

# #WHYYOUMATTER LESSON PLAN

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## **Objectives:**

- To get students to realize how much they matter to so many different people in their lives.
- To help students articulate their own unique importance in the world.
- To identify students that may be struggling with issues of self-worth and to refer them to the school counseling office for support.
- To assist students in writing a single #WhyYouMatter statement.

## **Activities:**

1. Teacher introduces the concept behind #WhyYouMatter (refer to your school's specific campaign efforts and the blog [www.whyyoumatter.org](http://www.whyyoumatter.org) for more information).
2. Teacher shares personal stories about how much students matter to her, highlighting instances in which students may not have realized what an effect they have on her life. (time varies)
3. Students journal in response to the following prompt: (15-20 minutes)

*Write a minimum full page about why you matter.*

Ideas to spark writing:

- your life affects many other people's lives
- you are important to very specific people
- you are somebody's baby
- you have great things to do now and in the future
- our class wouldn't be the same if you weren't here
- inside of you is the potential to do so much good

4. The teacher "opens the podium" for students to come up in front of their peers and share one reason why they matter. Students listen and snap their fingers to affirm what each individual shares. This can be a slow process as it takes time for students to build their confidence and feel comfortable sharing with one another. Additional wait time is essential. Power posing is also suggested beforehand (see Amy Cuddy's TED Talk "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are"). (5-10 minutes)

5. Once as many people have shared as desire to (not all students are required to come to the podium), the teacher re-opens the podium with a new task: every student is invited to come to the podium to say why someone else in the class matters. Students should come to the podium and say: "[Classmate's name], you

matter because [X].” You may find that it is much easier for students to share why others matter. Encourage all students to come say at least one thing about another person. (10 minutes)

6. Discuss with your students why it is so much easier to share why others matter compared to why we ourselves matter. Brainstorm a list of reasons why, and ask students what we can learn from this observation. (10 minutes)

7. Have students re-read what they wrote in their journal above, instructing them to highlight or circle lines from their journal that they might be able to use for their #YouMatter statement. (5 minutes)

8. Have students share their possible statements with their peers in partners or groups.

9. Email students’ parents to let them know about the campaign and today’s lesson assignment. Ask parents to talk with their children about why they matter.

### **Assessment / Next Steps for Consideration:**

-Student journals are saved to be included in their writing portfolios.

-Teacher notes students that struggled to articulate why they matter and makes recommendations to the counseling office as seen fit.

-Students write their #YouMatter statement and get their picture taken by photography students.

-Assign a “This I Believe” essay. Visit [thisibelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org) for the assignment guidelines and sample audio essays. #YouMatter statements lend themselves to talking about beliefs, sharing stories, and affirming students’ experiences in writing.



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