START WITH HELLO
WEEK TOOLKIT

September 23-27

A Youth Violence Prevention Program
www.sandyhookpromise.org

For questions, please email:
programs@sandyhookpromise.org
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Below are examples of how you can organize your Start With Hello Call to Action Week, along with ideas for daily themes. While Sandy Hook Promise encourages schools to engage in at least one activity each day, please note that schools should develop a Call to Action Week schedule that best accommodates their individual school needs.

**MONDAY, PROMISE 2 START WITH HELLO**
Coordinate different clubs and sports teams to meet, greet, and say “Hello” as all students and staff enter the school building or campus. Set-up a ‘Name Tag’ station near the school entrance where students and staff can create homemade name tags to wear throughout the week.

Share resources with other teachers about the power of effective communication and the significance of a simple “Hello.” Newsela is a free resource for teachers that levels texts for all age groups. The text set entitled Oh Hello: How We Communicate and Why Words Matter is an excellent way for classroom teachers to integrate literacy skills during the week.

Teachers can show student-created Start With Hello Week videos to inspire and engage students more deeply in the Start With Hello message and impact. Some exemplary videos submitted during previous Start With Hello weeks are a great way to start!

High School:  [St. Stephen’s Tractor Shed Theater: Tractor Shed Theater SWH Video](#)

Middle School:  [Show the student-created video from Burnet Middle School: Burnet Middle School Video](#)

Elementary School:  [Mary Bryan Elementary School: Say Hello To Make a Difference in the World](#)

**TUESDAY, PROMISE 2 REACH OUT AND HELP**
Reinforce the importance of reaching out and helping others. Display stories shared by students and staff about the times someone reached out and helped them for others to read, view, and reflect upon. Stories can be shared on school broadcasts, a bulletin board, over morning announcements, or in individual classrooms. Share the research behind a ‘Helper’s High’ with faculty and students – yes, helping does induce good endorphins so all the more reason to help! [Psychology Today: Benefits of Altruism](#)

Below are ideas for specifically for high schools, middle schools and elementary schools:

**HIGH SCHOOL**
Launch a ‘Most Helpful Person in the World/Our Community/History’ week-long project. Provide opportunities for groups of students to conduct research on helpful individuals and defend their ‘most helpful person’ in a class debate on Friday. The lesson can be tailored to historical figures, community members, or influential groups who help shape students’ lives such as caregivers, teachers, coaches, or religious leaders.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**
Run Socratic or Paideia Seminars in Social Studies classes about current and historical leaders who reached out, helped, and made a positive impact on society.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
Design a lesson for all students in the school to trace and cut-out a copy of their hands and create a Helping Hands wall. Have students write or draw ways they can reach out and help others on the hand and display the hands in a highly visible area of the school. Incorporate different variations of the word ‘help’ in English and other languages and reinforce the use of the word all day: help, helper, helpful, helping.
WEDNESDAY, PROMISE 2 BE KIND
There are many low-cost ways to place an emphasis on kindness for all grade levels including:

- Solicit statements of gratitude from students and staff that can be read over morning/afternoon announcements or scrolled on a TV monitor or broadcasting system.
- Host a Random Acts of Kindness movement and ignite students’ creativity by doing kind acts ‘just because.’
- Below are ideas for specifically for high schools, middle schools and elementary schools:

  HIGH SCHOOL
  Learn about the art of persuasion and gain skills in public speaking by writing TED Talks on the ‘Power of Kindness.’ Make time for students to write, practice, and deliver the TED Talks in a formal setting at the end of Start With Hello Week. Show the TED Talk entitled The Magic of Kindness by Middle School Teacher Orly Wahba.
  
  Are the Math and Science teachers feeling a bit stuck on how to make cross-curricular connections? Invite students to create a ‘Pay It Forward’ with Kindness flow chart in Math or Science class.

  MIDDLE SCHOOL
  Display a school-wide Positivity, Kindness, or Smile Wall where students can post positive messages, compliments, and notes of encouragement. The Wall can also include a Social Media aspect in which students, teachers, and administrators post a picture of themselves in front of the wall on Social Media.
  
  Show students the Kid President video about how to change the world through love and acts of kindness for an uplifting message: Love Changes Everything.

  ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
  As a class, view the teacher read-aloud of the book: Kindness is Cooler Mrs. Ruler by Margery Cuyler. Organize a group project and charge students with the task of publishing their own books about kindness.

