

Handouts

Building Positive Relationships



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**The
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Building Positive Relationships With Children

Suggested Activities for the Month

TO DO:

- Develop a behavior plan for changing a child's negative reputation in your classroom and strengthening your relationship.
- Pick some strategies to promote your positive relationships with your students.
- Set some goals to build your relationships with the parents of students in your classroom.
- Look for opportunities to promote your students' sense of responsibility in the classroom.

To Read



Chapters One, Two, and Fourteen from *Incredible Teachers* book.



Sample Interest Survey Letter Regarding Student's Interests

Dear Parents,

Welcome to First Grade! I am excited to get to know your child and looking forward to working with you over the next year to support your child's education. In order to get a "jump start" in developing a relationship with your child you can help me by filling out the following information and returning it to me as soon as possible. Knowing what activities and interests your child has helps me to develop curriculum that is exciting and meaningful for your child. Knowing areas you perceive as more difficult for your child helps me to stretch and encourage your child in new areas or places s/he might be tempted to avoid. Thanks for your help. Parents are the most important people in a child's life, and we need to work together for the benefit of your child. With home and school working together I know that each and every student can have the most successful year yet.

Child's Name:

Areas I see as strengths for my child: (academic or social)

Areas I see as more difficult for my child: (academic or social)

What I hope my child will learn this year:

My child's interests are: (include favorite magazines, toys, activities, outings, play acting, math, art, computer time, sports, etc.)

Things my child perceives as especially rewarding: (e.g., special privileges, leadership roles, special food, stickers, baseball cards, movies, etc.)

Things about my child that are special: (include pets, siblings, clubs, grandparents or other people involved closely with your child)

Looking forward to a great year!

Blackboard Notes
Points to Remember about
Building Positive Relationships with Students

Show students you care by:

- Giving them a personal greeting each day when they arrive
- Asking about their feelings e.g., dialogue journals
- Asking about their life outside of school e.g., listening bear
- Listening to them
- Eating in the cafeteria occasionally with students
- Recognizing birthdays in some way
- Sending cards and positive messages home, e.g., happygrams
- Finding out about their hobbies and special talents, e.g., interest surveys
- Making home visits
- Sharing something personal about yourself
- Spending time playing with them — at recess or during free classroom time
- Establishing positive relationships with every child regardless of their academic or social abilities
- Getting to know their parents through home visits and classroom meetings
- Calling parents periodically to report their child's success or accomplishments

Show students you believe in them by:

- Identifying negative self-talk
- Promoting positive self-talk
- Communicating your belief they can succeed
- Making "I can" cans out of empty juice cans and drop strips of paper in them on which students have written skills they have learned, e.g., math facts, spelling words, sharing with others, helping. (This is also useful to show parents the child's progress.)
- Making phone calls to students to applaud their special efforts or accomplishments
- Helping every child in the classroom to appreciate other's special talents and needs
- Following their lead, listening carefully to their ideas and being an "appreciate audience" at times

Show students you trust them by:

- Inviting students to help with daily tasks and classroom responsibilities
- Offering curriculum choices
- Encouraging collaboration among students
- Encouraging students to help each other
- Sharing your thoughts and feelings with them

Helping Your School Become “Bully Proof”

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Carl, aged 8 years, is hyperactive, impulsive and inattentive. He fidgets constantly in class, rocking back and forth in his chair, his hands and feet always moving. He often mumbles to himself in an effort to focus on the teacher's directions. His teacher finds his body movements distracting and is critical of his failure to follow through on directions. He is regularly teased and jeered at because of his “odd” behaviors. Few of his peers will play with him. At recess, he is isolated, barred from participating in group games. A small group of older boys once made a game of taunting him, calling him names and pushing him around. Another time they attacked him on the way home from school and tied him up, calling him their “pet monkey.” Recently at school he has started to become verbally abusive with younger children.

Mary frequently comes to school smelling like feces, for at the age of 7, she still messes in her pants. She is ashamed about this problem and is always anxious lest it occur at school. At recess and lunch time, she is ridiculed by other children. They call her a “baby” and tell her she is stupid. She has never been invited to participate in group games with the other girls in her class, nor has she ever been invited to a classmate's birthday party. She is often found alone in a corner of the playground. In conflict situations, she cries easily and withdraws.

