

# MLK Day Child Activity

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is observed on the **third Monday in January** and is also widely recognized as a **National Day of Service**, a day to practice helping others in our communities.

This childcare activity helps young children connect MLK Day to what they understand best: **kindness, fairness, helping, and including others**.

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## At-a-glance activity

**Activity name:** *Kindness & Fairness Community Quilt*

**Age group:** Toddlers–Preschool (adaptable for school-age)

**Time:** 15–25 minutes (plus optional extensions)

**Group size:** Small group or whole class

**Focus skills:** Social-emotional learning, empathy, classroom community, cooperation

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## Materials

Choose what you already have:

- Pre-cut paper squares/rectangles (one per child)
  - Crayons/markers or washable paint
  - Glue stick or tape
  - Large poster paper/butcher paper (for assembling the quilt)
  - Optional: magazines + kid-safe scissors, stickers, cotton balls, construction paper
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## Step 1: Introduce the theme (1–2 minutes)



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Tell children this is a day to practice **fairness, kindness, and helping** the kind of community Dr. King wanted people to build.

## **Step 2: Brainstorm kid-sized actions (2–3 minutes)**

Ask children to share examples of:

- Kind actions (helping, comforting, friendly words)
- Fair actions (taking turns, sharing space, including others)

**Teacher tip:** Write children's ideas on chart paper under "KIND" and "FAIR."

## **Step 3: Create quilt pieces (8–12 minutes)**

Each child decorates one square with **one kindness/fairness idea**, such as:

- A drawing of friends playing together
- A heart + "helping hands"
- Simple icons: sharing, taking turns, inviting someone to play

**For preschoolers:** Encourage drawings.

**For toddlers:** Use *stickers, stamps, or handprints*.

## **Step 4: Assemble the class "Community Quilt" (3–5 minutes)**

Gather children around the poster and let them help place their squares.

**Optional title ideas:**

- "Our Class Can Be Kind & Fair"
- "We Help Our Community"
- "Kindness Quilt"

## **Step 5: Choose a Day of Service action (2–5 minutes)**



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Because MLK Day is also associated with service, add a small classroom-friendly “helping” action.

**Pick one:**

- Make “thank you” art for a community helper (custodian, cafeteria staff, front desk, delivery driver)
  - Collect gently used books (family donation bin for a week)
  - Classroom “cleanup service”: children help tidy a shared area together
  - “Buddy help”: older children help younger children with a routine (wash hands, put on coat)
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## Things to mention

Use any of these during the activity:

- “**Kindness** is how we treat people with care.”
- “**Fairness** means we try to make things right and include others.”
- “Dr. King believed people should be treated **fairly** and with **respect**.”
- “Today we practice helping our classroom community, because our classroom is part of a bigger community.”

## If a child asks a big question “Why do we have this day?”

You can say:

- “A long time ago, some people were treated unfairly because of how they looked. Dr. King worked to change that by using peaceful words and actions.”

*(Keep it calm, honest, and brief; bring it back to fairness and inclusion.)*



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## Age adaptations

### Toddlers (2–3)

- Focus words: **kind / help / share**
- Quilt pieces: stickers, scribbles, handprints
- Service action: “Help clean up the block area together”

### Preschool (3–5)

- Focus words: **kind / fair / respect**
- Quilt pieces: drawings + teacher-written dictation (“I can be kind by...”)
- Service action: “Make a thank-you poster for staff”

### School-age (6–8)

- Add reflection: “How can we solve problems fairly?”
- Add a “peace corner” plan: kids create class agreements for respectful conflict resolution



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