THURSDAY, PROMISE 2 EMBRACE DIVERSITY
Encourage teachers of ages to focus on lessons that bring-up the topics of diversity, equality, equity, multiculturalism, and tolerance. History teachers will find the Zinn Education Project useful for lesson ideas Zinn People’s History.

The beginning of the year is a great time to run student mixers and connectors to get students from all grade-levels, communities, ethnicities, programs, academic programs, and lunch tables interacting and connecting. Run a Teaching Tolerance-style Mix It Up Day or Beyond Differences No One Eats Alone Day during lunch to get students networking and mingling with students from different groups, cliques, and grade-levels: Mix It Up at Lunch and Newsela Making the Lunchroom a Friendlier Place.

Below are ideas for specifically for high schools, middle schools and elementary schools:

  HIGH SCHOOL
  Invite students to create original Spoken Word poetry with the themes about Starting with Hello, Embracing Diversity, and Rejecting Racism. Use Facing History and Ourselves to bring Spoken Word to the Classroom. Looking for more inspiration? Sandy Hook Promise School Outreach Coordinator has written and performed this poem: Lets Start With Hello by Erika Newman.

  MIDDLE SCHOOL
  Write and perform short skits in class to teach students about different cultures and ethnicities. Use this as a Project-Based Learning opportunity to get students working together to understand important terms such as “stereotype”, and to perform an educational mini-play that opens doors for peer-to-peer learning.

  ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
  Read, watch, and create a book about embracing differences and promoting tolerance. Watch the K – 2 version of the book We’re All Wonders for inspiration.
FRIDAY, PROMISE 2 CONNECT
Culminate the week with a community-wide activity that celebrates togetherness, connectedness, and inclusiveness. Assemblies, talent shows, poetry slams, human chains, and theatrical performances are some ways to reinforce the importance of starting with hello, while acknowledging contributors to the week’s events, such as SAVE Promise Club student leaders and students who submitted entries into the Student Voices contest.

Some ideas for all ages include:

1. Link a paper chain with each of the students’ names represented on the links around the school campus or building.

2. Organize a whole-school assembly or fair to highlight the incredible artwork, poetry, songs, and projects students created for Start With Hello Week.

3. Start a SAVE Promise Club or recruitment drive to expand club membership.

4. Continue with the momentum after Start With Hello week by scheduling activities and events that continually reinforce the three steps: See Someone Alone, Reach Out and Help, and Start With Hello. Below are ways that high schools, middle schools and elementary schools have accomplished this:

HIGH SCHOOL
Host a Town Hall Meeting where members of the school and community-at-large are invited to participate in a dialogue about the successes of Start With Hello week and solutions and suggestions on how to keep the message going.

MIDDLE SCHOOL
Save a special day each week and name it ‘Kindness Counts Tuesdays.’ Reinforce the importance of being kind by highlighting simple actions or activities students can do each Kindness day to keep the message going. Place Post It notes with compliments on lockers and distribute candy grams with reminders to be kind.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Put students in charge of setting-up a station, jar, bulletin board, or other area in the school and classroom where students can share notes and stories about how they reached out and helped someone else, or, they themselves were a recipient of help.
Use these tips and best practices to create your *Start With Hello* video.

1. You don’t need fancy equipment to make your *Start With Hello* video. Cell phones will work just fine. However, if your school has audio and video equipment or a media class or club, take advantage and ask for help.

2. When creating your video, be sure to keep the phone or camera still, prop it up against a still object or use a tripod.

3. Stay close to the camera when making your video, especially if you’re using a smart phone, so that the microphone can pick up your voices and your message comes across clear and audible.

4. Have notes or a script nearby in case you need a little hint.

5. Use AirDrop to email yourself the video. If it’s long, then you can download it to your computer or a USB drive like any other file.

6. Be sure to include your *Start With Hello* video in your *Start With Hello* Award application. You can also share your video with us during *Start With Hello* Week and we will share it on our social media! Email it startwithhello@sandyhookpromise.org, tweet us at @SandyHook, or tag us on Instagram @SandyHookPromise.
MEDIA ADVISORY

[Insert Date]

PRESS CONTACT

[Insert Contact name, phone number and email here]

[Insert Name of School/Youth Organization] Empowers Young People to Start With Hello

[Name of School/Youth Organizations] Promotes National Start With Hello Week

[Insert name of school/youth organization], in partnership with Sandy Hook Promise, a national, nonprofit organization led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School is taking part in Start With Hello Week during [Insert Date(s)].

