

# unique and united

DESIGNED BY ME, DESIGNED FOR US



## Why Unique and United?

The Students Rebuild: Unique and United project helps students explore what makes them special while celebrating how everyone is different in wonderful ways. Through art and sharing, students will learn that being unique is something to be proud of and that differences make communities stronger and more interesting.

## Educational Goals

Through this activity, students will:

- Reflect on what makes them unique.
- Recognize shared humanity between individuals, cultures, and communities.
- Use creativity to spark dialogue, challenge assumptions, foster connection, and ignite bold ideas that can change the world.

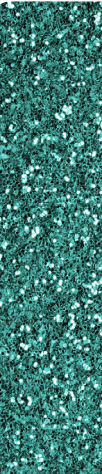
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## Creating a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment

- Use simple, clear language to establish expectations for kindness and respect.
- Model inclusive behavior and gently redirect unkind comments immediately.
- Be prepared to support students who may feel different or left out.
- Offer multiple ways to participate - some students may prefer drawing over talking.
- Watch for signs of discomfort and check in privately with students as needed.
- Keep discussions age-appropriate while still honoring different experiences.
- Have comfort items available (quiet corner, fidget tools) for students who need breaks.

## Student Guidelines for Being Kind and Respectful:

- Listen with your ears and heart - everyone has something special to share.
- Use kind words when talking about yourself and others.
- It's okay to be curious - ask questions to learn, not to make someone feel bad.
- Everyone gets to share - take turns and make space for friends to talk.
- Celebrate differences - different is wonderful and makes us all special.
- Help everyone feel included - invite others to join and be part of our group.



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## Grade Level:

Grades K-5

## Estimated Time:

**Total: 2-3 class periods (30-45 minutes each)** *Note: All timings are suggestions and can be adjusted based on your class needs and available time.*

## Sections:

- Introduction & "Designed by Me": 30-40 minutes
- Video & Discussion: 20-30 minutes
- "Designed for Us" Exercise: 40-50 minutes
- Sharing & Reflection: 20-30 minutes

## To shorten the activity:

- Skip the "Designed by Me" section and go directly to partner shoe design after the introduction
- Have students share their designs in pairs or small groups instead of whole-class presentations

## Overview:

This activity explores individuality, innovation, and shared humanity using a video about adaptive shoes. Students reflect on how differences shape needs and how inclusive design helps everyone belong. It

also explores the idea that our unique qualities are actually the things that bring us together in our shared humanity.

Students create their own designs that celebrate uniqueness and promote unity. Through discussion and creation, students develop empathy and see how thoughtful innovation connects us all.

## Objectives:

### During this activity, students will:

- Recognize and celebrate individual differences and needs.
- Understand innovation as a way to create solutions that reflect and respect individual needs.
- Explore shared humanity by examining how inclusive design helps everyone feel seen, valued, and connected.

## Materials Needed:

- Device to watch the video (TV, projector, computer, or tablet)
- New Adaptive Shoes from Adidas video
- Paper and writing/drawing supplies (plain paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils)
- Design a Shoe for a Friend Worksheet (on Page 8)
- Shoe Template (on Page 10)



## 1 INTRODUCTION | EXPLORING UNIQUENESS | 10-15 minutes

Before beginning the video portion, set the stage with a brief activity that helps students reflect on their own uniqueness. This will strengthen their connection to the themes in the activity.

**Prompt:** Have students conduct a brief brainstorming session. Students can share their ideas through discussion, writing, or drawings.

Everyone is unique in some way. Think about how you look, what you can do, what you like to learn, and where you come from. Think about the people and things you love, what you're really good at, and even the things that are hard for you sometimes.

Next, ask students to consider their needs. What do they need to survive in the world? Brainstorm as a class.

**Examples:** food, shelter, air, etc.

Ask students to consider their more specific needs. What are the things that each of them needs to thrive?

**Examples:** a phone, a computer, friends, a bus pass, etc.

Now, ask students to think very, very specifically about themselves. What objects in their lives are specifically needed just by them? What unique needs do these objects serve?

**Examples:** eyeglasses, hearing aids, soccer cleats, art supplies, books, spiritual items, etc.



## 2 DESIGNED BY ME | 10-15 minutes

Ask students to recall the unique (special) qualities they just brainstormed, and then imagine a brand-new product that only they could use and that is completely modeled toward their unique qualities and needs.

- What is this special product?
- What does it look like?
- What does it do?
- Why is it a good fit for you?
- How does it help with what you're good at or what you need?
- How would you feel if you had this special product?

Have students draw or write a brief paragraph about their design.

