

# ***Understanding Our Impact***

Lesson Objective:

- Students will understand the concept of community responsibility and how individual actions have a larger impact.
- Students will reflect on their personal contributions to the community and identify ways they can positively impact their environment.
- Students will learn to apply the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to situations involving responsibility.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 8: Understanding Our Impact
- Paper and pencils
- Optional Activity: Several types of waste (real or mock items)
- S.T.A.R. Reflection Worksheet
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Briefly discuss why it's important to think about our actions and our responsibility in our community.

## **Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script**

### **1. Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:**

- "Today, we're going to talk about something that affects all of us—our community. Everything we do, even small actions like throwing away trash or recycling, can have a big impact on the people and environment around us. In the story we're reading today, the Star Squad learns about the importance of

thinking beyond themselves and working to help their town. Let's see how they take on this challenge."

- Wait for the children to settle.

## 2. Discussion Starter

- "Have you ever done something to help your community? What was it, and how did it make you feel?"
- Encourage students to share brief examples. Explain that today's lesson will help them think about how their choices affect not only themselves but also their surroundings.

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 8 aloud.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

### Story Time Teacher Script:

#### 1. Prepare the Children for the Story:

- "Let's read \*Chapter 8: Understanding Our Impact\* together. Pay attention to how the Star Squad realizes that their actions can affect their whole town, and think about how the things we do every day also make a difference."
- (Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

#### 2. Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments:

**While reading,** pause during key moments.

#### Ask Questions:

- Why does Mr. Jenkins want the class to focus on how their actions impact the community?
- What ideas does the Star Squad come up with to help their town?
- How does visiting the park help the group understand the problem better?
- What does Benny notice about the trash bins in the park?
- Why does Maya think the state of the park affects everyone's experience?
- How does Harriet use her leadership skills during the park clean-up day?
- How does Buzz contribute to educating others about recycling?

- What solution does Ollie suggest to keep the event organized?
- How does Sammy use the S.T.A.R. strategy during the event?
- What do the friends realize about the importance of teaching others, not just cleaning up?

## Chapter 8: Understanding Our Impact

It was the beginning of December, and the holiday season was just around the corner. Mr. Jenkins had decided it was the perfect time for the class to think about their role in the community. "This month, we'll be focusing on how our actions affect not just ourselves, but the larger community around us," he announced. "When we reflect on the impact of our choices, we can make decisions that contribute positively to the world."

Ollie, Harriet, Benny, Sammy, Buzz, Betty, and Maya were curious to learn more. They had talked about responsibility and decision-making before, but they hadn't really considered how their everyday actions could ripple out to affect the people and environment around them. Mr. Jenkins assigned each group a different topic related to community involvement. Ollie and his friends would be learning about local efforts to reduce waste and keep their town clean. "Your task," Mr. Jenkins explained, "is to find ways that you and your classmates can help make a positive difference."

### *Seeing the Bigger Picture*

As the friends sat down to brainstorm ideas, Buzz started off by saying, "We could organize a trash cleanup day at the park."

"That's a good idea," Harriet agreed, "but what if we also talked to people about why it's important to keep our community clean? Sometimes, people don't realize how throwing trash on the ground affects everyone."

Sammy added, "And maybe we could ask the school to set up more recycling bins. If there were more places to recycle, fewer people might throw away things that could be reused."

Ollie, ever the planner, suggested they start by visiting the park and observing what was happening. "If we look at where trash is piling up or what kinds of things people are throwing away, we can figure out how to help in a way that makes the biggest impact."

### *Observing the Community*

The next afternoon, the group went to the park to see for themselves what they could learn. They noticed that there was a lot of litter around the playground, and some of the recycling bins were overflowing.

"I bet people throw trash on the ground because the bins are full," Benny said. "If there's nowhere to put it, they just leave it."



Maya looked thoughtful. "It's not just about the trash," she said. "When the park is messy, it affects everyone's experience here. Families don't enjoy visiting as much, and it makes the whole town look less nice."

