



# Adding A Little More **BNICE** To Your School Culture

**A Helpful Guide To Building Your  
Elementary School Culture In Super Positive  
& Sustainable Ways**

This guide is a collection of proven "game changers" from other elementary schools across the nation

# CHRIS FRENCH

[www.bnicketoday.com](http://www.bnicketoday.com)



## Adding A Little More Nice To Your School Culture

What is your school culture like? Resist the temptation to answer right away. Imagine taking a walk around your school with a smart phone or camera. Photograph the posted signs, bulletin boards, materials on lockers, doodles on notebooks, and whiteboard graffiti. Perhaps capture a series of social-media bites from your school's Twitter or Instagram feed and look at your schools upcoming calendar of events.

Why should you do this? Because it's exactly what we don't notice that shapes our school culture. People are bombarded with hundreds of messages each day that influence their self-identity, either telling them they matter or that they are an afterthought. What messages is your school sending to students, teachers, and parents?

Changing your schools culture into one that you'll be 100% proud of isn't an overnight process. You **HAVE** to be prepared for the long game and although one person can inspire, it takes the ownership of students, faculty and parents to make the necessary changes that you and everybody can be proud of.

Of course, making an effective change is more than just posters. Consider the following statements that I have heard recently from school leaders: "We can't change the grading policy—it's part of our culture." "Public displays of data won't work here—the culture won't allow it." "The parents just don't understand—you can't change the culture by passing a law." Each of these statements includes the word *culture*, but the meaning of the term ranges from policies and procedures to personal preferences to deeply embedded belief systems.

Cultural change, although challenging and time-consuming, is not only possible but also necessary—especially in schools in which the word "culture" is used as a rhetorical talisman to block leadership initiatives, stifle innovation, and maintain the status quo. In the last decade, the education standards movement has taught us that policy change without cultural change is an exercise in futility and frustration.

Trust the process, never give up and be consistent. Ultimately, your Kindergartners will graduate to another school and those students will be leaving behind important school traditions centered on **inclusion, diversity, and tolerance**. This will be because your school committed to adding a little more nice to your school culture.

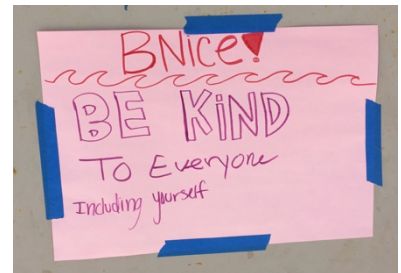
# Here Are Some Ideas To Add Some More Nice To Your School.

(These are just tips in no particular order)

**Buddy Bench:** The buddy bench is a simple idea to eliminate loneliness and foster friendship on the playground. Let's spread the message of inclusion and kindness!

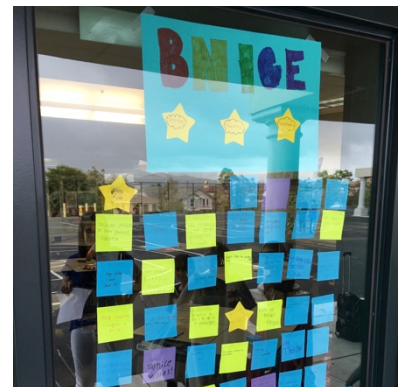
## Morning Announcements:

- 31 days of character.
- iCalendar for students, teachers and parents found on [bnicetoday.com](http://bnicetoday.com).
- Turn the 40 Developmental Assets into tangible actions.



## Visual Marketing:

Creating posters and signs everywhere with quotes and nice messages is an excellent way to begin creating a culture of niceness. BNICE post-it's on the windows giving helpful tips on how to BNICE is great method.



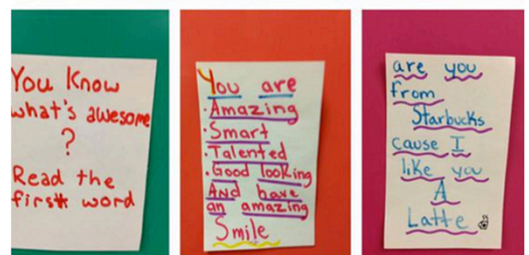
**Create A "Caught Being Kind" Board:** It's fun to post someone's name on a board and praise them for something they did. It's also fun to see your name on the board. You can do this for students, faculty, and parents.

## BNICE Ambassadors:

Have student door greeters at the start of school welcoming everyone to a new day. You can also have room greeters for when someone walks in, the student can greet them and ask if they can help with anything.



**Mission Statements:** If your current schools mission statement does not accurately reflect your commitment to character, redo it. If you love it, live it. Also, classroom and individual mission statements are great ways to set the standard. Having teachers write one out can also be a good rededication for why they chose teaching.