After students are done with their designs, ask them to share their object with the class or in small groups.

**Optional prompt:** "I made this for myself because..."

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## WATCHING THE VIDEO | 15 minutes

Before watching the video, ask students about the unique challenges they or someone they know may face, and whether they might benefit from the help of others.

Watch the [New Adaptive Shoes by Adidas](#) video as a class. This shared viewing sets the stage for the activity by introducing the topic of adaptive design and highlighting the theme of individuality and inclusion.

### Supporting Engagement

#### Set the tone:

- Ask students to watch with curiosity.
- Encourage them to notice the details about the people and the product.
- What is Chris and Jessica's challenge?
- How do regular shoes affect their physical and mental well-being?
- How do the new shoes work?

**Active watching:** Pause at key moments to ask:

- What do you notice?
- What emotions are you observing in the video?
- How does that make you feel?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 10-15 minutes

**Focus: We are all special, and everyone deserves to belong.**

- "What is special about the people in the video?"
- "Why were regular shoes difficult for Chris and Jessica?"
- "How do the new shoes help them?"
- "Why is it important that everyone can move and play?"



## 5

**CREATIVE ACTIVITY: "DESIGNED FOR US" | 25-35 minutes**

Let students know that youth their age have created amazing inventions. Review the stories at the end of the guide for inspiration. The stories feature a boy named Heman, who was 14 when he invented special soap, and Xóchitl, who was only 8 when she made a solar water heater. Tell students that just like these examples, they can design something special too!

Students will partner up to work together and celebrate each other's unique qualities and needs.

Each pair will get to know each other through a series of fun and thoughtful questions. They will explore their likes, strengths, and what makes them unique. For students who can read, the printable worksheet, on Page 8, can guide the conversation.

**Optional for some students:** coloring templates like the ones found on Page 10.

Tell the students they are now inventors, designers, and innovators! Based on what they learned about each other, they will design a shoe that suits their partner's needs, abilities, and interests.

As students draw the design, they should consider details that reflect their partner, such as color, style, shape, and special features like buttons, zippers, or even boosters to make them faster, etc.

They may label their design elements to help explain their designs when they share them with the class.

When they share their designs, encourage them to share not only the elements of the shoe but also explain what they learned about what makes their partner unique and special. Also, ask them to consider what design element of their shoe might be beneficial to other people, not just their partner.

**Final Reflection Questions:** Have students respond to these questions through drawing, writing, or sharing with the class:

- What made your partner special and unique?
- How did it feel to design something just for someone else?
- What did you learn about how we are all different but also the same?
- How can we help everyone in our class feel included and special?

**Take a photo of what your students created and share it at [Studentsrebuild.org](https://www.studentsrebuild.org). Creative Visions will donate \$5, up to \$1 million for each submission or student engaged. The project is open from September 15, 2025- June 1, 2026.**



## OPTIONAL extensions

**Drama/Storytelling Extension: "If My Shoe Could Talk..."** Students write or act out a short story where their designed shoe comes to life and talks about the person it was made for! What adventures do they go on together? What does the shoe say about its special features, and why do they matter?

**Art Extension:** Students create a decorated shoebox or folder that acts as a mini museum exhibit for their design. Inside, they can include:

- A drawing of their shoe
- A small sculpture or 3D version (using playdough, foil, or recycled materials)
- A "designer's card" with their partner's name, shoe name, and key features

**STEM/Building Extension:** Provide LEGOs, cardboard, felt, foam, or recyclables for students to build a simple model of their shoe. This can be a fun hands-on way to turn their 2D drawing into a 3D prototype.

**Language Extension:** Students create a fun mini commercial, poster, or catchy jingle (song) advertising their partner's shoe. They should highlight who it's for and why it's so special!



# INSPIRATION SECTION

## Inspiration: Dream Big, Design Boldly

Inspired by his early experiences in Ethiopia and motivated by a desire to make cancer treatment more affordable and accessible, at just 14 years old, Heman Bekele came up with a groundbreaking idea: a soap that could help treat skin cancer. This innovative concept earned him the top prize in the 3M Young Scientist Challenge (2023), which gave him the opportunity to team up with researchers to turn his idea into reality. His story shows the power of curiosity, empathy, and perseverance. It also reminds us that innovation starts with asking bold questions, dreaming big, and designing solutions that benefit our needs and the needs of others. Heman's journey is proof that our unique innovations can meet universal challenges and unite us in our shared humanity.

**Something to think about:** How does Heman Bekele's story show the importance of using personal experiences to design solutions for others?

