



## SAMPLER

### IMPROVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**When students are well behaved  
Time for teaching and learning is saved!**

**Teachers cannot solve students' problems alone.  
It takes good partnerships of school and home.**

Students' behavior is directly linked to *each* student's and *all* students' achievement and success in school. When classrooms are well managed, teaching and learning proceed apace, students learn more, and everyone can enjoy the school experience. If students misbehave in class or create problems at school, progress is disrupted and the learning climate suffers. Student behavior is, partly, a function of teachers' and administrators' school and classroom management skills. In addition, the learning climate thrives when teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together to develop school rules, encourage good behavior, and solve behavior problems quickly and effectively.

Students, teachers, parents, and others in the community may work as partners to maintain students' good behavior and improve problems in many in many different ways—not only (and not mainly) to punish misbehavior. When students help set the rules for behavior and know what is expected of them as good school citizens, most students will meet these standards.

To reach their full potential, students need to know that their teachers and parents care about what they are learning *and* how they behave. High performing schools have a culture of cooperation, good behavior, and laser-like, insistent attention to learning. In such schools, teachers can teach and students will learn.

The activities in this *Sampler* were conducted and reported as promising partnership practices by schools working with NNPS across the years.

They activate the six types of involvement and illustrate different roles that parents and community members may play as partners with educators in building character and improving student behavior in school. They show how student behavior is improved by two-way communication by teachers and parents; parent and community volunteers for safety on the way to school, in the cafeteria, library, computer lab, hallways, and other locations; projects that engage students in community service; attention by educators and parents to the development of positive character traits; and recognition of students' exemplary behavior.

**Improve Classroom Teaching, Management, and Students' Behavior.** The sample activities were conducted by schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to engage teachers, students, and parents across grade levels in ways that improved student behavior. Individual teachers and grade-level teams may adapt the activities to strengthen partnerships with their own students' families and communities on students' character development and school behavior. For example, individual teachers in many schools recognize each student's good work and good behavior with *Good News Postcards*. And, any teacher may highlight students' positive behaviors and acts of kindness in their classroom as in *Cary Kindness Chain*.

The ten examples in this *Sampler* are a few of many excellent activities in NNPS annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. See more at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Success Stories.

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## Review of Research: Family and Community Involvement to Improve Student Behavior

Joyce L. Epstein and Steven B. Sheldon

Children's behavior in school affects their own and their classmates' attitudes about school and learning. A well-behaved, well-managed classroom is a friendly and productive place. A classroom rife with discipline problems is an unhappy place for everyone. Most school behavior problems are solved easily by students, teachers, and peers. Some problems can be prevented and others resolved when educators, parents, and others in the community work together with students on school rules and expectations for good behavior.

**Parents influence student behavior.** Research conducted over several decades reported that *home conditions* and *family dynamics* (e.g., parenting, decision-making style, rules and discipline strategies, family caring relationships vs. conflict) affected students' behavior in school and good citizenship or delinquent behavior in the community. Importantly, other studies confirm that *parental involvement* helps prevent or reduce students' behavior problems in school and increases student achievement, over time, regardless of family background (Hill, et al., 2004). One study, showed that when parents' volunteered at school and supervised students' homework, students' behavior improved, including students in families with low incomes (Domina, 2005).

**Communities influence student behavior.** Community contexts also affect results for students. For more than a decade, researchers have reported that the social and cultural organization of neighborhoods helps to shape the socialization processes of families and schools. For example, adolescents who were exposed to persistent violence in their communities were more likely to have poor school attendance, low grades, and problem behavior in school. There are, however, counterbalancing forces at home and at school that override negative neighborhood influences.

**School interventions affect student behavior.** Many schools presently conduct behavioral interventions, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This and similar programs organize educators' attention to students to ensure a safe school and good behavior. In most places, parents and community partners have been ignored or given modest roles in these programs. The programs tend to focus on standardized rules, incentives, and consequences across teachers for students' misbehavior and good behavior in school.

