



Explore the Seven Principles

Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa is dedicated to one of seven principles. In Swahili, these are known as the *nguzo saba*. Each day of Kwanzaa, introduce one principle to your students. Invite older children to think of examples of that principle at work in their everyday lives (some examples are given below). With very young children, focus on a few principles that are easy for them to understand (creativity, unity), and ask kids to draw pictures illustrating each principle.



English

Unity
Self-determination
Collective work and responsibility
Cooperative economics
Purpose
Creativity
Faith

Swahili

Umoja
Kujichagulia
Ujima
Ujamaa
Nia
Kuumba
Imani

What the Principles Mean:

Day 1/December 26

Unity: We join together as a family, as a community, and as a nation.

Example: You are kind to your brothers and sisters in order to help keep your family strong and happy.

Day 2/December 27

Self-determination: We speak up for ourselves and plan our own futures.

Example: You decide to become a teacher because you know you can do it. You don't let others talk you out of it.

Day 3/December 28

Collective work and responsibility: We work together to solve problems.

Example: After a neighbor's home burns down, your community chips in to provide lodging, clothes, and food for the family.

Day 4/December 29

Cooperative economics: We support African-American stores and businesses.

Example: You decide to buy your groceries at a corner store run by a neighbor, rather than go to a large supermarket chain.

Day 5/December 30

Purpose: We choose a goal and work toward it little by little.

Example: You promise to be more helpful at home—then, each day, you choose one job to do (setting the table, cleaning your room, listening the first time you are asked to do something).



Day 6/December 31

Creativity: We use all of our own talents and appreciate the talents of others.

Example: You sing a song to your baby brother, or read the poems of great African-American poets.

Day 7/January 1

Faith: We believe in our parents and community leaders. We believe that African-Americans will win the struggle for equality.

Example: You don't feel bad about yourself, even if someone tries to treat you differently because of your skin color.

Gifts for Kwanzaa



Gift-giving is a part of many winter holidays, and Kwanzaa is no exception. Kwanzaa gifts are usually handmade and have special meaning for both the giver and receiver. Here are some ideas for

meaningful gifts your students can prepare, whether they actually celebrate Kwanzaa at home or are simply learning about the holiday as part of a theme unit.

1. Mini-posters with lists of seven personal goals for the coming year. If students are giving the lists to loved ones, the goals may be home-centered (i.e., I will respect my parents). If the students are not bringing the lists home, the goals may be school-centered (i.e., I will read every day).
2. A window box or personally-decorated planter with seedlings.
3. An original poem for a parent, friend, classmate, or neighbor. Help children come up with a list of words they can use, such as the Swahili names of Kwanzaa symbols and their English translations.
4. A note promising to do one chore a day for a week (or more!) at home or at school.
5. A Unity Cup.
6. A mkeka mat for everyone in their family.
7. A family memory scrap book.

Heroes and Role Models

Children can learn about the seven principles by hearing about people who exemplified them. Here is a highly arbitrary list of historic figures. Make this a year-long project and invite children to continue adding contemporary names.

UNITY

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leader of peaceful protests for equal rights.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Rosa Parks, seamstress who decided she should sit where she wanted on public buses and set in motion a civil rights revolution.

COLLECTIVE WORK & RESPONSIBILITY

Thurgood Marshall, first black U.S. Supreme Court justice.

COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS

George Washington Carver, inventor

PURPOSE

A. Philip Randolph, founder of the first black trade union. It won better working conditions for people who worked on railroads.

CREATIVITY

Marian Anderson, singer
Duke Ellington, composer
Jacob Lawrence, painter

FAITH

Each of the people above overcame great obstacles. As you help your students learn more about them, discuss the difficulties they faced and how they overcame them.