

Your Words Matter

A Kids Are Fantastic SEL Lesson for 4th Grade

Grade Level: 4th Grade

Time: 35–45 minutes

SEL Focus: Communication Skills, Empathy, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand how words can **harm or heal**
 - Recognize the emotional impact of hurtful language
 - Practice **pausing and reflecting** before speaking
 - Learn how to give a **meaningful apology**
 - Commit to using words responsibly in friendships and group settings
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Materials

- *Your Words Matter* SEL video
 - Whiteboard or chart paper
 - Markers
 - Optional: Reflection sheet or notebook paper
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Part 1: Warm-Up Discussion (5–7 minutes)

Teacher Prompt:

“Have you ever said something you didn’t mean, and wished you could take it back?”

Allow a few students to share (no pressure).

Follow-up Questions:

- Why do words sometimes come out stronger than we intend?
- Can words affect someone even if we say, “I was just joking”?

Key Message:

Words don’t disappear once they’re spoken.



Part 2: Watch the Video (5 minutes)

Before pressing play, tell students:

“As you watch, pay attention to how words change the way the characters feel—and what they do afterward.”



Play: Your Words Matter



Part 3: Guided Group Discussion (10–12 minutes)

Use these questions to encourage deeper thinking:

1. What words caused tension in the story?
2. How did those words make the characters feel?
3. What changed when the characters **paused and reflected**?
4. Why is apologizing sometimes hard—even when we know we should?
5. What made the apology meaningful in the story?

✨ Teacher Emphasis:

A real apology includes:

- Admitting the mistake
 - Acknowledging feelings
 - Choosing to do better next time
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🧩 Part 4: Activity – *Pause, Rephrase, Respond* (10 minutes)

Write this on the board:

PAUSE → REPHRASE → RESPOND

Instructions:

Give students short scenarios (or let them brainstorm their own), such as:

- Someone makes a mistake during a game
- A classmate says something embarrassing
- A friend feels left out

In pairs or small groups:

- What's the **first thought** you might say out loud?
- How could you **rephrase** it to be respectful?
What's a **better response** that keeps the friendship strong?

Have groups share examples.

 Part 5: Reflection (5–7 minutes)

Choose one option:

Option A: Writing Prompt

“One way I can make my words matter in a positive way is...”

Option B: Sentence Starters

- “I didn’t realize my words could...”
- “Next time I feel frustrated, I will try to...”
- “A kind apology sounds like...”

Students can write or share quietly.

 Closing Circle & Affirmation (3 minutes)

End with this short affirmation:

“My words have power.”

“I choose words that help, not hurt.”

“I can pause and make better choices.”

 Why This Lesson Works for 4th Grade

- ✓ Encourages accountability, not blame
- ✓ Matches real peer dynamics
- ✓ Supports conflict resolution skills
- ✓ Aligns with CASEL competencies
- ✓ Reinforces Kids Are Fantastic values