Robbie, aged 6 years, is sent to the principal's office by his teacher almost daily for inappropriate language and unruly behavior, both of which disrupt classroom work. On the playground he frequently starts fights with other children. Nevertheless, he seems to have a small cadre of peers who follow him around, are attracted to his self-confidence and excited by his bravado and bold language. Robbie has been sent home from school several times for aggressive behavior; each time he receives severe spankings from his father for his misbehavior. Robbie's father is an alcoholic and on several occasions when drunk he has verbally and physically abused Robbie's mother. Robbie has witnessed this violence. Robbie's mother is frequently depressed and withdrawn. Perhaps as a result, she seems unconcerned about Robbie's schoolwork and behavior and rarely communicates with his teacher. Frustrated with Robbie's behavior, Robbie's teacher is critical of his parents' apparent lack of concern.

What is bullying and why does it occur?

A person is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. (Olweus, 1993)

Bullying among children is one of those hidden areas of social interaction, like physical and sexual abuse, that has thrived because of secrecy on the part of those involved and neglect on the part of professionals. Most bullying occurs at school and most of it is hidden from school staff. Out of a combination of shame and fear of retaliation, victims will rarely report the bullying incident. They also may not want to admit to difficulties at school for fear of worrying their parents, especially if their family is under stress or has experienced some trauma.

Bullying is defined as repeated attacks-physical or verbal-upon someone who has less power by someone who has more power, either by virtue of physical strength, age, social status or sheer numbers. This definition distinguishes the bully both from the child who may occasionally hit or call another child names, but does not do this to the same person repeatedly and over time, and from the child who attacks another child of approximately the same psychological and physical strength. Bullying may be overt (direct, obvious) or covert (indirect, hidden). Covert bullying includes spreading rumors, social ostracism, and manipulation through friendships. It is a problem that may cause long-term damage to the victim and bully alike. In the scenarios described above, the children are victims of bullying at school-Carl experiences overt physical bullying, and both

experience overt verbal bullying as well as covert forms of bullying, including social rejection. Both types of bullying can be equally destructive to children's well being, though in different ways; moreover, they are interrelated and often occur together in the same relationships.

Surveys have indicated that as many as 15% of school children—1 out of 7 students—are occasionally involved in bully/victim problems; 3% of children report they are bullied once per week or more often (Olweus, 1993). The frequency is higher for children in elementary school (kindergarten to grade 5) than for children in middle school, especially for physical bullying. Boys are more likely to experience overt forms of bullying and girls more indirect forms of bullying. Evidence suggests that boys are more likely than girls to be either victims or bullies (Olweus, 1993). The most common situation is for a group of two or three students to repeatedly harass one individual.

Recent research (e.g., Boulton & Smith, in press; Farrington, in press; Olweus, 1978; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988) suggests that certain personality characteristics may put children at increased risk for being bullied. Typical victims are often more anxious and insecure than their peers. They are likely to be more cautious, sensitive, and quiet; they may suffer from low self-esteem, and have a negative view of themselves and their situation. When attacked by other students, they usually will cry and withdraw rather than retaliate. They may perceive themselves as failures for being unable to handle their problems; they may feel stupid and ashamed of this, and may even come to think they deserve the bullying. Victims sometimes find when they report bullying to adults, they are ordered to "stand up for themselves," further reinforcing their guilt and self-concept of social incompetence. Although they may have a positive attitude toward schoolwork, they have a negative view of their ability to form friendships. It is typical for them to be without a good friend in class. Traits associated with victimization are, for boys, smaller than average size, less than average physical strength, perceived lack of physical attractiveness, and poor communication skills. There is a second category of victim, the so-called "provocative" victim. These children have both anxious and aggressive behavior patterns, and are sometimes hyperactive and impulsive. Their aggressive, disruptive behavior "provokes" other children into bullying behavior. It is important to realize, however, that this type of victim does not cause the bullying and is in no way responsible for it, although he or she can be made aware that bullying is a possible response to his or her aggression.

