the students in nature as they use their senses to explore HOW to connect RESPONSIBILITY in a different setting.

Kindness Connection

This section helps students see how nature and kindness are connected. The natural world easily allows students to focus not only on RESPONSIBILITY but on developing personal tools for SELF-DISCIPLINE.

Garden Connection

This section allows you to put your RESPONSIBILITY skills into practice!

RESPONSIBILITY

Unit Overview

Natural RAK Concept:			
Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
What is Responsibility? Ownership Self-Discipline	Creating and Maintaining a Watering Schedule	Outer Order, Inner Calm	Sustainable Watering Cans
Theme: Responsibility, Ownership, Self-Discipline in Nature			
CASEL Connections: Self-Awareness: Self-Confidence Self-Management: Self- Discipline, Goal Setting, Organizational Skills Responsible Decision Making: Analyzing a Situation, Identifying and Solving Problems			

RESPONSIBILITY

Theme

Responsibility, Ownership, Self-Discipline in Nature

CASEL Connections

Self-Awareness: Self-Confidence

Self-Management: Self-Discipline, Goal Setting, Organizational Skills

Responsible Decision Making: Analyzing a Situation, Identifying and Solving Problems

Literacy & Conversation Starter

Although the word RESPONSIBILITY is likely familiar to them, using it in connection with the natural world is a new concept.

Try the following ideas when starting the conversation

- Sit in a circle so everyone feels included
- Share personal examples to help students better understand the concept
- Use movement and skits to act out WHAT respect looks like, sounds like, etc.



Share

What is RESPONSIBILITY? Responsibility is being reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you. Responsibility starts with YOU. Our choices affect ourselves, others, and even the world around us! The choices we make can help our environment or hurt it.

Let's brainstorm what responsibility LOOKS like:

- *How do you show responsibility at HOME?*
- *How do you show responsibility at SCHOOL?*
- *How do you show responsibility in NATURE?*

Nature & Science Connection

Focus on connecting our senses to the natural world. HOW do we experience RESPONSIBILITY when we are outdoors or in the garden? If desired, write or draw the connections students make down on paper and display them to share the work.



Inspire

Creating and Maintaining a Watering Schedule

Examine your plant list (and garden map if you made one) and organize it as a class based on the watering needs of each plant. Example- Daily, every other day, once a week, etc. Once you have the list in place, create a watering schedule based on your plant needs.

Incorporate the following:

- WEEKLY CALENDAR- map out which plants need to be watered on which days based on their needs. Assign 2-3 students each day to water.
- PLAN AHEAD- As a class, plan ahead for things that may affect the watering schedule- holidays, field trips, illnesses, etc. How can we plan ahead to ensure our plants are OK?
- [Big Green's watering resource](#).

Closing Reflection

1. *Why is it best to have 2-3 students assigned to each day?*
2. *How can you show RESPONSIBILITY while doing this task?*
3. *Why is it important to think about watering ahead of time?*

Kindness Connection

This section focuses on individual and 1-on-1 kindness skills. The outdoor world is a natural place to focus on kindness for ourselves and others. Make sure you give them 10-15 minutes to truly experience this section since it can be a coping skill across multiple settings in the future.



Empower

Outer Order, Inner Calm

Explain that the outdoors is a natural connection for us to explore kindness both within ourselves and with others and our space. Today we will focus on self-discipline and how having order in our lives can help us feel calm on the inside.

Have students find a quiet place outside:

- Imagine this- you are working in the garden. There are plants with dried leaves, plants that are dying, and weeds that are overtaking the garden. You were hoping for a big harvest this fall, but it looks bad. HOW DO YOU FEEL INSIDE? Calm or Upset?
- Now Imagine this- you are working in the garden. There are plants that are sprouting from seed, plants that are beginning to bear fruit, and others that are ready to harvest. There are hardly any weeds and it looks nice. HOW DO YOU FEEL INSIDE? Calm or Upset?