The friends realized that the problem was bigger than just litter. The state of the park affected everyone who used it, and by working to clean it up, they would be helping the entire community.

### *Putting Their Plan into Action*

The group decided to organize a "Park Clean-Up and Awareness Day" for the following Saturday. They made posters and invited other students, families, and local community members to join them. The idea wasn't just to clean up the park—it was also to help people understand why taking care of the community mattered.

They set up stations around the park where volunteers could learn about the effects of littering, how to properly sort recyclables, and ways to reduce waste in daily life. Harriet, with her confident and energetic nature, led a station where she talked to kids about how even small actions, like picking up a piece of trash or choosing to recycle, could make a big difference. Sammy shared calming techniques to use when feeling frustrated about seeing a messy space. "Instead of getting upset, take a deep breath and think about what you can do to help," he said, using the S.T.A.R. strategy to demonstrate how to stop, think, and act.

Buzz led a group in making posters about recycling, while Betty showed how items like plastic bottles could be repurposed into new things. Ollie kept the event running smoothly, making sure everyone had the supplies they needed.

Benny worked with Maya to set up a recycling challenge where participants could guess how much waste was kept out of the landfill by sorting recyclables correctly.

### *Reflecting on Their Impact*

At the end of the day, the park looked noticeably cleaner, and many people had learned more about keeping the community clean. As they packed up, the friends reflected on what they had accomplished.

"I didn't realize how many people didn't know about the recycling rules," Buzz said. "A lot of the kids told me they weren't sure what to put in each bin."

Harriet nodded. "It makes sense why there's so much litter if people don't know what to do. But now, at least, they have some new information."

Maya spoke up. "And it wasn't just about picking up trash today. We helped others see why it's important to think about how our actions affect everyone. The park belongs to all of us."

Mr. Jenkins, who had come to check on the group, gathered them together. "You've all made a real difference today," he said. "And the most important thing is that you helped others

understand how their actions affect the community. When we recognize that our choices can impact the larger world, we become more thoughtful and responsible."

### *Moving Forward*

As they walked home together, the friends felt a sense of pride. They had taken a problem they noticed in their community and worked together to find a solution that went beyond just cleaning up.

Ollie, always thinking ahead, suggested, "We could make this a regular thing—maybe once a month, we could do a community clean-up or another project to help the town."

Sammy added, "And we could keep using our journals to reflect on how our actions are making a difference, not just for us, but for everyone."

With each step, the friends felt more aware of the world around them and more committed to making positive choices. As they headed into the holiday season, they knew that the gift of a cleaner, more caring community was one they had helped create together.

### **3. Post-Chapter Teacher Script**

- **Teacher:** "Ollie and his friends sure made a difference in their community. I wonder if we could do the same?"

### **4. Post-Chapter Questions**

These questions encourage children to think deeply about what they listened to and to understand that they actually can make a difference in their community.

- How do the Star Squad's actions affect the park and the community?
- Why is it important to think about the bigger picture when we make decisions?
- How can you help your community, even with small actions?
- What does it mean to make a positive impact?
- What lessons can we learn from the Star Squad's clean-up day?
- How did planning and teamwork help the Star Squad succeed?
- Why is it important to teach others about the impact of their actions?
- What part of the clean-up event do you think was the most effective, and why?
- How does reflecting on our actions help us become better community members?
- What is one way you can take action in your own community?



Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will brainstorm and plan a classroom project focused on helping their school or local community, inspired by the Star Squad's park clean-up event.

### **Activity: Organize a "Classroom Community Impact Day" (20 minutes)**

#### **1. Introduce Activity**

- "Now that we've seen how the Star Squad made a difference, it's time to think about how we can help our own school or town. In your groups, come up with an idea that would make a positive impact. It could be something like organizing a clean-up, setting up recycling bins, or even teaching others about why these things are important. Once we've heard everyone's ideas, we'll choose one to work on together."



#### **2. Instructions**

Divide the class into small groups. Give each group a task: brainstorm ways to improve their school or local community (e.g., recycling drives, trash clean-ups, helping fellow students, or making posters about keeping the environment clean). The students can use the S.T.A.R. Decision Making Worksheet to build out their ideas and use it to assist them in presenting their ideas to the class.

