

# TIME FOR CHANGE:

DREAM. ACT. CHANGE OUR WORLD.

Changemaking is a mindset and an approach to life that addresses today's pressing challenges and injustices through the application of four key abilities: conscious empathy, teamwork, changemaking leadership, and changemaking action.



## ABOUT THIS SERIES

Developed based on feedback from First Book educators, this series of tip sheets offers guidance about incorporating changemaking into various subjects and settings. Refer to the featured tips, booklists, and activities for cross-curricular connections that help students understand how the skills they're learning in the classroom can help them thrive as changemakers in their communities.



## ABOUT THIS TIP SHEET

This tip sheet offers practical guidance and strategies for incorporating the changemaking abilities and a changemaker mindset into art, music, and theater classes and programs.

This guide includes:

- best practices
- booklists
- “sparks” to ignite changemaking
- lessons, activities & other educational resources
- inspiring stories of young changemakers

Whether you're just starting to integrate changemaking into art education or have been doing so for years, this tip sheet offers simple tips and versatile resources to help you support the changemaking artists in your classrooms and programs.

### GRADE LEVEL

K-12

### SUBJECTS

Art, music & theater

### RATIONALE

The visual arts, music, and theater invite us to consider diverse perspectives, engage emotionally with complex issues, and develop empathy. Art allows us to imagine different worlds and realities, offering hope and motivation to those advocating for social justice, environmental sustainability, and inclusivity and equality in their communities.



**Any form of art is a form of power; it has impact, it can affect change – it can not only move us, it makes us move.**

Ossie Davis, American actor, director, writer, and activist

### National Core Arts Standards

The National Core Arts Standards outline the philosophy, goals, and structures that shape student learning and performance in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. Arts education cultivates creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness — essential skills for personal development, civic engagement, and changemaking action.

### Standards

## BEST PRACTICES: HOW TO INTEGRATE CHANGEMAKING INTO ART EDUCATION

Incorporating changemaking into arts education involves blending creative expression with social impact and community engagement. Below are best practices and strategies for emphasizing the changemaking power inherent in artistic creation.

### SERVICE-LEARNING ART PROJECTS

Design art projects that serve a community need or support a social cause, providing students with hands-on experience in using their art for positive impact.

- Create murals or public art installations that raise awareness about social issues like homelessness or mental health.
- Organize an art auction or exhibition to raise funds for a local charity.
- Develop multimedia campaigns or performance pieces that advocate for environmental sustainability or human rights.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS WORKSHOPS

Integrate workshops and lessons that teach students the basics of entrepreneurship, including project management, marketing, and financial literacy.

- Conduct workshops on how to start and manage a creative business or nonprofit.
- Teach students to develop business plans for art-based social enterprises.
- Invite guest speakers who are art entrepreneurs to share their experiences and insights.

### COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY ART INITIATIVES

Encourage students to collaborate with community members, local businesses, and organizations to create art that addresses local issues or enhances community well-being.

- Partner with a community center to create a mural that reflects the neighborhood's culture and values.
- Organize community art fairs or festivals that highlight social causes and local artists.

- Develop public performances or exhibitions that involve community input and participation.

### STUDENT-RUN ART ENTERPRISES

Facilitate the creation of student-run businesses or cooperatives where students produce, market, and sell their art. Students can use the profits to support social initiatives or reinvest in their enterprise.

- Establish a school-based gallery or shop where students sell their artwork.
- Create a cooperative where students collaborate on designing and producing art products, learning both creative and business skills.
- Develop an online platform where students can showcase and sell their art to a wider audience, promoting social entrepreneurship.

### ART AS ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Use art as a medium to advocate for social change, teaching students to create works that convey powerful messages and inspire action on social issues.

- Produce a series of short films or animations that highlight social justice issues and are shared through social media to raise awareness.
- Create interactive art installations or performances that engage the public in dialogue about important social topics.
- Design posters, digital art, or other visual media campaigns that promote causes such as climate action, equality, or community health.

## USE BOOKS TO ENCOURAGE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND CHANGEMAKING ACTION

Shop the [Creativity](#) and [Activism & Civic](#) sections of the Marketplace for inspiring stories that show how the arts can be a powerful vehicle for social change and self-expression. The following books, recommended by First Book's Title Selection team, were available on the Marketplace at the time of publication.

