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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume I: The Kids are not the Threat

Be a Leader, Not a Boss: Making Big Differences Through Sustained Small Actions

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In this unit, my students and I will be looking into both small and large ways that we can be activists and advocates for change. Our unit will focus first on how we can use the disciplines of the creative arts (visual art in particular) to make positive impacts on the immediate world around us. We will delve into this through an examination of various artists, our school community, our neighborhood and city. Grounded in a people-first perspective, we will inspect the ways artist-activists around the world use creativity and their work to enact positive and lasting differences. We will be asking ourselves how we can use our creativity to make our communities more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable places. We will consider the different localities of impact - from our neighborhood all the way up to the globe. How can we advocate, through art, for the acceptance and dignity of all humans? How can artmaking and creation make us all feel safer physically, emotionally, and spiritually as well as making us feel more connected to our world, nation, communities, and families? Most importantly, how can we use art and artmaking to find joy in an often-hurtful world?

(Developed for Elementary Visual Art, grade 5; recommended for Visual Art and Social Studies, grades K-12)

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