**Schools' outreach to involve parents and the community is important.** Over the years, many studies have shown that what schools *do* to communicate with and engage families and community partners makes a difference in helping students sustain good behavior, solve behavioral problems, decrease disciplinary actions, and improve teaching and learning in school. In effective partnership programs, more and different families and community groups become involved in ways that influence children's behavior, attitudes, and achievement in school.

For example, well-designed and well-implemented workshops may increase parents' understanding of child and adolescent development and age-specific issues such as peer pressure and preventing bullying so that they can guide their children to take the right path for good behavior in school. Well-organized programs for volunteers, mentors, and safety patrols increase the number of adults at school who are available to supervise student behavior. Teachers may design homework activities for parents and students to discuss important character traits at home. Students, then, realize that their parents' have high expectations for kindness, honesty, responsibility, and other qualities that contribute to good citizenship, learning, and success in school. Studies show that, over one year, elementary and secondary schools that *increased* outreach to involve families and community partners in activities linked to student behavior *decreased* the percentages of students sent to the principal, given detention, and in-school suspension.

In sum, many studies confirm that creating goal-linked practices for school, family, and community partnerships increases parents' attention to and conversations with students to improve student behavior, school discipline, and the learning climate. These findings are built into tools for partnership program development in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. For example, each school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) focuses one page of its One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships on a behavioral goal, such as family and community involvement activities that build character or improve students' behavior, as illustrated by the activities reported in this *Sampler*.

For details on these and other studies and complete references, see:

- Domina, T. (2005). Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school. *Sociology of Education*, 78, 233-249.
- Hill, N. E., et al. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations. Demographic variations across childhood. *Child Development* 75, 1491-1509.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2009). Improving student outcomes with school, family, and community partnerships: A research review. Pp. 40-56 in Epstein, J. L. et al. *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.



## Cary Kindness Chain

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*John B. Cary Elementary School  
Hampton, Virginia*

Last March, the hallways of Cary Elementary School were decorated with a paper chain, every loop of which described an act of kindness performed by a student or family member.

Cary Elementary is a Title I school that strives to excel in all areas. It has been fully accredited for the past few years and is proud of its academic success. The administration also works diligently with its students to promote proper conduct and good behavior in school, at home and in the community.

To celebrate Random Acts of Kindness Week, every student received a Kindness Chart to take home. Students were asked to list 10 acts of kindness that they or their family members performed at school, home, neighborhood, or work. Parents helped their children organize and complete their charts.

When students returned the charts, ATP members worked with parent volunteers and students to cut apart the charts so that each "kindness" was on its own paper strip. These strips were linked to make the paper chain hung in the hallways.

The Cary Kindness Chain project supports the school's behavioral improvement goal of increasing good behavior and reducing student suspensions. More acts of kindness should help students reach this goal. Emphasizing and providing examples of kindness help teachers and administrators promote alternatives to violence. This, in turn, helps to improve the school's climate.

The school was interested in a character education project that families also could work on at home, because many families are unable to attend events at the school due to work schedules and other commitments. Cary wanted to provide an opportunity that would begin with learning at home and culminate with a public display of the results. In reviewing possible

projects, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) came across information on promoting kindness, loved the idea and created the materials for their school.

The colorful chain and the clear display of many acts of kindness delighted students, parents, community members and other school visitors. "Why did you take the chain down?" a student asked when the project was completed. "We love it!"

A parent said that the activity was a great reminder of small ways to help others. Each participating student and family received an Acts of Kindness Award certificate, a candy treat, and public recognition at Family Fun Night!

Another advantage of this project is that it costs very little. The only materials required are supplies that schools already have on hand, such as copy paper, construction paper and certificate paper.

Cary Elementary plans to continue this activity, and would like to involve more families. The ATP plans to create a competition among the grades, and offer more recognition in the school and community for families who exceed the requested 10 acts of kindness.



# Character Education at Work

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*Ballentine Elementary School*  
*Irmo, South Carolina*

Every month brings a new character trait and corresponding community service project to Ballentine Elementary.