**Staff Appreciation:** As a class, take time to write letters and put up signs showing your appreciation for the custodians who take care of your school! Keep your classroom so clean that they won't have anything to pick up. Do the same for front office staff.

**Begin With Kindness:** Start a staff meeting or your first 10 minutes of class with an inspiring video: YouTube search "The Butterfly Effect of Chris Rosati". Chris Rosati has ALS. He is a father, husband, friend and founder of Inspire Media. In 2010, he was diagnosed with ALS and has slowly lost his ability to walk and speak. Still, he is devoting the rest of his life to spreading kindness. After watching the video, have a brief discussion about how kindness transformed Chris and those around him (ex: He turned his challenge into an opportunity to do something meaningful and serve others.).

**Pen Pals:** Encouraging students to reach out to other cultures in a great way to teach diversity and inclusion. Perhaps you could post a world map that shows all of the countries your students have reached out to.

**School Pride:** School culture and school pride go hand in hand. Do your students know your school song? Do your students participate and lead school pep rally's?

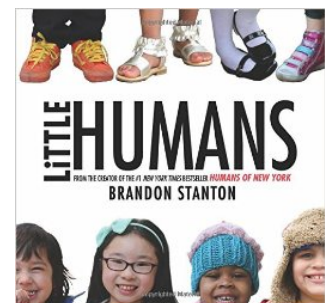
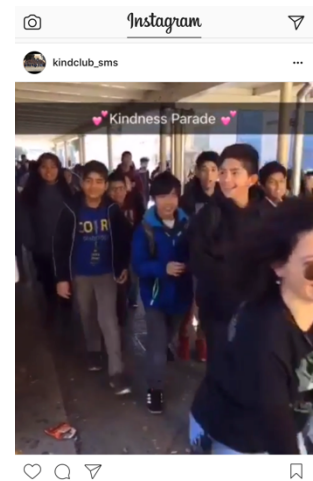
**Kindness Parade:** Because who doesn't love a parade? Make signs, designate a path and take lots of pictures. This activity teaches students the right kind of activism. Students can stand up and march for kindness and love, not for what they hate. It's all 100% positive.

**BNICE Popcorn:** Have one class do an act of kindness for another. It's just that simple.

**Create A Third Party Compliments Box:** Unique, effective and totally doable. See how students at Carol High School made theirs. In YouTube, search "#ThirdPartyCompliments 2015". Be sure to watch the students & staff reading their own third-party compliments.

**Newsletter:** Perhaps a monthly newsletter can help keep students engaged as well as build strong leaders. Student leaders can run character newsletter spotlighting character events between publications. Create a format and simply have the students fill in the sections.

**Humans Of <insert school here>:** Humans of New York is a highly popular project that showcases individuals of that area. Schools across the nation are now starting to adopt the "Humans of" concept to let other students know more about who is being spotlighted that week or month. Its purpose is to display a persons likes and dislikes in a respectful way that others will relate to. The word "human" merely states that although we are all unique, we are all human beings. This can be done on social media, bulletin boards, newsletters, etc...



**Look At What Other Schools Are Doing:** You don't have to reinvent the wheel. There are many schools out there that do wonderful things at creating a positive school culture. Students, faculty, and parents can **all** contribute to finding new and exciting ways to add a positive school culture.

- TIP: In YouTube, do a search for "Leader in Me Video Matt Weller"
- TIP: The Podcast "School Culture By Design" by Phil Boyte interviews educators from all over the country. A lot of it is MS/HS but the essence of it is very adaptable to elementary.

**Parent Meeting:** Invite parents to a strictly positive and fun meeting about your schools efforts in creating a positive school culture. Introduce your goals for the year and ask for their help. This is a great opportunity to inform the parents of the proper language in this effort such as "pro-friend" over "anti-bully" and "diversity & inclusion" over "anti-bias". Help them to see your goals and get their buy-in by asking for their help. People by nature are willing to help if you just ask them.

**Start A Kindness Club / Character Council:** This could either be integrated into your current leadership group or it could be something totally new. Their responsibilities would be to create and inspire a culture of being nice and kind at your school. They can create kindness parades, bulletin boards, posters and do the morning kindness announcements by giving the "BNICE to do challenge" of the day.



 **the KIND KIDS CLUB**  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Boy or Girl: \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to be a Kind Kid?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want to be a part of The Kind Kids Club?

