



Helping Hands

Essential Question: *How do kids contribute to their communities?*

Total Time: 1-2 hours, including 25-30 min for video interaction

Subject: Social Studies (Civics)

Learning Goals: Compare & Contrast, Communication, Speaking & Listening, Community Contribution

Overview

In every community around the world, there's a lot of work to do! Communities and families work best when everyone pitches in to help. Whether kids participate in everyday tasks or problem-solving, lending a hand helps young people develop responsibility, learn to cooperate, and master practical life skills. Kids who take ownership of their roles at home and in their community are more likely to step up to help others outside their neighborhood and to consider themselves part of a global community. In a video interaction, explore how kids get started on the path of civic engagement by asking the question: *How do kids contribute to their communities?*

Learning Goals

- Describe ways in which people benefit from working together in communities
- Explore another community's interests, perspectives, and values
- Connect to others through respectful, open-minded listening and speaking
- Compare how children contribute to communities to identify similarities and differences

<p>1</p> <p>Activate (25-40 min)</p>	<p>Students talk with their peers about how they help in their community. After learning where their partner classroom is located, they predict how their new friends help at home and prepare to connect with their partner classroom.</p> <p>See complete instructions for Activate starting on page 3</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Interact (25-30 min)</p>	<p>In a live video interaction with your partner classroom, classes introduce themselves, share how they contribute, and ask/answer questions.</p> <p>See complete instructions for Interact on page 6</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Reflect (15-20 min)</p>	<p>Students gather in a circle to reflect on what they learned about the varied ways in which kids contribute; they discuss how kids' experiences were similar and different, as well as how they are inspired to help in new ways.</p> <p>See complete instructions for Reflect on page 7</p>

Materials & Resources

Before you teach this activity, gather the following materials:

- Access to a map (paper, globe, or online) to show the partner classroom location
- **Optional:** A labeled clock set to the local time of the partner classroom's city
- **Optional:** Printed handouts of the Helping Hands Thinking & Reflection Tool or your own adaptation of this tool [after sign-up, access [Empatico resources via teacher dashboard on our website](#)]
- **Optional:** Printed note cards or poster of the [Empatico Skills](#) [access through [teacher dashboard](#)]

Teacher Planning Considerations

- **Empatico Skills:** Practicing the [Empatico Skills](#) [found in your [teacher dashboard](#)] can strengthen students' communication and interpersonal competencies and help create positive experiences between partner classrooms. You may want to introduce (and model) these skills before beginning the activity.



When you see the Empatico badge, an Empatico skill is being practiced.

- **Thinking & Reflection Tool:** We have provided a tool to support student thinking and reflection throughout this activity. However, if your class already uses journals or class notebooks, you can support the same kind of engagement using your own familiar routines and materials [access the tool through [teacher dashboard](#)].
- **Teacher Tips for Intercultural Experiences:** These evidence-based tips help you prepare for and address any challenges that may arise before, during, or after the interaction with your partner classroom [access tips through [teacher dashboard](#)].



When you see this icon in the activity, it's a good time for you to review the tips.

- **Reflection Circle:** At the end of this activity, you will gather students in a circle to reflect on their experience during the video interaction. If circles are common in your classroom, use your established norms for sharing ideas. If circles are a new feature for your students, be sure to review the Empatico Guide for Reflection Circles [access through [teacher dashboard](#)].
- **Extension Ideas:** This activity is designed to take approximately 1-2 hours. If you prefer to spend more time exploring the topic of how children contribute to their communities and families, extension activities could include reading a story about a young person's contribution and/or making a "[mind-map](#)" of the ways students currently help and how they would like to help.

Full Activity Plan

Activate

What? Connect what students already know to what they'll learn about next
Why? New knowledge is built on prior knowledge

Step 1

Introduce activity & discuss: How do we contribute? (10-15 min)

Explain the activity to students and focus them on the question they will discuss with their partner classroom: *How do kids contribute to their communities?*

You Might Say

"Have you ever wondered how kids around the world are like you or how they are different? We have an exciting opportunity to connect with another class in [city, state/country] to answer that question. When we meet our new friends, we'll explore some of the ways in which your experiences as kids are similar and different. The question we'll discuss is, How do kids contribute to their communities?"