- In October, the theme was “cooperation,” and the school collected more than 1,780 pounds of food for the Harvest Hope Food Bank, which helps local families with food and shelter.
- In November, the students concentrated on “effort,” and the third-grade sponsored Operation Foot Locker, a toiletry drive to support American soldiers.
- In February, the second-graders sponsored “Project Pet,” collecting pet food and supplies for a local animal shelter. The character word for that month was “initiative.”

The service projects and the emphasis on various character traits are all part of Ballentine’s Character Education at Work program, which attempts to foster an awareness of the local community’s needs and a genuine spirit of giving in each student. To drive home the importance of these service projects, Ballentine prominently displays them in Beacon’s Point, the center entrance of the school and home to its mascot, a bear named BES.

“I think it is important to model caring—especially to children,” said one parent, who is also a teacher. “I think the projects teach the children compassion and make them realize how fortunate they are!” said another teacher.

Ballentine’s school district originally adopted a list of Character Words/Life Skills, with one character trait highlighted each month—Cooperation, Initiative, Patience, Friendship, and Self-Esteem, among them—to show the impor-

tance of working hard and caring for others. Ballentine initiated the Character Education at Work program to bring these concepts to life through the month-long community service activities. A different grade sponsors each initiative to increase students’ feelings of responsibility for the program. The sponsoring grade publicizes the month’s activity in Ballentine’s weekly school and classroom newsletters.

The project for January, Ballentine’s Friendship month, was extra-special. Students donated books and stuffed bears to a local children’s hospital. This Books & Bears program was inspired by a Ballentine student who had been a patient in the hospital and had received a book and a bear from a friend.

The guidance committee of Ballentine’s Action Team for Partnership (ATP) chooses the themes and monthly service activities for the year. The team meets throughout the year to monitor the program and make changes to fit the needs of the school and community.

Ballentine is driving home to its students the importance of caring about others. The Character Education at Work program gives students, teachers, parents, and other members of the community common interests and goals.





## Community Partner/Side by Side

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*Walton Middle School  
Compton, California*

Walton Middle School wanted to increase the involvement of its parents and nearby community. Leaders selected a faith-based program called “Side by Side” to rally support for its students.

The resulting program, Community Partner, brought adults interested in working with students into the school as tutors, mentors and role models. The varied activities of the program provided the personal touch and positive contact to help students build a new level of trust with adults and increase their own confidence, self-esteem and achievement.

The mentors greeted students at school in the morning. They participated in field trips and at monthly Family Nights. Additionally, eight to ten tutors targeted students needing extra help and provided individual academic support and tutoring during the school day, in non-core time, or at home visits.

Each month, the Community Partner program would conduct a Family Night to address topics such as career awareness, college planning and preparation, leadership, and cooking and table etiquette. For example, a policeman, firefighter, doctor, and others were invited to Career Night to describe what their jobs required and the educational paths to these occupations. These evenings, held the third Wednesday of each month, were open to the entire student body and their families, but the targeted students received personal invitations to attend the monthly Family Nights.

There were two field trips during this school year: one to a symphony performance for a tribute to Motown and another to the aquarium. The Community Partner paid for the price of admission and the school district paid for transportation. Students said they look forward to these events because they have so much fun and learn “a lot of cool stuff.”

Walton has been in program improvement status for the past several years, and parent and community involvement has been low, according to a school staff member. The school’s community specialist learned that the administrator of Side by Side was interested in working with the school and its students. A meeting with the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the Community Program Administrator cemented this new relationship. At subsequent meetings the group worked out the details of the Community Partner program, including dates and activities.

School staff helped plan and implement the activities and also served as chaperones on field trips. Many other community partners helped organize and publicize events, provided guest speakers and food.

“This is a prime example of what can be accomplished when the school and community work together,” said Walton’s principal.

The school thanked Side by Side by recognizing it at the district’s annual volunteer dinner. Additionally, the program won recognition when the host of a district Cable TV Show, entitled “Parent To Parent,” invited two representatives from Side by Side to talk about the outreach program.