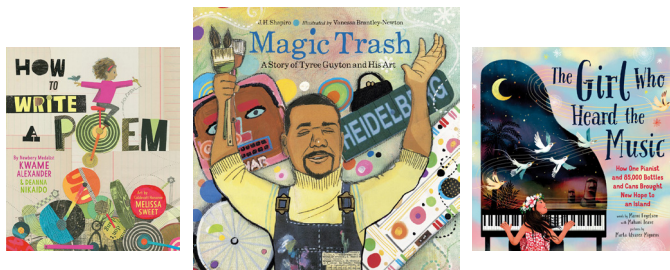
*These books serve as mentor texts and inspiration. How can you use these techniques to start a changemaking story in your world?*

*The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds  
Vashti believes she can't draw. Encouraged by her teacher, she begins with a simple dot and discovers her creative potential. Ages 4-6

*How to Write a Poem* by Kwame Alexander (Author), Deanna Nikaido (Author) & Melissa Sweet (Illustrator)  
Readers are invited to pay attention to their world — and to see that paying attention itself is poetry. Playful text and dynamic collage artwork encourage readers to listen, feel, and discover the words that dance in the world around them — poems just waiting to be written down. Ages: 4-9

*Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai (Author) & Kerascoët (Illustrator)  
Malala Yousafzai shares how she dreamed of a magic pencil that could change the world. Invite students to draw improvements over photos of their own communities and environments. Ages: 4-9

*Inheritance: A Visual Poem* by Elizabeth Acevedo (Author) & Andrea Pippins (Illustrator)  
Artist Andrea Pippins interprets Elizabeth Acevedo's poem celebrating self-love, creating a new work of art. How do words and images work together to be more powerful than words or images alone? Ages 13-18



*These books celebrate the people who have taken their art and ideas into the community to create a better world.*

*Magic Trash: A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art* by J. H. Shapiro & Vanessa Brantley-Newton  
This picture book biography of Tyree Guyton, an urban environmental artist, shows how he transformed his decaying, crime-ridden neighborhood into the Heidelberg Project, an interactive sculpture park. Ages 4-9

*Scrap Metal Swan: A River Clean-Up Story and El cisne de chatarra: la limpieza de un río* (Scrap Metal Swan, Spanish Edition) by Joanne Linden (Author) & Estrellita Caracol (Illustrator)  
Everyone in town is ready to clean up the river! Follow an artist and her helper as they hammer, chisel, weld, and zap some scrap into something beautiful. Ages 4-9

*Jimmy's Rhythm & Blues: The Extraordinary Life of James Baldwin* by Michelle Meadows (Author) & Jamiel Law (Illustrator)  
When he discovered the written word, James Baldwin discovered true power. From the publication of the groundbreaking collection of essays, *The Fire Next Time*, to his passionate demonstrations during the civil rights movement, Baldwin used his voice fearlessly. Ages 4-9

*The Girl Who Heard the Music: How One Pianist and 85,000 Bottles and Cans Brought New Hope to an Island* by Mahani Teave (Author), Marni Fogelson (Author) & Marta Álvarez Miguéns (Illustrator)  
Classical pianist Mahani Teave returned home to Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island, with a dream: to save its environment and culture. Her unique solution to pollution from tourism and ocean plastics was to create the island's first music and arts school — incorporating thousands of tires, bottles, and cans in its walls and adding rain barrels, solar panels, and a food garden. Ages 10-15

## SPARKS TO IGNITE CHANGEMAKING IN THE ARTS

The following 5-minute activities are designed to be engaging, hands-on, and thought-provoking. The goal of these activities is to inspire students to explore social studies concepts while fostering a sense of curiosity, creativity, and responsibility as changemakers in their communities and beyond.

### COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT COLLAGE

- Present a quick slide show or a series of images depicting various aspects of the local community, including both positive and challenging elements (e.g., public spaces, local wildlife, areas in need of beautification).
- Prompt students to reflect on and discuss which aspects they could address or highlight through their art.

### ART NEWS FLASH

- Share a brief news story or social media post about a local problem or event. Ask students to discuss how art can raise awareness or contribute to solutions.
- Connect current events to artistic expression and civic engagement.

### MINI MURAL PLANNING

- Divide students into small groups and give them five minutes to plan a mini mural on paper that addresses a local issue. Each group presents its concept.
- Foster teamwork and rapid ideation on how public art can impact communities.

### LYRIC BRAINSTORM

- Provide a local issue as a theme and ask students to brainstorm lyrics or key phrases that could be part of a song addressing this issue.
- Encourage creative thinking and songwriting focused on social impact.

### RHYTHM FOR CHANGE

- Introduce a local issue and ask students to create a quick rhythm or beat that represents the issue's urgency or mood. Discuss how music can convey emotions and messages about community problems.
- Explore the role of rhythm and music in expressing and mobilizing around social issues.

### TABLEAU OF ISSUES

- Briefly describe a local issue and have students create a frozen tableau (a still image made with their bodies) that represents the problem. Discuss how theater can portray and raise awareness of community issues.
- Use physicality and visual storytelling to engage with local problems.