Typical bullies have a strong need to dominate others and to control social interactions (Olweus, 1978; Pulkkinen & Tremblay, 1992). They are often as aggressive toward adults as well as peers. Bullies may be impulsive as well. Physical strength and a confident appearance are associated traits, along with a positive self-image. They often have well-developed communication skills so that they are slick at talking their way out of trouble. Insensitive and lacking in empathy, they may even feel their victims deserve their treatment. If they have been reared in a home where the atmosphere is primarily negative, they may have a hostile attitude toward their surroundings, including school, and toward authority figures. Bullying may be only one aspect of a general pattern of antisocial behavior. Furthermore, bullying during the elementary years is a predictor of delinquency later in adolescence. There is a second category of bully, the more passive bully, the follower or "henchman." These children do not take the initiative in bullying but participate on the sidelines. They may support the bullying by jeering or laughing at the victim, cheering the bully on, or engaging in the name calling and exclusion, even though they may wish the bullying wasn't happening.

Research on bullying suggests that family factors are of considerable significance in the development of the personality of the child who bullies as well as the child who is at risk for being bullied (e.g., Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Olweus, 1980). The victim often enjoys a secure home life and close relationships within the family. He or she may feel insecure about meeting parental expectations. Bullies, on the other hand, are likely to come from problematic homes characterized as lacking in warmth, with a low level of home supervision and monitoring. Studies have found that parents of bullies are likely to be overly punitive and use physical violence as their method

of discipline. There is an increased frequency of alcoholism and drug abuse in the family and a greater likelihood that such children have witnessed spouse abuse. They may have been rejected by a significant adult. Another commonly associated parenting style is the parent who is permissive towards his or her children's behavior, including aggression, and has failed to set appropriate limits or consequences when aggression occurs. Too little involvement, too much freedom, and violence in the home are key contributors to the low self-esteem, low empathy skills and escalating aggression that create a bully.

It must be emphasized that family factors, although important, cannot account for all cases of bullying. Bullies and victims do not always come from the types of families described above. The temperament of the child also plays a part in the development of what psychologists refer to as "aggressive reaction pattern" or bullying (Olweus, 1980). Aggressive children have been shown to be more likely to be impulsive, hyperactive, inattentive, distractible, and irritable-temperamental traits which make it more difficult for them to learn problem-solving and appropriate social skills. They turn to bullying because they lack the skills for dealing appropriately with social situations.

The conditions at school also have a role in accounting for bullying-specifically the degree of supervision during recess and other breaks (Olweus, 1993). Research has found a clear negative association between "teacher density" and the amount of bullying-that is, the greater the number of teachers supervising at recess or other breaks, the lower the incidence of bullying. Studies where students have been interviewed about teachers' responses to bullying have indicated that both the bully and the victim felt that teachers did little to stop the problem. This perception led them to conclude that teachers were unconcerned-that they would be allowed to continue their behavior.

What to do?

Every child has the right to an education free of aggression and humiliation. No child should be afraid to go to school for fear of being bullied, and no parents should have to worry about their child being bullied. This means that no child should be allowed to bully another child. If a child is prone to bullying, he or she should be provided with the kind of guidance and constraints that will teach him or her to be a responsible member of the school community, and he or she should be held accountable for any bullying by having to face consequences. What steps should be taken to ensure this?

1. Establish school policy and programs. School policy has a vital role in preventing bullying and helping children who become involved in bullying incidents. School policies should communicate a clear message to students, parents and teachers that bullying will not be tolerated and will be handled firmly. Policies should clearly set forth the rules and specify what will happen if the rules are broken. Since victims may be afraid to bring up their experiences with bullying for fear of retaliation from the bully, the school should set up a procedure enabling students to call the school counselor anonymously. The counselor can encourage the child who is victimized to also talk with his or her teacher and parents, and can involve relevant persons in providing help for the victim.

