A Guide for Teachers
Lesson ideas for elementary and middle school students on the impact of premature birth

Mission awareness activity:
What does prematurity look like?
Time: 10 to 15 minutes
Objective: To visually demonstrate premature birth and why being born too soon is a problem

Materials:
Mission materials: Please choose one, some or all of the following:
• Ring
• Paper clip (regular, not jumbo)
• Preemie-size diaper and newborn-size diaper
Activity materials (optional):
• Crayons, markers or color pencils
• World Prematurity Day Coloring Activity Sheet

Instructions:
Material instructions:
• Paper clips: Pass around paper clips and ask students to imagine a baby so small that its foot is the size of the paper clip.
• Ring: Pass around or show students a ring and ask them to imagine a baby so small that the ring fits around a whole arm or leg.
• Diapers: Show students both diapers, explaining that the newborn diaper fits on a baby who was born on time, while the preemie diaper is for a baby born too soon, and sometimes this diaper is too big.
Questions/explore:
• Ask students to find out from their parents how much they weighed when they were born. Ask if anyone in the room was born prematurely (too soon) or knows someone who was — and to tell their story, if they are comfortable talking about it. Ask students born prematurely to bring in photos.

Activity (optional):
• Distribute the World Prematurity Day Coloring Activity Sheet and crayons. Ask students to color each state based on their letter grade:
  A – Purple; B – Blue; C – Yellow; D – Orange; F – Red
• Ask students to find their state (or point out yourself). Which color is it? Let them know that since 2002, the March of Dimes gives every state a Report Card each year. The higher the letter grade each state has, the lower percent of babies being born early in those states. Since 2002, # of states have turned purple. By 2020, the March of Dimes hopes to color the entire map purple.

Service learning and fundraising activity:
Coin collecting for premature babies
Time: 1 week to 1 month
Purpose: To engage students in an activity that helps protect babies from being born too soon
Materials: Containers for collecting coins (coffee can, milkbox, etc.)
Instructions:
• Ask students to collect coins that will help give babies the best chance for a healthy start.
• Donate coins to your local March of Dimes office. Visit marchofdimes.org to find your local office.

Awareness activity:
Dress in Purple
Purpose: To engage students in an awareness activity to show their support for the March of Dimes and motivate their peers to do the same.
Instructions:
• Ask students to wear purple, the March of Dimes color, on World Prematurity Day (November 17) or another day during Prematurity Awareness Month.
• Encourage them to ask their friends to do the same
• On the day of the event, share information about the March of Dimes or ask students to share what they have learned.
Preterm birth is less than 37 completed weeks of gestation.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2012 preliminary natality data.

Report card grades calculated by March of Dimes Perinatal Data Center, September 2013. See Technical Notes for more information.

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