### IMPROV CHALLENGE

- Give students a local issue (e.g., pollution, access to public spaces) and ask them to improvise a quick scene that highlights this problem. Reflect on how theater can be a powerful tool for social commentary.
- Encourage quick thinking and the use of theater to explore and address social issues.

## CHANGEMAKING IN THE ARTS: LESSONS & EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

### PK-12

#### [Inspiring Creative Changemakers | Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)

The Smithsonian Learning Lab offers resources to help your students make creative interventions and take action on issues they care about. By studying historical and artistic objects, students will reflect on how artists have reckoned with our nation's racial conflict and learn how they can become creative changemakers themselves.

#### [Creating Change with Nikkolas Smith | Art Activity and Lesson](#)

Artist and author-illustrator Nikkolas Smith ("The Artist") shares how students can develop their leadership through creative expression and inspires them to use their artistic talents to create positive change within their communities.

#### [All Works | ArtsPositive](#)

ArtsPositive is a platform that showcases cause-focused illustrators and publishes a magazine featuring artistic changemakers from around the world.

#### [XQ Challenges](#)

The XQ Institute offers arts-related activism challenges in dance, music, and the visual arts and encourages students to use art to express how they feel about issues that are important to them.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

#### [Defining Change-Makers | Buffalo AKG Art Museum](#)

This lesson teaches students about leaders throughout the U.S. Students use the Freedom Wall — a community mural that depicts local and national leaders in the civil and social rights movements — as inspiration for designing a digital poster.

#### [Artivism and Marine Conservation Lesson Plan | DevelopmentEducation.ie](#)

Artivism is activism through art — using art to raise awareness of social and environmental issues and inspire change. This five-step lesson allows students

to learn about activism through art in the context of preserving our oceans, rivers, and lakes.

#### [An Educator Guide and Artist Study for the Artist](#)

Tiffany Jewell's educator guide to accompany Nikkolas Smith's *The Artist* brings Smith's message to life in the classroom. All young people can change the world through art; this guide explains Smith's concept of activism and how to incorporate his book and mission into your class or program.

### MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

#### [Creative Changemakers Curriculum](#)

Creative Changemakers is an immersive and dynamic standards-aligned curriculum to help 6th-12th grade students develop a deep understanding of the connection between storytelling and creative action through the arts and multimedia.

#### [Public Art as Advocacy | The English Access Scholarship Program](#)

This lesson plan addresses three essential questions: What is public art? What is advocacy? How can public art be used as a form of advocacy?

#### [Art for Social Change Assignment | Jordan Swain](#)

This lesson from artist Jordan Swain asks students to make change through art by creating a poster to support a meaningful cause or issue, such as race, privilege, sexual identity, or the environment.

#### [Activism through Art](#)

This collection of lesson plans investigates how artists address political and social issues through their practice. Through careful examination of three works of art from Wisconsin's Chazen Museum of Art, students will consider what activism is and how it relates to them and their community.

#### [Art as Activism | The Phillips Collection](#)

In this lesson, students identify a current social issue in their community, city, or country; explore how art can be a form of activism; and create a piece of artwork that brings awareness to a social issue.

## INSPIRING YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

These young changemakers used their passion for art to help people and find solutions to real-world problems.



### [Making Hospitals More Youth Friendly](#)

Malcolm's gesture of kindness to a few pediatric patients in a local hospital scaled to become an international organization and movement. He and his team are revolutionizing experiences inside and outside of hospitals through art.



### [Sophia: Unleashing Potential through a Boundless Love of Dance](#)

Sophia founded Ngoma Kenya, which funds dance classes for children in Nairobi. The organization works to equalize access to the arts so that all young people can reach their full potential through self and cultural expression.



### [Channeling Kids' Passions and Talents](#)

At age 10, Chirag founded the nonprofit Creative Children for Charity ("3C") to encourage young people to use their time and talent for positive change.



### [Intergenerational Exchange as an Entry Point for Changemaking](#)

A partnership between a high school club and a local women's group created new spaces for women to showcase their art.

## ABOUT TIME FOR CHANGE

**Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World** is a joint initiative between Ashoka and First Book, made possible by Swiss Haute Horlogerie manufacturer Audemars Piguet.

In our world of accelerated change, everyone — regardless of geography, race, or socio-economic background — needs to respond to injustices and inefficiencies and take action to create change for the common good. The goal of the Time for Change initiative is to help educators incorporate a changemaking mindset into their schools and nurture the young changemakers in their classrooms and programs.

Explore the complete collection of Time for Change resources, including the [Inspiring Young Changemakers](#) video series, on the [First Book Marketplace](#).