

School Bus Driver Delivers Lessons on Building Caring & Joyful Communities

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues before each session.

Lesson Goals

Help students:

- Become more aware of the various communities they live within
- Consider how we can build more affirming and joyful communities in all aspects of our lives: friends, family, different groups within our school life, sports teams, religious groups and local community
- See the importance of shared goals in building communities and inviting each person to have a role in working to achieve those goals
- Appreciate how by spending time, paying attention and getting to know and care for each person we can build positive communities
- Consider what is truly important in life – it's not so much the job title and the money, it's more about what we put into our jobs and especially what we put into our relationships with others.
- Become more aware of and grateful for the people who lead the various communities in all aspects of our lives.

Primary Virtues / Character Traits

Caring: to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person's situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and with generosity in acting to help

Empathy: trying to understand another person's situation, entering into the feeling or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

Compassion: Feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help

Generosity: to freely give of ourselves with possessions, time and / or talent for the betterment of another person, and when we do this without expecting anything in return this is **love**

Respect for Others: showing full appreciation of the worth and dignity of others; living by "the golden rule": do unto others as you would want done unto you

Secondary Virtues / Character Traits

Solidarity: unity from a shared common purpose and / or interest; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group; being present with others

Gratitude: showing appreciation for kindness and returning kindness; being thankful for all of the good things like family, friends and others who support us and care for us, health, home, opportunity and freedom.

Leader Introduction

Bus drivers are an important part of every community, without them how would students make it to school? They are also the first school employee a student sees in the morning and the last one they see before they get home. Those of you who ride a bus to school know the impact that a good, or a bad, bus driver can have on your day-to-day life. Today we are going to watch a video about a bus driver named Curtis Jenkins who goes above and beyond just transporting students to and from school...he's changing lives and bringing joy to his local community.

Video Clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxigsXlCeLU>

Leader Summary

Jenkins lives out so many of the virtues that we learn about in our lessons in ways that are by themselves small yet have a big impact on others. Let's take a closer look into what Mr. Jenkins and his students can teach us about creating caring and joyful communities within our daily lives.

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses or bullet points if needed)*

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions - included within the online lesson as a separate document.

1. Let's come up with our own definition of community. What comes to mind when you think about community? As you mention different aspects of community, I'll write them on the board and we'll then come up with our own definition.
(You can get students started by writing on the board "A community is a group of people who..."
Some ideas are a group of people who:
 - share an endeavor such as school, sports and clubs
 - share a goal/s
 - simply live by each other
 - are physically in the same space for whatever reason (the bus ride, lunch room etc.)
 - are related to each other – our family)
2. Communities can be negative and destructive, or positive and affirming. What are some of the things that the bus driver does that help every person in his bus to feel good about being part of their bus community?
(He shows he **cares** by taking the time to get to know every student on his bus; he is **generous** with small gifts; he encouraged the students to follow their passions; he challenges each student to have a "job" as part of their community.)

What are the shared values and goals that the bus driver focuses on with the students that help build a joyful community?

(He tells them "we're going to **care** about each other and **love** everybody"; he models and inspires students to be **generous** and live with **respect for others**.)

When a group we are a part of is unified by a shared value or goal, what virtue are we living out? (solidarity)

3. The reporter from the video said, "If you ask the kids what they like most about (Jenkins), the gifts (that he gives them) don't even come up." What did you hear the children say they are most **grateful** for about Jenkins?
(He **cares** about them and is kind by spending time with them, getting to know them and encouraging them.)
4. Let's think about some of the communities that we are a part of within and outside of school. What are some of the values that the leaders of those communities - our parents, teachers, coaches and others talk about and that they challenge us to live out?
5. How do you think these kids feel everyday going into school after riding on the bus with Jenkins?
(happy, positive outlook for the day, affirmed, confident, etc.)

Some of these students say that the best part of their day is riding the bus. What effect do you think starting and ending their day in a loving, caring environment has on their schooling?
(By feeling cared for and affirmed they are likely in a better frame of mind to learn and to do well in school. In seeing good virtues and values lived out by their bus driver they are more likely to practice these in their classroom and other communities.)

6. It's easy to think about work as something we will do in the future to earn money so that we can provide for ourselves and possibly a family. These are noble goals but what does Jenkins teach us is also important about work?
(How we treat others and whether we care for others within our work can be just as important as the money. Also, any job can be important if we use it as an opportunity to care for others.)
7. Right now, your job is to be a student, a member of your family, and for many of you a member of a sports team, a club, a religious community and part of a group of friends. How specifically can you bring a sense of care and joy to these communities and the people you interact with?
(This can also be a journal writing and extended activity below.)

Journal Writing Options

1. Who are some of the people in your community who care for you and help you to succeed? How do they make a difference in your life? What are you most **grateful** for about them?
2. Right now, your job is to be a student, a member of your family, for many of you a member of a sports team, a club, a religious community and part of a group of friends. Choose one of these communities and write about how you can help build a sense of caring and joy within that community.

Extended Activities:

1. Organize students into teams of 3-5. Assign each team one community where they will think about specific ways to make that community caring, positive and joyful. Each team will then present to the group as a whole their specific recommendations. Each team member should present on at least one recommended action or strategy. Try to cover a wide range of communities: family, homeroom, lunch table, sports teams, clubs, local community etc.
2. Pair students into groups of 2-3. Have students share what their future job goal is. Have the students brainstorm and discuss different values, virtues, and acts that they can do within that job that will help them care for others as part of their work directly and / or as outreach to a larger community.

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