

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 unique while celebrating how everyone is different in meaningful ways. Through collaborative design and innovation, students will learn that being unique is something to value and that differences create opportunities for creative solutions that help everyone.

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.

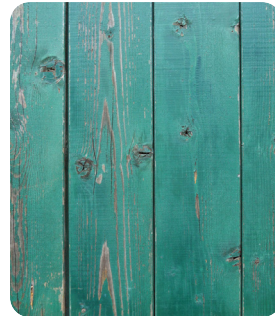
Creating a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment

Teacher Guidelines for Classroom Safety:

- Set clear expectations for respectful discussion about differences and challenges.
- Be ready to facilitate conversations about identity, belonging, and inclusion.
- Model empathetic responses and guide students toward constructive dialogue.
- Provide choice in participation - written reflection, small group, or whole class sharing.
- Monitor group dynamics to ensure all voices are heard and respected.
- Be prepared to address stereotypes or misconceptions that may arise.
- Know your support systems - have counseling contacts available if needed.

Student Guidelines for Being Kind and Respectful:

- Listen to understand - everyone's story and experience matters.
- Speak from your own experience using "I" statements rather than assumptions about others.
- Ask thoughtful questions that come from genuine curiosity and respect.
- Respect boundaries - not everyone needs to share everything, and that's okay.
- Challenge stereotypes and assumptions while being kind to the person sharing them.
- Include everyone - make sure all group members have opportunities to contribute.



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Grade Level:

Grades 6-8

Estimated Time:

Total: 3-4 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": 45 minutes
- Video & Discussion: 30 minutes
- "Designed for Us" Exercise: 60-75 minutes
- Presentations & Reflection: 30 minutes

To shorten the activity:

- Have students work individually instead of in groups of four for the "Designed for Us" exercise
- Focus on written descriptions rather than building models or creating detailed prototypes

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 utensil
- Art supplies (varying depending on the medium used by students)



1 INTRODUCTION | EXPLORING UNIQUENESS | 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 or write a paragraph in response to the prompt.

"Everyone is unique in some way. Think about your physical appearance and abilities, your mind, your culture, your interests, and your experiences. Think about the things and the people you love, the things you are great at. Think about things that are challenging for you as well."

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 | 30 minutes

Ask students to recall the unique 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 would this product be?
- What would it look like?
- What would it do?
- Why would this work for them?
- How does the product complement their unique needs or strengths?
- How would owning this product make them feel?

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

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

Optional prompts:

- "I made this for myself because..."
- "If someone else used it, it would be helpful to them because..."

3

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?

4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 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?"

Focus: Inclusion through innovation.

- "What made regular shoes hard for Chris and Jessica to use?"
- "How do these adaptive shoes help with more than just movement?"
- "What does this tell us about how design can help everyone feel included?"



5

CREATIVE ACTIVITY: "DESIGNED FOR US" | 40-60 minutes

Before diving into your their own design work, suggest that students learn about the young innovators at the end of this guide. Heman Bekele was only 14 when he developed cancer-fighting soap, and Xóchitl Guadalupe Cruz López was just 8 when she created her solar-powered water heater. Their stories show how personal experiences can lead to innovations that help entire communities.

Put students into groups of four. Ask them to identify types of challenges they have encountered or witnessed other people in their lives encounter. They can speak from personal experience or observation. Some areas to consider in their discussion: social, emotional, cultural, communication. Encourage students to listen to each other carefully.

Ask each group to identify one area of need that resonated most with them. This will become the focus of their group project.

To help keep them focused on the challenge at hand, each group will write a brief guiding statement, like:

- We want to help students who feel nervous about public speaking.
- We want to help people who feel left out during P.E. class.

They will now create a new innovative product or service that supports that need in a way that is helpful to those who need it, celebrates individuality, shows kindness, and supports the shared human experience.

Depending on the time and resources available, students can write, draw, design, or build a model of their product.

6

PRESENTATIONS & REFLECTION | 30 minutes

After completion, each group will present their product with a short pitch. The pitch should include:

- The real-world issue they identified
- Who their product or service is for and how it helps
- How their design celebrates the uniqueness of the target population
- How the design supports the shared experience of humanity
- How their design creates a kinder, more caring world.

After the presentations, discuss with the class what they learned about other people's experiences, how they plan to continue to unite their community through innovative work, and what they were most surprised to learn about themselves and their classmates.

Final Reflection Questions:

- How did working with your group change your perspective on the challenges people face?
- What connections did you discover between your own experiences and others' needs?
- How can design and creativity be tools for building a more inclusive community?
- What is one way you will apply what you learned to make a positive difference in someone's life?

Take a photo of what your students created and share it at 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

ELA/Spoken Word Extension: Each student writes a monologue or spoken word poem from the point of view of someone using the product or service their group designed. This helps build empathy and allows students to explore tone, voice, and emotion.

Art & Design Extension: Students design a logo, product packaging, or promotional poster for their innovation. They can also create a tagline or motto that expresses the mission of their product/service in a memorable way.

Digital Media/Technology Extension: Students write and produce a short commercial or animated video explaining their product and the problem it solves. They can use tools like Canva, iMovie, or Adobe Express to create a polished pitch.

STEM & Prototyping Extension: For tech-based designs, students can use tools like Tinkercad, Scratch, Figma, or Google Slides to build interactive models or simple app designs that reflect their solution in action.



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](#)