The school has an important role in educating families about the meaning of bullying—both for the bully and the victim. This educational effort can take place through the use of special workshops and through regular PTA meetings. Bullying is a multifaceted problem rooted in a variety of interrelated factors such as the child’s temperament, social behavior, communication skills, level of self-esteem, and self-confidence, in addition to family, school and societal influences. Rather than blaming some single source such as society, the family or the child, schools can be proactive, focusing on preventing bullying regardless of the factors which may have contributed to the problem in the first place.

The school should provide comprehensive training to help prevent as well as treat the socialization difficulties that lead to bullying. This training needs to go beyond individual teachers’ efforts with individual students; it should be part of an effort involving the entire school. Supportive education and training in social skills, problem solving, empathy training and esteem-building address the root causes of bullying and have long-term payoffs for the school.

2. Educate teachers and parents in the early signs of possible bullying. Early detection of bullying is an important aspect of prevention. Everyone in the school community needs to be made aware of the indicators that a child may be falling into a victim role or developing into a bully. Here are some of the signs:

Signs of Falling Into a Victim Role

- Reported incidents of being the object of derogatory remarks
- Repeated experiences being made fun of, laughed at, degraded, belittled
- A pattern of being dominated by others
- Getting pushed, shoved, punched, hit, or kicked and being unable to defend oneself adequately
- Having books and/or money taken, damaged or scattered around
- Having bruises, cuts, torn clothing with no explanation
- Being excluded from peer group activities at recess or during breaks
- Being the last to be chosen for team activities
- Hovering near teachers during recess or breaks
- Difficulty speaking up in class
- Appearing anxious or insecure at school
- Reluctance to go to school
- Being a loner—having no close friends
- Never inviting classmates home after school, or never being invited over to others’ homes or to parties

Signs of Becoming a Bully

- generally negative attitude and oppositional toward school authority figures and parents
- high frequency of antisocial behaviors such as lying, stealing, swearing, hitting
- having a tough “bravado” demeanor
- having a strong need to dominate others by threats or bragging about one’s physical prowess
- having difficulty following the rules and tolerating delays or refusals
- repeatedly taunting, teasing, name calling
- low empathy for others and a refusal to assume responsibility for one’s actions
- associating with other antisocial peers

3. Establish conditions at recess and other breaks that discourage bullying. Most bullying at school occurs during recess or other breaks. Schools and teachers need to be sure there is adequate supervision during recess and other breaks (lunch time, bathroom breaks) so that bullying cannot occur. Schools with higher teacher density during recess have lower levels of bully/victim problems. However, simply increasing the presence of teachers during these times is not enough; teachers must know how to intervene early, quickly and effectively in bullying situations and must be ready and willing to do so. Teachers and staff may need to cue themselves to identify bullying for what it is. Even if there is only a suspicion that bullying is taking place, it should be acted upon. Rather than thinking, “They’re just goofing around,” “It’s all in fun,” or, “He’s not trying to be mean,” the teacher’s guiding rule should be, “Better to intervene too early rather than too late.” A consistent response from teachers and playground supervisors gives students a clear message that bullying is not acceptable and that those in charge will always take the side of the victim or potential victim. Potential bullies need to know that power (i.e., the school authorities, teachers, parents) will always be used to protect the potential victim.

A teacher who observes bullying needs to intervene by:

- imposing a consequence on the bully (whatever is specified by school policy).
- speaking on behalf of the victim and modeling an assertive response.
- reporting the incident to the classroom teacher and parents of the students involved.

The school schedule and the school environment can be set up in such a way as to discourage bullying. Since a good deal of bullying takes the form of older children being aggressive against younger and more vulnerable children, schools should try to schedule recess at separate times for older and younger students and for special education students. Furthermore, since bullying tends to occur more frequently in certain parts of the playground and in bathrooms, these areas should receive extra monitoring. A well-equipped and attractive outdoor environment can help reduce bullying by inviting more positive activities.

4. Teachers need to have clear class rules about bullying and regular classroom discussions about these problems. Along with school-wide policies and programs, individual classrooms can be a place for education about bullying. The school rules about bullying should be explained and posted for all to see. For example, the following three rules set clear standards regarding overt and more covert forms of bullying:

1. Bullying of other children is not permitted.
2. Students will try to help children who are bullied.
3. Students will include students who are often left out.