Start with Hello teaches students how to reach out to and include those who may be socially isolated as well as to create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their school or youth organization.

Excessive feelings of isolation can be associated with violent and suicidal behavior. In fact, one study reports that chronic loneliness increases the risk of an early death by 14%. Furthermore, young people who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence and/or depression. As a result, many further pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others.

Start With Hello Week raises awareness and educates students and the community through Start With Hello trainings, advertising, activities, public proclamations, media events, student contests and school awards. Start With Hello Week brings attention to the growing epidemic of social isolation in our schools and communities and empowers young people to create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their school or youth organization.
WHEN:  [Insert the date and time of your school/youth organization’s Start With Hello event(s)]

WHERE:  [Insert your school/youth organization’s address]

WHO:  [Insert the names of those participating in your school/youth organization Start With Hello events, such as “student leaders”, administrators or other notable people attending].

VISUAL AND INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

INTERVIEW  [Insert the names of those available to participate in an interview]

CAPTURE  [insert a description of the visual activity(ies) taking place, such as students, teachers/directors discussing Start With Hello and asking questions or a Start With Hello pledge wall].

ABOUT -  [Insert school or youth organization and include description or mission statement here].

ABOUT SANDY HOOK PROMISE

Sandy Hook Promise is a national nonprofit organization led by several family members who lost loved ones at the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012. Our sole purpose is to prevent gun violence so that no other parent experiences the senseless, horrific, and preventable loss of their child.

Sandy Hook Promise prevents gun violence by teaching adults and youth how to recognize the signs and signals of individuals who may be at-risk of hurting themselves or others, and how to intervene to get them help. We train youth and adults, at no cost, in four evidence-based “Know the Signs” programs. For more information on Sandy Hook Promise, please visit: www.sandyhookpromise.org
Start With Hello: TOOLKIT

1. See Someone Alone
2. Reach Out and Help
3. Start With Hello

Social isolation is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, lonely, or treated like you are invisible. It is a growing epidemic in the United States and within our schools. Excessive feelings of isolation can be associated with violent and suicidal behavior. Furthermore, young people who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence and/or depression. As a result, many further pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others. The positive news is that there are cures for disconnection and loneliness if we reach out and help one another.

We encourage you to talk to your child about the Start With Hello program and ask them to share what they have learned. Not only will that help you learn how to support your child to identify isolation, reach out and connect, and Start With Hello, it also demonstrates to your child that you take this subject seriously and can support them in their actions to create a more connected and inclusive home, classroom, school and community.

Sandy Hook Promise is excited to announce the launch of a Start With Hello digital interactive platform for grades K to 5. This digital learning tool is being funded by The Walt Disney Company and will be available in the Fall 2019 at no cost for school districts. For more information on this new resource or for more information about Sandy Hook Promise programs, please visit: https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/.

Thank you for supporting Start With Hello Week!

Sincerely,

[Name of Principal, Guidance Counselor, School, and/or Youth Organization]

Be sure to customize all yellow fields below and remove the highlight before sending!
This sample Start With Hello Week proclamation can be used with Mayors/City Councils, Police Chiefs/Sheriffs, County Government, School Board, Governors or other elected officials. Be sure to customize all green fields below and remove the highlight before sending.

**PROCLAMATION**

Whereas, social isolation is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, lonely, or treated like you are invisible, and

Whereas, social isolation is a growing epidemic in the United States and within our schools, and

Whereas, excessive feelings of isolation can be associated with violent and suicidal behavior, and

Whereas, young people who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence and/or depression and as a result, many further pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others, and

Whereas, Start with Hello teaches students, grades 2-12, the skills they need to reach out to and include those who may be dealing with chronic social isolation and create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their school or youth organization, and

Whereas, in addition to young people, Start With Hello will benefit educators, administrators, community based organization leaders and parents, and

Whereas, by building a culture of inclusion and connectedness, schools and communities can better support their young people and reduce their risk of bullying, violence and depression, and

Whereas, Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a national, nonprofit organization based in Newtown, Connecticut and is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012 that claimed the lives of 20 first-graders and 6 educators; SHP is focused on preventing gun violence (and other forms of violence and victimization) BEFORE it happens by educating and mobilizing youth and adults on mental health and wellness programs that identify, intervene and help at-risk individuals, and