## ELLSWORTH EAGLES SHARE

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### ELLSWORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS

**T**he Ellsworth Eagles had a soaring year as community contributors. Through four projects, one of them initiated by the students, the youngsters shared their time, talent, money, and energy by helping people close to home and others half a world away. They also met one of the goals of the Naperville School District and the school principal—growing as community contributors.

The Eagles Share project, a volunteer effort encouraging families to give back to their local and global communities, took these four different avenues:

- » *Support Our Troops. For Veterans' Day in November, students collected snacks and toiletries to send to soldiers overseas.*
- » *Winter Scarf Project. During the winter class parties, students made fleece scarves that were packaged in decorated bags and delivered to three local agencies for distribution to families in need. The children also donated gloves and hats to go with the scarves.*
- » *Helping Haiti. Students initiated this project after hearing about the devastating earthquake. First, the school hosted a donation drive to collect items for health kits to be sent to Haiti. In addition, a teacher came up with "Hands Helping Haiti," a project for which students made colorful hand cut-outs that they sold for 50-cent donations at the January Open House for parents and during lunchtime. They raised \$800 that was donated to the American Red Cross for Haiti.*
- » *Crayon recycling. Students collected old crayons and donated them to the School and Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education (S.C.A.R.C.E) program, which melted*

*the crayons to make large crayons for children with special needs.*

Ellsworth students were particularly enthusiastic about the Hands Helping Haiti project. They wrote their names on the many-colored hands and hung them throughout the halls.

Ellsworth is a Title I school with students from diverse economic backgrounds. "We wanted students to discover there are numerous ways to be a community contributor," said the president of the Home and School Association.

The School / Family / Community / Partnership (SFCP) committee oversaw the service projects and promoted them. For the Winter Scarf Project, for instance, adults bought and cut the fleece fabric and then the students prepared and knotted the fringe. About 10 parents and 15 teachers and school staff members helped the nearly 300 Ellsworth students with the projects.

"Making the scarves to help people stay warm makes me feel happy," said one student.

"It is the kindness of donors like you that helps us fulfill our mission," said a representative of the Ronald McDonald House, which received scarves, hats, and gloves to distribute.

The projects, and the responses to them, were published in the school newsletter, which is translated into Spanish, and in fliers and e-mails. Next year, Ellsworth is forming an all-school student council, which should give students a louder voice in planning future "share" projects.



# FIRST ANNUAL CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

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## PASCO HIGH SCHOOL PASCO, WASHINGTON

**M**any Pasco High students face daily challenges inside and outside of school. Some work hard to overcome the obstacles of gangs and poverty that take a toll on students' school behavior and academic success, but their efforts often go unnoticed. The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) decided to rectify this problem by honoring students who work hard, help others, and demonstrate good character and citizenship.

This year, Citizenship Awards honored 85 students at a red carpet event for the students and their families. Parents shed tears of happiness as they watched their children recognized – perhaps for the first time – for persistence amid struggles, improvement, public service, and courage, among other criteria.

The school sent formal invitations to the selected students and their families. ATP members personally called parents to invite them to the award celebration.

To begin the ceremony, teachers and administrators greeted the families along a red carpet. Balloons, flowers, and colorful tablecloths gave the cafeteria a festive look. Leadership students served punch and cake. The main focus was on the awards for students. Each ATP member had the names of five students. Families stood as their children's names were called and the reasons for their awards were read. The students lined up on the red carpet where fifty received medals and 35 received certificates of honorable mention. The honorees had their photos taken with their families against an attractive backdrop as a memento of the awards ceremony.

In addition to honoring students, the awards also made parents feel good about their contributions as parents, made them feel welcome in the school, and fostered a stronger relationship among teachers, parents, and students. "Parents began coming up and hugging students and teachers," said one of the co-chairpersons. "This

was so moving and powerful that there were not many dry eyes."

Teachers nominated, with a short description, as many students as they believed met the criteria: Good attendance, improvement in academic or non-academic behaviors, resiliency, selfless behavior, volunteer service, or if the student had committed a courageous act. The goal was to focus on students who may not have been previously recognized, rather than student athletes, school leaders, or those with high grade point averages, who are honored in other ways at school.

