

HOW TO FOSTER CHANGEMAKING CULTURE TOOLKIT

A **changemaker** is someone who **imagines a better reality**, **takes action**, and **collaborates with others** to bring that **new reality into being for the good of others**.

The purpose of this toolkit is to support you in understanding **what a changemaking culture is** and **what it could look like**. With the written and video examples, we try to provide examples for ways that you and your team can foster a changemaking culture within your school, district, or organization.

DEFINING CHANGEMAKING CULTURE

Changemaking culture in schools is all about **creating a space** where everyone—students, teachers, and the whole school community—feels encouraged to notice problems, dream up ideas, and take action to make things better for everyone. It's rooted in the belief that **anyone can be a changemaker**, no matter their age or background. In this kind of culture, students are supported to lead with empathy, work together, think creatively, and tackle real-world challenges.

Teachers help spark curiosity, encourage initiative, and create opportunities for **students to make a difference**—both inside and outside the classroom. In a fast-changing world, a changemaking culture helps young people **not just keep up, but step up**—to lead, adapt, and shape the future in positive ways.

TIPS

Establish **clear expectations**
& **goals** for changemaking.

Celebrate **all efforts** of changemaking,
no matter how small!

INTEGRATING CHANGEMAKING

Integrating changemaking into your school, district, or organization shouldn't be another responsibility to add to your plate, but something that you can **integrate naturally** into the work that you already do with young people. **Consider ways you can tie changemaking into existing work.**

CLASSROOM LEVEL

IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- **Create space for students to listen, reflect, and understand.** Create opportunities for students to listen to each other's stories, reflect on the world around them, and understand different perspectives. Empathy is where real changemaking begins.
- **Let students have a say.** Give them voice and choice—whether it's picking a project topic, helping shape class norms, or leading an activity. When students feel ownership, they show up differently.
- **Make learning feel real.** Connect lessons to real-world challenges and opportunities. Let students work on things that actually matter to them—things they see in their community or the world.
- **Celebrate all kinds of leadership.** Recognize the quiet problem-solvers, the kind teammates, and the creative thinkers—not just the loudest voices or top test scores. There are so many ways to lead.
- **Be a changemaker too.** Share your own experiences of taking action—big or small. When you model it, students start to believe that they can do it too.
- **Make room for trying (and failing).** Encourage students to take risks, try new things, and learn from what doesn't work. Mistakes are part of the process—they're also where the magic often happens.
- **Bring the outside in.** Invite local changemakers—whether it's a high schooler running a peer tutoring program or a community leader making waves. Real stories inspire real action.

EXAMPLES

- Instead of just having a line leader or tech helper, **one classroom had rotating roles** like “Community Connector” (welcomes new students or visitors), “Wellbeing Checker” (helps promote mental wellness), or “Changemaker of the Week” (leads a small improvement project).
- Students partnered up to **interview each other** about what they care about or a challenge they faced at school. Then, in small groups, they brainstormed how to make the school more inclusive or supportive.
- In a middle school science class, students learned about environmental issues and then **chose a local problem**—like plastic waste at lunch. They **designed simple, doable solutions** like a school-wide “no plastic day” and created posters to raise awareness. They were able to tackle a real issue that mattered to them on a hands-on way.
- At the end of the day for a month, a teacher asked their classroom: “What's one way you used your voice, helped someone, or solved a problem today?” Students were asked to **share their thoughts or journal it privately.**

CLASSROOM LEVEL

CASE STUDY

Bodkin Elementary School, Anne Arundel, MD

After defining the four traits of changemaking with anchor chart, students in Mrs. Major's 2nd grade class then continued to explore and engage with Changemaking throughout the year in English Language Arts (reading and opinion writing) and Science lessons.