Whereas, one of Sandy Hook Promise’s core violence prevention programs, Start With Hello, is being celebrated as part of Start With Hello Week, September 23-27 2019 at [insert the name of your school or youth organization]; and

Whereas, through Start With Hello, young people will build a more connected and inclusive classroom, school and community,

Therefore, I, [Insert name and title of Elected Official] of [insert name of City and State], do recognize and commemorate the importance of this program and herby proclaim [Insert Date] to be Start With Hello Week

In the City/State/School of [Insert City Name] and encourage all our citizens to recognize the significance of Start With Hello.
FACEBOOK

1. Students: #StartWithHello Week will take place from September 24-28! Join us for a week of activities aimed at easing social isolation and promoting kindness and inclusion! https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit

2. Students, express your #StartWithHello creativity by entering your submission into the Start With Hello Student Voices Contest at https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/studentcontest

3. Our school will be participating in this year’s #StartWithHello week from September 24-28! There will be many activities throughout the week to increase social inclusion in our school community to make sure no one is left out and everyone has a friend. https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit

4. This Monday [Name of School] will begin #StartWithHello Week! The week will focus on including peers who may be isolated or left out of day-to-day school activities. It’s as easy as starting with “hello”! https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit

5. This [Day of Week], we’re going to make sure #NoOneEatsAlone! Young people who are chronically isolated can become victims of bullying, violence and/or depression. Let’s do our part to ease social isolation by sitting and eating with someone new today! https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit

6. “When you know better, you ought to do better. And I know from that tragic day that as an educator I can do better. We need to empower our children to feel good about themselves and to help others feel good about themselves. We need to teach them how to be aware of the children they share space with, who seem lonely, may not fit in, and how to connect with them.” #StartWithHello https://www.weareteachers.com/teaching-kindness/

7. Here’s what we have planned at [Name of School] for #StartWithHello Week! [List Activities by day]. Please join us for a week of fun and making new friends!

8. Monday is the start of #StartWithHello Week! Visit http://www.sandyhookpromise.org/bringstartwithhello to find out more about this great, student-led social inclusion Call to Action week!

9. Did you meet someone amazing or learn something new about someone you’ve known for a while? Share your photos using #StartWithHello to show us!

10. We signed up for #StartWithHello Week to encourage students to be more inclusive & kind to help create a safer & happier school community for us all. http://bit.ly/1OTbkcb

11. DID YOU KNOW? Studies suggest that chronic loneliness increases the risk of an early death by 14%. #StartWithHello to make a difference today! https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit

12. A great way to #StartWithHello! Every Friday, members of the Black Students Union at one LAUSD school greet every student by name as they walk onto campus as a way to strengthen bonds between students and create a more inclusive school community.
TWITTER (CAN ALSO BE USED FOR INSTAGRAM CAPTIONS): 

13. It’s almost #StartWithHello Week! Get ready to make new friends and have a lot of fun with us at [Name of School].

14. #StartWithHello Week is almost here! What are you looking forward to learning this week? [Attach SWH logo]

15. Students, share your #StartWithHello story with @sandyhook by applying for the Start With Hello Student Voices Contest at https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/studentcontest

16. Monday is the start of #StartWithHello Week! Visit www.sandyhookpromise.org/prevention_programs to find out more about how we can help reduce social isolation! @sandyhook

17. [On whatever day works] Today we are making sure #NoOneEatsAlone! #StartWithHello to meet someone new to sit with at lunch today!

18. Social isolation can happen anywhere in our school. How will you meet someone new today? #StartWithHello

19. Did you make a new connection during #StartWithHello Week? Tweet us @sandyhook and tell us about it!

20. Reply to this tweet, tag @sandyhook, and include #StartWithHello to show us some of the activities you’ve been a part of during #StartWithHello Week!

21. DID YOU KNOW? Studies suggest that chronic loneliness increases the risk of early death by 14%. #StartWithHello to make a difference today!