- **Introduce the "me too" signal, which will also be used in the video interaction.**

[Click here for an example of the ASL sign for "me too."](#) Since it is likely students will play in similar ways, they should practice using the "me too" sign while they generate ideas as a class.



The "me too" hand signal

- **Think-Pair-Share:** You may want to pass out the *Helping Hands* Thinking & Reflection Tool [[access through teacher dashboard](#)] (or your own adaptation) to provide a space for recording student thinking throughout the activity.
 - **Think** (independently): Ask students to write down 2-3 ways they think they contribute to their community (school, family, neighborhood, organizations, etc.).
 - **Pair** (partners): Ask students to share their ideas with a partner and prepare a joint list. Remind them to practice their **Empatico Skills** while sharing and to use the "me too" signal if they have similar ideas.
 - **Share** (full class): Ask student pairs to share how they help. When students hear an idea they had on their list, they can use the "me too" signal. By the end of the discussion, you should have a good idea of the most common ways students contribute to their communities.
 - Ask students to think about and explain why their contributions matter. How does what they do make their communities better, stronger, more welcoming, etc.?
- **Decide how to share the ways students contribute with the partner classroom.** Remember to keep it simple and clear for the video interaction. Depending on your students, you might use one or more of the following approaches:
 - All / most / some of us help by... Our contributions are important because...
 - Kids in our class usually help in (#) ways. The most common ways we help are... Our contributions are important because...
 - Use relevant math (such as percentages or fractions) to convey how students help. Be sure to also explain why/how their contributions matter.



Step 2



Orient students to their partner classroom (10-15 min)

Help students understand where their partner classroom is located. Generate curiosity by establishing the goal of discovering both similarities and differences between the two classes.

You Might Say

"We have a fantastic opportunity to learn more about kids who live in a different community. First, let's talk about what we already know about [city, state/country]. Then we'll think about how kids who live there might have similar or different responses to our question, How do we contribute to our communities? We'll use our discussion to prepare for our exchange."

- Show your students where the partner classroom is located on a map. If possible, use Google Maps to demonstrate the distance between your school and the partner school.
- If there's a time difference between the classrooms, explain the time zone difference.
- OPTIONAL: Hang up and label a clock that shows the local time in the partner classroom's city.
- **Discuss & predict:**
 - Ask students what they know about the partner classroom's city/state/country and what they think it's like to live there.
 - Ask students to predict what they think might be the same or different about the way their partners contribute to their communities. Ask students to explain their reasoning for why they think their partners help in those ways.

NOTE: While still ensuring respect for the partner country and culture, take care not to "correct" student thinking as this will allow students to learn firsthand about integrating new information into their evolving ideas about their partner classroom.

- Based on this discussion, have students generate 2-3 questions they would like to ask their partner classmates. Encourage students to avoid one-word answers by including WHY (e.g., *At school do you prefer assigned jobs or just helping when asked? Why?*)

Step 3

Prepare for video interaction (5-10 min)

Taking some time to prepare students for how they will speak and ask questions during the video interaction will help everything go smoothly.

DETERMINE IN ADVANCE the best interaction arrangement for your class size, students, and technology set up. Some options include:

- **Designated student speakers:** You and/or the class decide in advance which students will speak and in what order. Speakers should be close to the computer. More spontaneous interaction in the Q&A portion of the interaction can be teacher-facilitated or student-led.
- **Small groups with spokesperson:** Students prepare comments and/or questions as a group and send one person up to speak for the group as needed.

- **Teacher-facilitated speakers:** The teacher individually calls on students to walk up to the computer to speak.

You Might Say

"We've predicted how we think our partner classmates might answer our question and developed some additional questions for them. Now we're going to get ready to meet them on [day, time]. In order to make sure they feel welcome and that we can learn from them, we need to make a plan for respectful participation and how to work with the computer technology that makes our meeting possible."



- **Establish expectations for the video interaction.** You may wish to write these down for student reference:
 - Generate communication expectations by referring to the **Empatico Skills** [access through teacher dashboard] or making your own
 - Remind students of the "me too" sign as a silent, but effective visual signal
 - Explain where students will sit to see the large screen
- **Decide who will speak** for the following communication roles:
 - Greet the partner class; introduce their class grade, school, city, etc.
 - Share how students in your class typically contribute and why it matters
 - Also decide how students will ask/answer planned and impromptu questions during the Q&A portion of the interaction
- **Demonstrate speaking** at the presenter's chair so the microphone can transmit voices clearly
 - If needed, prepare notes for speakers to read from
 - Practice speaking roles



Conclude with a role play exercise or an "imagination conversation," which have both been shown to prepare children for a positive interaction. Before beginning either exercise, reassure students that they'll have a fun friendly conversation with their partner classroom, and they'll have a great time.