Students should be praised for following the rules; in particular, students who are easily influenced by others should receive appreciation for not reacting aggressively.

It is important for teachers to have regular discussions in class about bullying. These discussions should be held regularly (e.g., once a week), perhaps with students sitting in a circle on floor. In these class meetings teachers can clarify and reiterate the consequences of breaking the rules. They can read stories about bullies and victims where the bully is presented as anxious and insecure beneath a tough surface and where students learn to empathize with the victim. In addition to stories, role playing is an effective way of eliciting feelings and ideas. Concrete examples from the classroom and playground should be used to help students think of ways they can counteract social isolation and stop bullying. It is important to discuss verbal bullying and covert bullying so that students realize that even passively observing from the sidelines is being an accomplice to the bullying. Students can then be prompted to discuss how they can help a child who is being victimized, rather than standing on the sidelines.

Because students feel that if they tell the teacher about a bullying incident they will be perceived as tattlers, teachers need to counteract this attitude by telling students that reporting bullying is following the school's rules. Moreover, tattling on behalf of another child who needs help can be defined as being compassionate and sensitive to the feelings of the weaker child. The goal is to have students understand that both victims and bullies need help, and that only if incidents are reported will that help be forthcoming. For instance, suppose that a student is frequently ostracized by the other students at recess. The teacher could use puppets to act out the situation. One puppet, Bert, keeps telling the other puppet, Ernie, that he can't play with him and his friends. Sometimes he even calls Ernie nasty names. The teacher says to her students, "What should Ernie do when Bert tells him to go away and calls him names?" She encourages them to come up with many possible solutions. She then asks, "What would you do if you saw Bert telling Ernie to go away and calling him names?" They come up with a list of possible actions, and the teacher helps them think through (as a group) the consequences of each action. In order to address the issue of "tattling," she includes the question, "What would happen if you told the teacher that Bert bullied Ernie?" After exploring all the possible outcomes of reporting, she goes on to ask, "What else could you do besides tell the teacher?" In this way the teacher not only gives the students a repertoire of responses to bullying, she also develops their capacity for problem-solving and, by exploring the issue in a group, defuses students' fears of being perceived as "tattlers."

Cooperative learning activities in the classroom, where students work in small groups, also help prevent bullying. It is important that the teacher split up the more aggressive children and put them in different groups with assertive, socially skilled students (who will not accept bullying) and not with victims. Students who are isolated or who tend to be victimized should be placed with positive, friendly students. Carefully planned cooperative group activities, where the focus is on the performance of the entire group, create mutual positive dependence among group members and by extension a feeling of cohesiveness in the whole classroom.

When each member of the group is given responsibility for every other member's learning of the prescribed task, students begin to feel responsible for each other, an attitude which is contrary to that of the bully or the passive bystander.

5. Special intervention for victims. The goals of intervention for victims are to build children's self-confidence, to rebuild their sense of security at school, and to establish a feeling of being accepted or, ideally, liked by at least one or two classmates. Teachers can pair up victimized children with more popular children and foster friendship opportunities. They can also give these children extra attention.

Another aspect of intervention with victims is teaching them the importance of letting their teacher and parents know about incidents of bullying. Often children will not want to tell adults for fear of getting the tormentor in trouble and then experiencing retaliation. They may even convince their parents not to tell the teacher. They need to be helped to understand that in the long run this secrecy is more harmful to them because it allows the bully's behavior to continue. Children who are victimized need to learn to report incidents. Teachers and other school authorities, for their part, need to give the victim the message that it is not his or her fault for being harassed. They need to assure children that they will get adequate protection against retaliation or continued harassment from bullies.

It is also important that the victim learn to avoid the aggressor when possible as well as to know how to stand up to bullying-with assertiveness, not aggression. Research has also shown that bullies don't continue bullying children who respond assertively to their efforts to control or isolate them. Teachers can model this assertive behavior for the child. For example, when an incident occurs on the playground the teacher might say to the child who has been bullied, "Tell Robbie that it feels scary to be hit, you don't like being hit and not to do it again." During class the teacher can also present role-play scenarios where one child is bullying another child and have the children practice assertive responses. During these role plays children can also be prompted to talk about the victim's feelings of humiliation, helplessness and worthlessness.