- After brainstorming, have each group present their idea to the class.
- As a class, decide on one idea to implement for a "Classroom Community Impact Day."

Optional Activity: Trash Sorting Game

Objective:

Teach students about proper recycling and waste management through a hands-on activity that emphasizes the importance of sorting trash correctly. This game will help students understand how to sort waste into different categories and reflect on how their choices affect the environment.

Materials:



- Several types of waste (real or mock items), such as:
  - Paper (newspaper, notebook paper, etc.)
  - Plastic (bottles, containers)
  - Aluminum (cans, foil)
  - Glass (bottles, jars)
  - Organic waste (apple cores, banana peels)
  - General waste (items that cannot be recycled, such as chip bags or plastic wrappers)
- Four bins labeled: Paper, Plastics, Aluminum/Metal, and Non-recyclable Waste.
- An Organic Waste bin (if your area has composting options, otherwise include it with general waste).
- Timer (optional, for a competitive version of the game)

#### Game Setup:

1. Place the bins at the front of the classroom or outside in an open space.
2. Arrange the waste materials in a random pile on a table or the floor.
3. Explain the rules of the game to the class, emphasizing that the goal is to sort the waste items into the correct bins as quickly and accurately as possible.

#### Introduction:

"Today we're going to play a game that helps us learn how to sort waste correctly. Remember, throwing away trash in the wrong bin means that recyclable items might end up in landfills, and we don't want that! Our goal is to make sure all recyclables go in the right bin so they can be reused, and the rest goes into general waste. Sorting our trash correctly helps the environment and makes a big impact on keeping our community clean."

#### Explaining the Waste Categories:

"Here's how it works:

- Paper: Newspapers, notebooks, printer paper, and cardboard go in this bin.
- Plastics: This is for plastic bottles, containers, and anything made of plastic that can be recycled.
- Aluminum/Metal: Cans, aluminum foil, and other metal items belong here.
- Non-recyclable Waste: This is for items that cannot be recycled, like chip bags, candy wrappers, and other mixed materials.
- Organic Waste: If we have food scraps, like fruit peels or leftovers, these can be composted. But if your school doesn't compost, they can go into general waste."

#### Demonstrating:

"Let me show you an example:



- Here's a plastic bottle—this will go into the Plastics bin.
- Here's an apple core—that would go into the Organic Waste bin.
- And here's a chip bag—this goes in Non-recyclable Waste since it can't be recycled. Got it?"

#### Rules:

"The goal is to work together as a team to sort the waste correctly. You'll take turns coming up, picking one item, and deciding which bin it belongs in. If you're unsure, you can ask a classmate or me for help. It's better to ask than to make a mistake—just like in real life!"

#### Game Variations:

- Standard Mode: Students take turns picking up one item and placing it in the correct bin. You can discuss each decision as a class.
- Timed Mode (optional): Set a timer for 3-5 minutes and see how many items the class can sort correctly within that time frame.
- Team Challenge Mode: Divide the class into two teams. Give each team a pile of waste to sort. The first team to correctly sort all items wins.
  - If using real items is not possible, see handouts below

#### Step-by-Step Instructions for the Game:

##### 1. Start the game:

"Okay, let's get started! I'll call on students one by one. Come up to the pile, pick an item, and place it in the correct bin."

##### 2. First turn:

"Let's start with [Student's Name]. What do you have? Ah, you picked a soda can. Where does that go?"

##### 3. Engage the class:

"Great! The aluminum can goes in the Metal bin. Does everyone agree? Does anyone know what happens if we throw it into the general waste instead?"

(Give students a moment to answer. Discuss how aluminum can be recycled and used to make new products, while if it goes into the trash, it takes much longer to break down.)

##### 4. Continue turns:

"Next up is [Student's Name]. What item do you have? Oh, it's a piece of notebook paper. What bin does that go in?"