**Video:** [Teenager Wants to Cure Skin Cancer with Soap](#)

## Solar Powered: Xóchitl's Breakthrough

At just 8 years old, Xóchitl Guadalupe Cruz López from Mexico designed a solar-powered water heater using recycled materials like plastic bottles and old glass. Her invention helps families in her community heat water without cutting down trees or inhaling harmful smoke from burning wood. This clean, affordable, and sustainable solution earned her a national science prize from Mexico's National Autonomous University's Institute of Nuclear Sciences and shows how even the youngest inventors can solve real problems.

Xóchitl's innovation demonstrates how addressing our own unique challenges can lead to solutions that benefit many others. By designing with her community's needs in mind, she created an idea that naturally fits others facing the same issues. Her story reminds us that when we design from personal experience and care for people and the planet, our ideas, no matter how small, can make a big difference and connect us through shared solutions.

**Something to think about:** Xóchitl built a working solar water heater using just recycled bottles, cardboard, and hoses—things most of us throw away. What 'trash' around your house or school could actually be the building blocks for solving a problem you care about?

**Article:** [8-Year-Old Girl From Mexico Wins Nuclear Sciences Prize For Her Invention](#)



# DESIGN a SHOE FOR a FRIEND

empathy + CREATIVITY = a PERFECT PAIR

## Step 1: Meet Your Partner

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner's name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 2: Ask & Listen

Ask your partner these questions. Write or draw their answers.

1. What do you like to do during the day?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What kind of shoes do you wear now? Do you like them?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What do you wish your shoes could do?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What colors, patterns, or decorations do you love?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you need anything special in a shoe? (e.g., easy to put on, wide, soft)

\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 3: Design Your Partner's Dream Shoe

Name your shoe: \_\_\_\_\_

Draw your shoe here and label all its special features. (Use colors, labels, and creativity!)

### Step 4: Reflect & Share

1. Why did you design the shoe this way?

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2. How do you think this shoe will help your partner?

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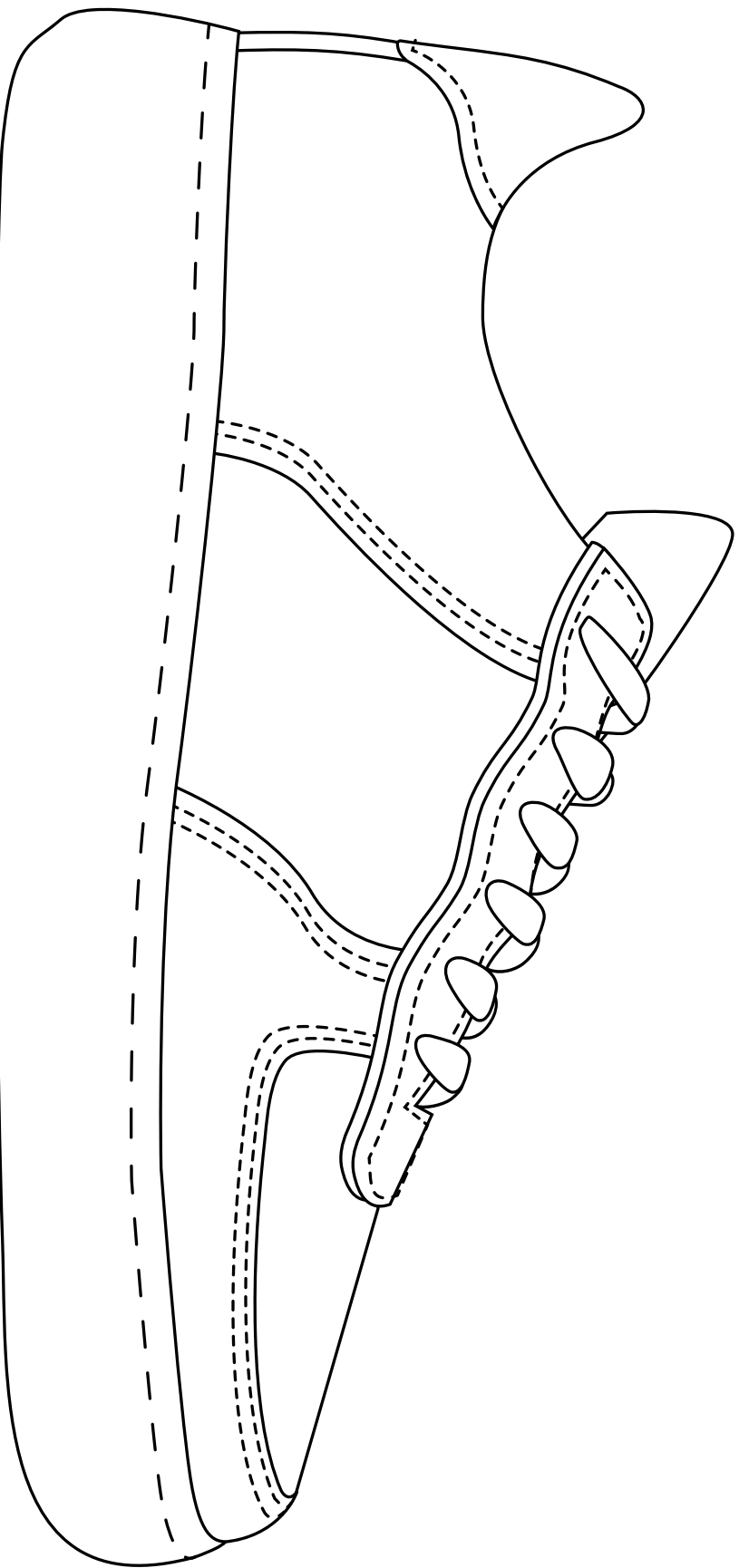
3. What did you enjoy most about this project?