For days after the event, students approached the nominating teachers to thank them and to say how proud they felt that their accomplishments were noticed. One student said that he planned to make a frame in woodshop so he could hang his certificate at home. This event succeeded in building pride in students who may not have felt appreciated at school.

At ATP meetings, plans are in place for improving the process next year. The team is considering adding 20 more awardees, but aim to keep the intimacy of the evening even if the number is increased.



## GOOD NEWS POSTCARDS

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### **ROBERT FROST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PASCO, WASHINGTON**

**B**ills, pizza coupons, credit card offers, more bills, and . . . recognition of a job well done. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Robert Frost Elementary managed to brighten up families' mailboxes this year, and they did it with nothing more than a big stack of blue and yellow postcards and a staff of teachers with good news to share.

A core ATP goal—fostering positive student recognition—inspired the Good News Postcards this year. After the principal stressed the importance of establishing efficient and positive teacher-to-parent communication, the team's Positive Student Recognition committee decided that mailed postcards would provide a tangible affirmation of every student's good qualities.

And indeed, at year's end, every student had received at least one Good News Postcard. The ATP organized the practice to recognize the accomplishments of all students. At the outset, all teachers received a letter from the ATP detailing the practice. The letter informed them that they would receive a sheet of mailing labels for their class and, once a week, a postcard on which to write a positive comment about one of their students.

After signing and affixing the mailing label, teachers returned the postcards to the ATP for mailing. This ensured that organizers could help teachers keep track of which students had received a postcard and which ones had not.

The cards were designed with school spirit, with a bright yellow cougar paw print on a blue background, the Robert Frost mascot and colors. Next to the paw print, the text announces: "Good News!" And: "¡Buenas Noticias!" And: "Хорошие Новости!" Corresponding to the three languages spoken by families at Robert Frost—English, Spanish, and Russian, respectively—the multilingual text sends its own message: that Robert Frost celebrates the diversity of its population.

Teachers highlighted students' academ-

ic achievements, good behavior, effort, and all-around improvements in the classroom. The ATP encouraged teachers to be short and sweet, and specific: "Susie did a great job today in helping a friend with reading," or, "Juan was a good friend today and invited someone to be part of his group."

What makes the Good News Postcards unique is that the practice was not publicized. Rather, the element of surprise made receiving the card all the more special. The ATP was delighted to learn that word of the Good News Postcards spread quickly.

ATP co-chairpersons report that the practice has received nothing but good feedback. One parent said, "My son put his postcard in a picture frame and takes it out to show it off when company comes over." By bringing to light the good qualities of their students, teachers are also encouraging students to proudly let that same light shine.





## PARENT FORUM: WHOSE PARENTS LET THEM DO THAT?

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**FRANCIS HOWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI**

**M**iddle school can be a trying time for students and their parents. Traditional parenting rules and practices don't always apply to the early adolescents who become "new teens" in their families. There is no owner's manual for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students.

For the parents at Francis Howell Middle School and its feeder elementary schools, however, there is a helpful parent forum: Are Everyone Else's Parents REALLY Letting Them Do That? This discussion group gives families insights into the sometimes-scary world of early adolescents. It offers parents comfort that they are not the only ones dealing with erratic moods, apathy, and disrespect, as well as with teens' energy, creativity, and dreams for the future. The forum also affords parents opportunities to meet one another and to get acquainted with teachers, administrators, and staff.

Sponsored by the school's Parent Involvement Team (here called the PIT Crew), this year's forum built on the success of a similar event last year. Parents who attended the first forum asked for another. The school principal led the discussions, but parents suggested the topics, including: bullying, disorganization, friendships, peer pressure, and technology. The principal addressed parents' questions and concerns and enabled everyone to share opinions and tips for dealing with the troubling, mysterious, and exciting issues of raising successful middle school students.

This year about 25 parents and staff from six middle and elementary schools attended. Participants included families of rising fifth-graders who wanted to help their children make a smooth transition to middle school. PIT Crew members acted as hosts for the evening, providing coffee and cookies and mingling with parents to address their questions.