(Encourage the student to place it in the correct bin, and invite the class to chime in.)

5. Encourage discussion:

"For each item, we'll make sure everyone understands why it goes in a certain bin. If we're unsure, we'll talk through it together. Don't worry if you make a mistake—that's how we learn!"

6. Mid-Game Reflection

"Let's pause for a moment. How are we doing so far? Does anyone have any questions about which items go where? Why is sorting our trash so important?"

7. Wrap-up the Game:

Once all the items are sorted, say:

"Great job, everyone! We sorted everything into the right bins. How do you think this game relates to what we learned from the Star Squad in the chapter? How does sorting our trash and recycling properly affect our community?"

Closing Discussion (5 minutes):\*\*

"We learned today that sorting our trash properly is just one small way we can take care of our community. It keeps recyclables out of landfills, reduces pollution, and makes our environment cleaner for everyone. Small actions, like recycling, can have a big impact—just like the Star Squad discovered in today's chapter. What other small actions can we take to help our school and town?"

(Allow students to share ideas, reinforcing that each small step makes a big difference.)

### 3. Sharing



- After students complete the activity, invite a few students to share what small action they might take in their community going forward.

### 4. Wrapping it Up

- "You've all come up with great ideas to help our community. Remember, even small actions can have a big impact when we work together. Whether it's picking up trash, teaching others about recycling, or finding ways to help out, we can make a difference every day. Let's keep thinking about how our actions

affect the world around us and how we can be responsible members of our community."

- Encourage students to write down one small action they can take this week to help their community

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

1. Review and Reflection Overview:

- If it's possible, have the students work on planning their Community Impact Day.

## Review and Reflection Teacher Script



1. **Gather in a Circle for Reflection:**

- "Let's all come back together in a circle."
- "I think we can all see that there is a lot that we can do to impact our community in a positive way and that if we put our hearts and minds into it, we can make a big difference!"
- Encourage students to share one small action that they can commit to doing to help the community.

2. **Closing**

- "Great job thinking about how we can individually and collectively be more responsible in our community."

## Home Connection Letter

1. **Sending Information Home:**

- "Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that we learned that our actions can impact our community in both positive and negative ways and we discussed how we can make a positive impact on our community."
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.



## Parent Letter

### Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today in class, your child learned about how their actions can impact their community, both positively and negatively. We read a chapter from \*The Star Squad: Navigating Fifth Grade Adventures\*, where the characters organized a park clean-up day to help their town and teach others about the importance of taking care of the environment.

As a class, we discussed ways to make a positive difference and even brainstormed ideas for a "Classroom Community Impact Day," where students will put their ideas into action. We also talked about how even small actions, like picking up litter or recycling, can have a big impact on the world around us.

Encourage your child to share their ideas with you and ask them how they plan to make a positive impact on your community.

Thank you for supporting your child's growth as a responsible and thoughtful community member!

Best regards,



## ***S.T.A.R. Decision-Making Worksheet***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Scenario:

### **S.T.A.R. Strategy**

#### **1. Stop**

- What decision do you need to make?

Write down the decision you need to make.

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#### **2. Think**

- What are the options?

List the choices you have.

Option 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(You can add more options if needed.)

- What are the short-term benefits of each option?

Think about how each choice would make you feel or benefit you right now.

Option 1 Short-Term Benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2 Short-Term Benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

- What are the long-term consequences of each option?

Think about how each choice might affect you in the future.

Option 1 Long-Term Consequence: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2 Long-Term Consequence: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. Act**

- What will you do?

Based on your thinking, what action will you take?

I will choose: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **4. Reflect**

- How do you feel about your decision?

After making your decision, take a moment to reflect on how it makes you feel and how it might impact your future.

I feel: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Paper: Newspapers, notebooks, printer paper, and cardboard



Plastics: Plastic bottles, containers, and anything made of plastic that can be recycled.



Aluminum/Metal: Cans, aluminum foil, and other metal items





Non-recyclable Waste: Items that cannot be recycled, like chip bags, candy wrappers, and other mixed materials.