Closing Reflection

1. How did your feeling change when the garden was ordered and flourishing?
2. How does our RESPONSIBILITY as gardeners help the garden flourish?
3. Why do you think order on the outside helps to calm us down on the inside?
4. What can you do each day to have outer order in your life? (Follow a schedule, eat/sleep/exercise regularly, etc.)

Garden Connection

This project specifically allows your group to practice RESPONSIBILITY in your garden in a productive and meaningful way. You may wish to break students into small, task-focused groups to promote responsibility on a more personal level, even though this project can easily take the entire group to complete.



Project

Sustainable Watering Cans

Watering is a huge endeavor and can be difficult to organize. However, when students create a personalized tool it can help them feel more dedicated to this responsibility. Follow the instructions below to create sustainable watering cans for each person that helps out.

- MATERIALS: Used plastic bottle with cap, preferably one with handles, 1 per student or student pair
- Thumb tack or a drill with a 1/8" drill bit
- Water source (indoor or outdoor)
- Craft supplies, optional, for decorating plastic bottles
- To USE: Fill up the water bottle and screw on the lid. Turn upside down to water plants.
- ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS.

Closing Reflection

1. Where will you keep your watering can?
2. How can you remember to put it back each time you use it?
3. How can you adjust the amount of water that comes out? (Remember some plants are more sensitive to water hitting their leaves, etc.)



The final Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) concept is COURAGE. We define courage as being brave when facing new or difficult circumstances. It takes courage to choose kindness in every situation, with everyone we meet, and in every space we enter. It can be easy to turn away from new or difficult challenges because of fear. Many of us have lost a connection to and familiarity with the natural world and the patterns and relationships that are found there. It takes courage to step into nature and explore our relationship with plants, animals, soil, and water. Caring for a garden can be a fantastic way to start practicing bravery in our own connection to the wild and complex world around us. When we use courage and kindness, we are able to accomplish goals and succeed.

To help you teach the concept of COURAGE in nature, we’ve provided 4 easily executed activities that start the conversation, draw your students outside, connect the natural world back to kindness, and ultimately work towards developing a practice of courage connected to our time spent in the garden, outdoor play space, and nature in general.

COURAGE UNIT OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a better understanding of courage and how it applies to ourselves, others, and the world around us. • Explain the importance of practicing courage and kindness in nature as a way to care for plants, insects, animals, and the environment. • Find value in utilizing the natural world as a method for practicing courage and kindness.

Breakdown of Inclusive Unit

Literacy & Conversation Starter

It’s important to get your students thinking about, discussing, and developing an understanding of COURAGE and KINDNESS. This section strives to spark conversations around courage and how it applies to our daily lives.

Nature & Science Connection

This section allows you to immerse the students in nature as they use their senses to explore HOW to connect COURAGE and KINDNESS in a garden setting.

Kindness Connection

This section helps students see how nature and kindness are connected. The natural world easily allows students to focus not only on courage but on developing personal tools to spread kindness as well.

Garden Connection

Have time and space and want to see respect in a garden setting? This section allows you to put your COURAGEOUS skills into practice!

COURAGE

Unit Overview

Natural RAK Concept:			
Literacy & Conversation Starters	Nature & Science Connection	Kindness Connection	Garden Connection
What is Courage? How does it take courage to be KIND?	Friend or Foes of the Garden	Outdoor RAKS!	Kindness Garden Rocks
Theme: Courage, Kindness to self, Others, and our Outdoor Space			
CASEL Connections: Self-Management: Stress Management Relationship Skills: Social Engagement, Communication Responsible Decision Making: Evaluating, Reflecting			



COURAGE

Theme

Courage, Kindness to self, Others, and our Outdoor Space

CASEL Connections

Self-Management: Stress Management

Relationship Skills: Social Engagement, Communication

Responsible Decision Making: Evaluating, Reflecting

Literacy & Conversation Starter

The meaning of courage usually equates to bravery. However, the ultimate courage is the ability to be kind in new and challenging circumstances.

Try the following ideas when starting the conversation

- Sit in a circle so everyone feels included
- Share personal examples to help students better understand the concept
- Use movement and skits to act out WHAT courage and kindness look like, sound like, etc.