"Our hope is that this forum will help in

connecting our parents to our school," said one of the organizers. "Connected parents help support school improvement goals." In fact, some parents who attended the first forum last year got more involved in the school as volunteers and as new members of the PIT Crew.

After the event, the "word on the street" was so positive that the principal received a request to take the show on the road. The district's after-school program for elementary school students asked her to lead another forum for fifth-grade parents.

In addition to wide-ranging discussions of how to be effective parents of middle-schoolers, the forum also gave parents a sense of how Francis Howell Middle School addresses many of the same developmental topics. "The meeting was well organized and the issues pertaining to our specific middle school (student safety, school security officer, lunch room behavior, bullying, cell phone use, school bus behavior, etc.) were all answered in a factual manner. [It] gave me a strong sense of the daily middle school environment," said one fifth-grade parent.

"I went home with more confidence in what I was doing as a parent," added the mother of seventh-grade twins.

Some of that confidence probably resulted from parents' realization that they could talk with other parents to find out if they were the only ones letting their children "do THAT."



## RED TIE CLUB

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### **TIMROD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**B**uilding character and leadership skills in students who are currently disruptive in school is an important goal, but is not easy to attain. Timrod Elementary established the Red Tie Club to help fifth and sixth grade boys shape up and be the school leaders they were meant to be.

The school noticed that some boys, in particular, were being sent often to the office for disciplinary problems. The number of office referrals worried the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). The teachers, parents, and administrators knew that good behavior in class is essential for a productive and effective learning environment for everyone. One team member suggested that by targeting the fifth and sixth grades—the leaders of the school—the program's effects would trickle down into the other grades by example.

The school chose red ties because they're a symbol of leadership and strong decision-making skills. Think of business or political leaders in important meetings or interviews—red ties are common attire. Students in the Red Tie Club receive these ties and must attend leadership-school meetings every other Thursday from 2:30-3:30 p.m. The meetings cover such topics as manners, honesty, consideration, responsibility, determination, and other qualities of upstanding leaders.

Students discuss leadership skills and are guided to look people in the eye and shake hands firmly. The Red Tie Club members keep a Log Book to record their good behaviors in school and at home. At each meeting, students review their Log Books and share their experiences with other Club members. At each meeting, those with examples of Red Tie Club behaviors have their names put into a raffle basket. At a culminating Club Family Dinner, ten names are drawn for a Wal-Mart gift card.

Along with faculty lessons and Log Books, the Club hosts conversations with members of the community. The Chief of Police, Mayor, and others have been guests at Red Tie Club meetings. They offered advice and told of their experiences that would help the young men become good leaders.

Students also work to improve their community. They participated in the school beautification day, planted flowers, performed general maintenance and saw clearly how much work goes into making the school an attractive place.

The ATP and faculty know that their fifth and sixth grade boys will soon go to middle school, where many challenges of growing up will be waiting. The Red Tie Club aims to help the students become strong and just leaders in Timrod and in future years. The boys are aware of this lofty goal. A 6th grader said, "[A local attorney] taught us that being honest can be hard at times, but it's always the right thing to do. He showed us that the decisions we make now...will help us figure out what kind of people we want to be."

Similarly, a 5th grade Club member shared, "[The youth minister] told us that character is what you do when no one is looking. [It is a good thing] to open a door for someone just because, or let someone in your family watch what they want on TV."

Teachers, parents, and community members have reported measurable differences in the 19 members of the Red Tie Club and in the school, generally. As Dr. Brooks, the district superintendent, noted, "This program is truly wonderful. Seeing this kind of transformation in these students is just simply amazing."



# Sherman School's Anti-Bullying Program

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*Sherman Elementary School  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin*

All 427 students at Sherman Elementary joined a campaign to rid their playground of its worst behavior problems. Sherman School's Anti-Bullying Program brought important lessons into all classrooms and had children in grades K to 5 creating posters that urged their classmates to think twice before they picked on their peers.