- **Role play exercise:** Have a student come up and engage in a conversation with you or another student, similar to the one they will have with their partner classroom. Discuss the aspects of the conversation you'd want to see and not want to see in the "real" conversation (you may want to use the **Empatico Skills** as a guideline).
- **"Imagination conversation":** Ask students to 'mentally prepare' for the upcoming exchange by closing their eyes and imagining what it will be like to have a fun friendly conversation with their partner classroom. Remind students to think about what they already know about their partner's culture, city, or country.

Interact

What? Discover new ideas and perspectives while interacting with students from another part of the world
Why? Partner school interactions deepen learning as students apply knowledge to different contexts and practice perspective-taking and communication skills.

Step 1

Prepare students right before the video interaction (5 min)



Tips

You Might Say

"We're excited to meet our new friends! We've prepared to introduce ourselves and we've decided who will share how we contribute, and how we'll ask and answer questions. Remember to listen carefully to what our new friends say, and remember to think about how kids in our classes help in similar and different ways. We'll talk about what we learn afterwards."

If using the *Helping Hands* Thinking & Reflection Tool [[access through teacher dashboard](#)] or your own adaptation of the tool, remind students to take it out during the interaction. Students may benefit from using clipboards if they're seated on the floor.

- Have the class get organized and seated for the interaction
- Remind students to listen for ways their partner classroom contributes that are similar and different from their ways of helping
- Remind students about **Empatico Skills** and the "me too" signal



Me too

Step 2

Facilitate video interaction (20-25 min)

Connect your classes through your teacher dashboard by clicking the START VIDEO button and then selecting CLASS INTERACTION. Teachers will guide students through the following exchange of introductions and ideas.

Structure of the video interaction:

1. Class A: Greeting and introduction
2. Class B: Greeting and introduction
3. Class A describes how kids contribute to their communities
4. Class B describes how kids contribute to their communities
5. Class A asks question; Class B answers
6. Class B asks question; Class A answers
7. [repeat as needed]
8. Say thank you and goodbye!

Reflect

What? Students gather in a circle to reflect and make sense of their experiences

Why? In addition to strengthening learning, “reflection circles” build community and encourage honest dialogue among students

Step 1

Reflect on what was learned in a reflection circle (15-20 min)



Soon after the interaction, gather students in a circle to debrief the video interaction. You may want to review the Empatico Guide for Reflection Circles, and remind your students of the **Empatico Skills** and “me-too” signal. Consider using the *Helping Hands* Thinking & Reflection Tool [[access through teacher dashboard](#)] to support reflection.



“Me too”

You Might Say

“Wow — we just met students in a classroom that is [xxxx] miles/km away from us! Let’s reflect on what we learned. As we talk, remember you can use the “me too” signal if you share a classmate’s idea or opinion. First, what did we learn about our question: How do kids contribute to their communities? Let’s start by hearing how you thought kids in both classrooms helped in similar ways...”

Facilitate a Reflection Circle:

Suggested discussion questions to guide student reflection:

1. What were some similarities / differences between our classes in how kids contribute to their communities?
2. Of the ways to help *that were different from your experience*, what did you learn that helps you understand why that kind of contribution is important for our partner classroom?
3. Of the ways to help *that were different from your experience*, which kinds of help could benefit our community? Why?
4. What questions would you like to ask our new friends if we met again?
5. What do you think worked well about our video interaction?
6. What do you think we should do differently next time?

Optional Step Writing reflection opportunity

Choose prompts that work best for your students (or give a choice):

- What are some new ways you could contribute to your community? Ask students to reflect on ways of helping that they learned about (or were reminded about) and are inspired to try.
- What else would you like to know about your new friends?
- To get a sense of developing ideas, have students respond to this prompt in their reflection: “I used to think.....but now I think....”

Review student entries to get a sense of what they learned and what kind of future Empatico experiences would match their interests.