22. “The only way to have a friend is to be one.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson #StartWithHello

23. At [NAME OF SCHOOL], we’ll use #StartWithHello from @sandyhook to encourage students to be more inclusive & help create a safer & happier community. https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&ut m_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit

24. Play The “Kindness Game” from @Edutopia http://edut.to/1Nk4XhQ #bullyfree #StartWithHello

25. “Loneliness is a risk factor for many mental and physical health problems. Yet, it is sometimes not taken seriously.” Even more reason to #StartWithHello http://trib.mn/lILguwu


27. A young student realized a new classmate didn’t speak much English, but that didn’t stop her. #StartWithHello http://huff.to/2efIhVt

28. At this school, the “Catch of the Day” encourages students to perform acts of kindness. http://trib.in/2dZ4lDa #StartWithHello

29. “This program is all about creating connections and reducing social isolation.” -@NicoleHockley #StartWithHello http://bit.ly/1T3scxS @sandyhook

30. Social isolation is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, lonely, or treated like you are invisible.

31. I Promise: This week I will #StartWithHello to create a more inclusive, happy, and safe school community & help ease social isolation. https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek?utm_source=partner&ut m_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=socialtoolkit @sandyhook
Nine Elementary, Middle, and High Schools in Bloomfield, New Jersey conducted an array of activities to celebrate the 2018 Start With Hello Call to Action week. Student leaders led the week’s kickoff with an assembly at one of the schools. Due to the amazing coordination and effort, the Bloomfield School District was awarded the Sandy Hook Promise grand prize district award! The schools organized daily greeters, individual lessons in classrooms about Start With Hello and social isolation, compliment drives, pledges for no one to eat or play alone, and walls of kindness to name a few.

The district organized a community-wide ‘Chalk-It Up’ that became so popular parents will continue the activity year-round. To further promote Start With Hello, #BloomfieldStartWithHello was launched to raise awareness about Start With Hello for all stakeholders of the Bloomfield School District community. School staff, parents, city leaders, media, community members, and local businesses helped in the effort to promote the three steps of Start With Hello and become a more connected community! Below is a Bloomfield crossing guard supporting Start With Hello.

According to School Counselor Kristin Vermillion, Madeira Beach Fundamental students “had a good time coming up with their own ideas for our first Start With Hello week. During the week, students stood outside with the posters they made to welcome our school community. This is now a tradition that students are doing every Friday.” Students made t-shirts to wear throughout the week as well as handmade posters and signs. After three Start With Hello presentations, students practiced the art of conversation.

Madeira Beach Fundamental won an individual school grand prize award for participation in 2018 week for going above-and-beyond with school-wide activities: Mingle Bingo activity, community circles, “You Matter” wall in the cafeteria, and a ‘mix-it-up lunch’ to engage the entire student body and reinforce the three steps of Start With Hello. The week was also announced on the school’s marquee.
Spotlight Schools

Burnet Middle School, Burnet, Texas

Burnet Middle School hosted their first Start With Hello Week in 2016. As part of their Start With Hello Week, students organized an all school assembly to present the Start With Hello training presentation and invited parents and members of the community to attend.

The local Rotary Club sponsored Start With Hello t-shirts for all students to wear to the assembly and celebrate their efforts. Over 20 local businesses changed their marquees to celebrate Start With Hello Week and the local paper interviewed students about their Start With Hello experiences.

Bolstered by the positive ripple Start With Hello Week created within Burnet Middle School and throughout the community of Burnet, student leaders, with the support of an adult advisor, signed up as an official SAVE Promise Club. Since Start With Hello Week in 2016, Burnet Middle School and their SAVE Promise Club has been able to get their entire school district to come on board. This year, every school in the district will participate in Start With Hello Week, as well as Sandy Hook Promise’s Say Something program. Burnet Consolidated ISD, led by their SAVE Promise Club youth leaders and with the support of their adult champion, are building towards a long-term cultural shift of looking out for one another, practicing inclusion and building community.

Arlington High School, North Arlington, New Jersey

The students at North Arlington High School in New Jersey took the lead in organizing their Start With Hello Week. The student club thought outside of the box and put their own personal spin on many of the activities suggested in the Start With Hello Week planning guide.

North Arlington High School’s Start With Hello activities included organizing a poetry contest where all students were invited to write a poem about a topic associated with Start With Hello. The winner’s poem was published in the school newspaper. The student club also created a Start With Hello Wall where students wrote “hello” in many different languages. A student dressed up as the school mascot and encouraged students to sign the wall.

The student club also organized a scavenger hunt in which student teams tracked down as many Start With Hello logos as they could find around the school. The winning team received a gift card. Following the scavenger hunt, the student club led the school through the Start With Hello training presentation and connected the message of Start With Hello with the use of the scavenger hunt by saying that, “just as we have to go out of our way to say hello to others to ensure they feel included, we must go out of our way to track down the logos.”