Administrators at Sherman developed the program in response to student opinions. The school's book club members read *Loser* by Jerry Spinelli, which focuses on the experience of an outcast adolescent. In discussing the book's major themes, the boys in the book club agreed that there was some bullying going on at Sherman.

The school counselor and partnership coordinator decided it would be a good idea to address bullying and to prevent it. The school bought an anti-bullying curriculum, *Know What? Bullying Hurts*, for all grades. Students learned skills to help them identify and confront bullies. The lessons taught students to empathize with their peers and understand the reasons why bullying happens in the first place.

But the education did not stop with the students. The district's parent facilitator presented a parent workshop on the same topic. The school served dinner and provided child care. About 45 parents attended, and agreed that the workshop was helpful. "We think this information will be beneficial," a parent said.

When the classroom lessons were complete, the school sponsored a poster contest so students could illustrate and share what they had learned.

At the end of the year, administrators celebrated the school's progress by hosting an Anti-Bullying Graduation Celebration. A good crowd of students and parents turned out for the event to play a game of bingo and watch jugglers who had incorporated an anti-bullying theme into their performance. All students received a bracelet with the STAR logo, which

encouraged them to stop, think, act, and review their behaviors.

Both students and teachers agreed that the program had positive results. Student discipline referrals decreased; students have been "caught" doing kind, rather than unkind, acts. "We see changes on the playground and in the school building," said the partnership coordinator. "Students know the appropriate language to use when dealing with bullying."

Perhaps the most significant impact, however, was making children more aware of their own behavior. "Wow, I've been a bully and I didn't know it!" one student said.

The school used grant money to pay for most of the program's \$1,340 cost. A small fundraiser helped cover the rest.

School officials plan to continue the anti-bullying program. They would like to raise money for the *Peaceful Playground* program, which would expand on this year's program.



## Support Peace: Violence Prevention Week

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*Forest Home Avenue Elementary School  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**T**oo many disciplinary referrals and suspensions in school and a general feeling of unrest in the neighborhood prompted Forest Home Avenue Elementary's Action/Learning Team to plan Violence Prevention Week to educate students in nonviolent problem-solving methods. The week incorporated academic and school spirit activities, finishing off with an assembly encouraging students to "Support Peace."

Violence Prevention Week, held in mid-April, furthered the work of the school's Peer Mediation program, a year-round initiative to increase awareness of peaceful ways to solve conflict. Throughout the year, staff, parents, and students were trained as peer mediators and gave presentations to other students.

The weeklong violence prevention event began with presentations and skits in each classroom about the importance of peaceful conflict resolution. The students, working in groups of four, wrote skits about nonviolence. The peer mediators introduced the week's theme days, which included Dress Crazy Day and Wear Pajamas Day. The peer mediators also distributed fliers, pencils, and purple ribbons to the students to promote the week's purpose.

Another activity was the Violence Prevention Read-In. Community members and parents came to read to students and discuss diversity, tolerance, safety, conflict resolution, and the negative impact of bullying. Other activities also kept students thinking about violence prevention. Some classrooms made paper "peace doves," on which students wrote what

peace looks like or means to them. The school also promoted an anti-bullying essay contest to integrate writing into the week.

Violence Prevention Week culminated with the "Support Peace" assembly, organized by the peer mediators and school staff. They invited McGruff the Crime Dog and members of the Milwaukee Police Department to speak about nonviolence and act out situations with students in the audience. Students decorated the gym with their peace doves to demonstrate their "Vision of Peace." Eight students read their anti-bullying essays. Student dancers, working with a choreographer from the community group Danceworks, performed a sparkling finale. The assembly provided an opportunity to thank the peer mediators and advisors for their hard work on Violence Prevention Week.

The week made students more aware of their behavior and taught them more ways to resolve disputes peacefully. Parents and teachers said students have been managing their emotions better since the event.

"Wow, what a wonderful group of students," said one police officer. "If there is any other way that we can be utilized, please do not hesitate to call." Volunteers from the Read-In were equally impressed. "I was able to open some minds, and I love doing that!" said one of them.