Share

What is COURAGE? Courage is being brave when facing new or difficult circumstances. When we have the courage to be kind, we feel better about ourselves and help others to feel better too!

Let's brainstorm what responsibility LOOKS like:

- *How do you treat yourself with kindness?*
 - *How do you talk to yourself, care for yourself, etc.*
- *How do you treat others with kindness?*
 - *Kind words/gestures, standing up to bullies, etc.*
- *How do you treat our nature/garden space with kindness?*
 - *Kind actions, be aware of the space, give the plants/insects what they need, etc.*

Nature & Science Connection

Focus on connecting our senses to the natural world. HOW do we experience COURAGE when we are outdoors or in the garden space? If desired, write or draw the connections they make down on paper and display them to share the work.



Inspire

Friend or Foe in the Garden?

As a group, discuss the importance of bugs in the garden. Many bugs are friends of the garden (they help pollinate and eat bad bugs!). However, some are foes and will destroy your plants. Explore [this resource](#) for in-depth information.

Incorporate the following:

- Friends: Pollinate, Eat Bad Bugs, Keep the Garden Healthy. Examples include all bees, many spiders, butterflies, and ladybugs.
- Foes: Destroy Leaves, Eat Fruit, Ruin Roots. Examples include aphids, cucumber beetles, and cabbage loopers.
- Inspect our garden. Go slowly and look for evidence of bugs in our garden. You may find the bug itself OR damage it has done (hole in leaves, etc.).
- [Big Green Invasive Species Lesson & Activity](#).

Closing Reflection

1. *How do friendly bugs help our garden?*
2. *How do bad bugs destroy our garden?*
3. *What might happen if we don't use COURAGE and KINDNESS to care for our garden and get rid of the bad bugs?*

Kindness Connection

This section focuses on individual and 1-on-1 kindness skills. The outdoor world is a natural place to focus on kindness for ourselves and others. Make sure you give students 10-15 minutes to truly experience this section since it can be a coping skill across multiple settings in the future.



Empower

Outdoor Random Acts of Kindness (RAKs)

Explain that the outdoors is a natural connection for us to explore kindness both within ourselves and with others and our space. Today we will practice Random Acts of Kindness (RAKs) outside. A Random Act of Kindness is a fun surprise of kindness given to someone else without them ever knowing it was you! These acts of kindness are not announced, not planned, and not rewarded. You are doing kind things for others just because you want someone else to feel good, not because you want anyone to notice you.

- Divide up into small groups and brainstorm RAKs that can be done outside or in the garden (pick up trash, leave kind notes, deliver water to other classes while they work in the garden, etc.)
- Complete one RAK as a class (or group depending on how many ideas you have)

Closing Reflection

1. Which RAK was your favorite idea and why?
2. How did it feel to do a RAK without anyone knowing what you did or seeing their reactions?
3. How does KINDNESS help to promote a healthy and happy garden?

Garden Project

This project specifically allows your group to practice KINDNESS in your garden in a productive and meaningful way. You may wish to break students into small, task-focused groups to promote courage on a more personal level, even though this project can easily take the entire group to complete.



Project

Sustainable Watering Cans

Adding rocks to your garden is a natural way to add beauty while also promoting kindness. Create Kindness rocks and place them in your garden to accomplish both goals!

- GATHER ROCKS- if you are in a rocky area, allow students to choose rocks directly from nature. Otherwise, bring one rock for each student.
- CLEAN THE ROCKS- dirty rocks are difficult to paint. Scrub them clean with soapy water.
- DRAW/PAINT POSITIVE PHRASES- Using paint and paint markers, add positive affirmations such as “Smile”, “You are loved”, “I’m happy you are here”, etc.
- PLACE THE ROCKS IN YOUR GARDEN- Add your kindness rocks in and around the garden space for others to find when they are out there! Remind students that rocks stay in the garden even after they are discovered.

Closing Reflection

1. How did it feel to create your kindness rock?
2. How did you decide where to place your rock in our garden space?
3. How does it make you feel to see other people’s rocks whenever we enter our garden?