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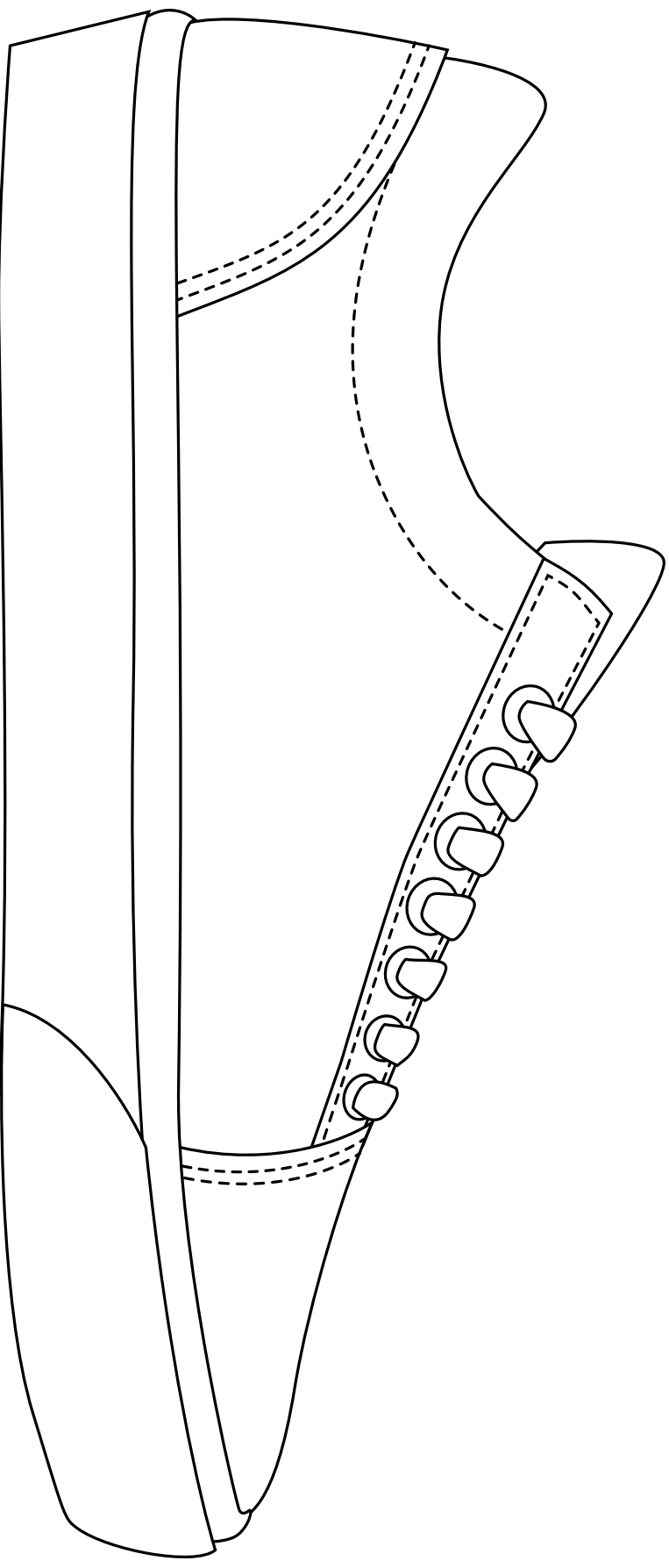
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4. Do you think there are other people who would also enjoy having a shoe like this? If so, who?

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**Design a Shoe for a Friend**



**Design a Shoe for a Friend**