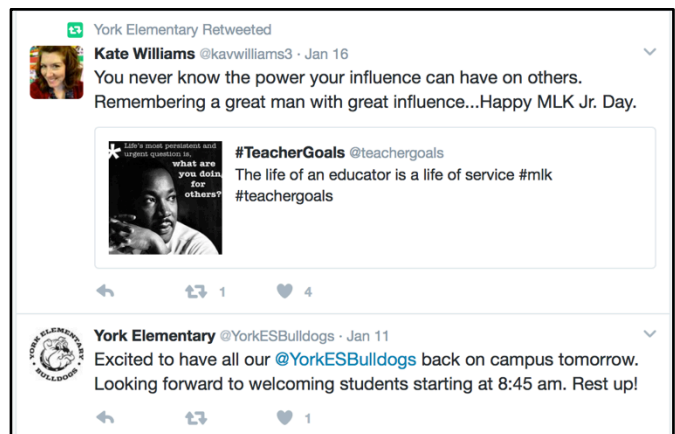
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**How Is Your Online Presence?** Think of ways how your online presence can reflect what you are trying to do at your school. Does your website show your commitment? Do your teachers have easy access to your monthly themes? It's important to keep a level of anonymity, especially with elementary students. However, there are ways to have excellent social media feeds that boast your character development efforts. This can help to create ownership on your school culture. Some school websites have a "Report Bullying" button. Maybe yours can have a "Report Kindness" button...see the difference?



## Kindness Activity Wall

Designate a wall, door, or bulletin board to kindness!

**Kindness Activity Wall Purpose:** To do kindness acts for each other: students, faculty, and parents.

**Materials:** A large (5-7' long) sheet of butcher paper, colored markers, bin, and masking tape.

### Directions:

1. Tape butcher paper on a highly visible area.
2. Students, teachers, staff and parents are to write (using the markers in the bin next to the butcher paper) a kind act that they would like another student, faculty, or parent to do, not necessarily for them, but for anyone to do while at school. For example: sit by someone who is sitting alone at lunch, help tutor someone who needs extra help, pick up trash in the hallway, say something kind to someone you do not know, write a thank you note to a teacher, make a new friend today, etc.
3. Each person reads an act of kindness that they would like to do then they do it!
4. Once the act is complete, the person should cross it out on the butcher paper.



**Suggestions:** Introduce these lessons to students so that they understand the expectations and purpose/goal of these activities. Say, "Since this is a kind activity meant to help us all create a kinder school by being kinder people, we all need to write kind things (words that will not offend anyone such as bad language or inappropriate activities). We can do this because of the kind people we already are! Let's keep our overall intention of spreading kindness at (school name) focused on what is good! Set a personal intention by making it your goal to write and complete one activity each day. Together, we can make (school name) the kindest school ever!" Obviously, the adults will need to monitor what is being written.

## Kindness in a Mason Jar

**Kindness in a Mason Jar Purpose:** To do kindness acts for each other: students, faculty, and parents.

**Materials:** A Mason Jar or another container (one per classroom, one for the staff and/or one at the front office for parents), kind acts written out on strips of paper (enough so that everyone gets an activity)

### Directions:

1. Print kind acts onto strips of paper: For example: sit by someone who is sitting alone at lunch, help tutor someone who needs extra help, pick up trash in the hallway, say something kind to someone you do not know, write a thank you note to a teacher, make a new friend today, etc. Additional grade level kind acts can be found at:  
[www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas)
2. Put strips into a Mason jar.
3. Each person pulls one strip out and is encouraged to do that kind act.
4. Using the Five W's (Who, What, Where, Why, When, and How) have students write in a kindness journal or share aloud their kind activity experience. Staff can share at their staff meetings or professional development days.



**Other Options:** Instead of “acts of kindness” to do, you can fill the jar with “acts of kindness” you’ve seen. Then, at the end of the week, month or year you can read or post the slips of paper for everybody.





## Adding A Little More Nice To Your School Culture

### CHECKLIST

(This checklist is just a collection of a few proven “game changers” from other elementary schools)

- Buddy Bench** – A simple bench designated for inclusion
- Morning Announcements** – One kind act a day
- Visual Marketing** – Positive posters and signs displayed
- Create A “Caught Being Kind” Board** – A kindness activity board
- BNICE Ambassadors** – Door and room greeters for class and school
- Mission Statements** – For school, class, teacher and student
- Staff Appreciation** – A student run movement for the staff
- Begin With Kindness** – Starting a class or staff meeting with kindness
- Pen Pals** – Encouraging students to reach out to other cultures
- School Pride** – Take a monthly inventory of your schools pride
- Kindness Parade** – Plan something in the school calendar
- BNICE Popcorn** – One class does one nice thing for another class
- Create A Third Party Compliments Box** – Student run kindness act
- Newsletter** – Something to keep everyone updated in your efforts
- Humans Of <insert school here>** - Spotlighting a staff or student
- Look At Other Schools** – Find something new every month
- Parent Kindness Meeting** – Perhaps at the start or middle of the year
- Start A Kindness Club / Character Council** – This is so key!
- How Is Your Online Presence?** – Doesn’t hurt to explore this
- Kindness Activity Wall** – A kindness activity
- Kindness in a Mason Jar** – A kindness activity