

## Web of Words

### Overview

In this activity, students will gain understanding of how their words build one another up and affect the morale of the group.

### Grades

Any

### Activity Type

Whole Group

### Materials

- Round ball of yarn

### Duration

20 minutes

### Instructions

1. Have students sit on the floor in a circle with their legs crossed, facing one another; teachers should sit in the circle with students, ball of yarn in hand.
2. Tell students that today we're going to be looking at how the positive things we say to another not only builds us up as individuals, but also strengthens us as a team. Explain to students that even when you are best friends with someone, as part of the same classroom, after school group, sports team, etc., it is important to still offer positive feedback and encouragement to one another. This is part of being a mature, respectful, and positive contributor to your community.
3. Explain that you are going to start the activity. You will hold the end of the ball of yarn (the string) and roll the ball across the circle to someone else. When that student receives the ball of yarn, you make a positive statement about that person. For example:
  - Kendra is an excellent writer.
  - Matt does a really good job of listening.
  - Keshia always makes new students feel welcomed.
4. Tell students that they might feel a little uncomfortable if they are not used to offering positive feedback in this way. Explain that the more they get used to spreading positivity to one another, the more natural it will feel (and the better they and other people will feel based on the positive environment created!) Tell students to feel free to take a moment once they receive the yarn to think of an authentic positive comment, tailored for the individual they throw the ball of yarn to (i.e., rather than saying "Jose is nice," saying "Jose always has a huge smile that brightens up everyone's day.") Also let students know that the order they receive the yarn in doesn't mean

anything – whether first to receive the yarn or last, what matters is sharing positive feedback with one another.

5. Tell the student who received the ball to hold on to the string and roll it to someone else across the circle, complimenting the recipient on one of their strengths. Repeat this pattern until everyone in the circle has received the yarn and is holding onto the string. The activity should have created a large web of yarn across the circle.
6. Instruct students to slowly and carefully stand up while still holding on to their string. Comment to students “Look at the web of compliments and support we create when we choose to be positive and kind to one another. We create a web that’s hard for negativity to break through.”  
Ask students:
  - What if Student A (pick a student) decides to call someone a bad name, or start a rumor – what would happen to the web? (After students respond, ask Student A to drop his/her piece of string).
  - What happened to the web?
  - Now what if Student B (pick a student) decides to make fun of someone, what happens to the web?
  - How does one person’s decision affect the rest of the group in the circle?
  - After Students A & B drop their string, what can be done to rebuild the web?
  - How have you seen people choose to build one another up, or break one another down with their words?
7. Close by discussing with students how our words are powerful and the things we say matter. In every interaction, we have a choice to build the other person up and strengthen the bonds between us or to tear a person down, making him/her feel badly and thus weakening us as a collective unit.

### **Additional Activities**

Give your students a list of everyone in their class. Encourage them to write several positive things about each of their classmates. Collect the lists and compile all of the positive comments about each student on a single piece of paper with his/her name at the top. Teachers should add their own positive feedback to the final compiled sheet as well. (The compilation sheet should be completely anonymous.) Title the paper “Every time you are feeling blue, look at what your classmates said about YOU!” You’ll be surprised at the smiles you see when you hand out the papers and how long students will keep those lists. (Teacher note: If any student’s list of compiled comments is lacking, teachers should try and inflate the list with their own comments about the student. It’s important everyone get genuine, positive feedback.)