6. Special intervention for bullies. The goal of intervention for bullies is to stop the bullying. This involves teaching social skills and nonviolent methods of expressing feelings and resolving conflict. It also involves increasing their empathy for others and their acceptance of children who are different.

Intervention begins with clear limit-setting-the message that bullying will not be tolerated. If a teacher even suspects there is a problem, s/he needs to take action immediately by talking with the suspected bully and victim. The message should be given clearly: "We don't allow bullying in our class/school and it must stop." The teacher needs to impose a negative consequence for the bullying behavior. Whenever bullying occurs, immediately send the bully to Time Out for 5 minutes and give attention to the victim (so that the bully's behavior is not inadvertently reinforced with teacher attention). Afterward, have a serious talk with him individually away from the rest of his peers.

The bully will likely try to minimize his contribution to the problem and may even blame the victim, saying, "He started it" or, "It was her fault!" It is important for the teacher not to engage in an argument about who started the bullying. Bullies are often very good at talking themselves out of problem situations. If allowed to tell their version of the story, they may humiliate the victim. Don't waste time on "getting to the bottom of things"-it diverts the focus from the bullying behavior to the circumstances. If this child has been identified as a

bully, then it is advisable to adopt a policy that he will automatically be held accountable. Remember the message is that bullying will not be tolerated, under any circumstances. If you are in doubt about who did the bullying (a rare situation indeed) send both children to Time Out, saying, "It looks like both of you may have been doing some bullying, so both of you need to go cool down and think over how you could have behaved differently."

Loss of a privilege can also be an effective discipline approach for bullying, an alternative to Time Out. The privilege might be recess or some special privilege that the student values, like computer time. Teachers should set up a discipline hierarchy for their classrooms defining the consequences for bullying, with the severity increasing as the number of incidents increases. For example, the consequence for the first bullying incident might be specified as a Time Out; for the second, Time Out and loss of recess; for the third, loss of some other privilege and a call home to parents; for the fourth, a meeting between the child, parents, teacher and principal.

It will be easier for the bully to change his behavior if he feels accepted and liked. Teachers will need to be careful to praise and reward these children whenever they are behaving cooperatively with teachers and peers, being sensitive to others' requests, assuming responsibility for their behaviors, and-especially-reacting in non-aggressive ways in a conflict-provoking situation. Children who bully others are not easy children to develop relationships with; teachers will need to make an extra effort in this regard. It has been said that the children who most need love will ask for it in the most unloving ways; the same can be said for the children most in need of encouragement, praise and positive attention.

If bullying is going to be met swiftly with negative consequences, teachers will need to observe and closely monitor playground behavior, in particular extra supervision for children with a history of bullying (actual or suspected). This will mean that the lunch time or playground supervisor will need to position himself/herself close to the suspected bully-and to be visible to everyone. This will not only ensure safety of victims but will discourage others from becoming involved because they will not want to be the object of similar supervision. Sometimes teachers have a negative attitude toward recess supervision because they don't want to be seen as police officers; or they may stay inside at recess because they feel they need a break from the students. While teachers do need breaks, recess is not the appropriate time to take these breaks. Failure to adequately supervise recess, lunch time and the loading of buses means that the weaker students will be left to the mercy of bullies; without adequate supervision, intervention will not happen, and lack of intervention implies silent condoning of the bullying. Attentive supervision is effective not only for helping the bully realize his behavior is inappropriate, but also for assuring the safety of potential victims.

7. Close cooperation between home and school. As noted above, schools have an important responsibility for informing families about the extent and causes of the problem. The message to families can be that because of the potential seriousness of bullying, the school is going to focus on even minor cases of bullying and social isolation; moreover, the school should advise parents that this monitoring may initially result in increased contact from administrators or teachers until the problem has been resolved. Conversely, schools need to ask parents to communicate openly with them, to stay involved, and to contact teachers if they suspect their own or another child of bullying.

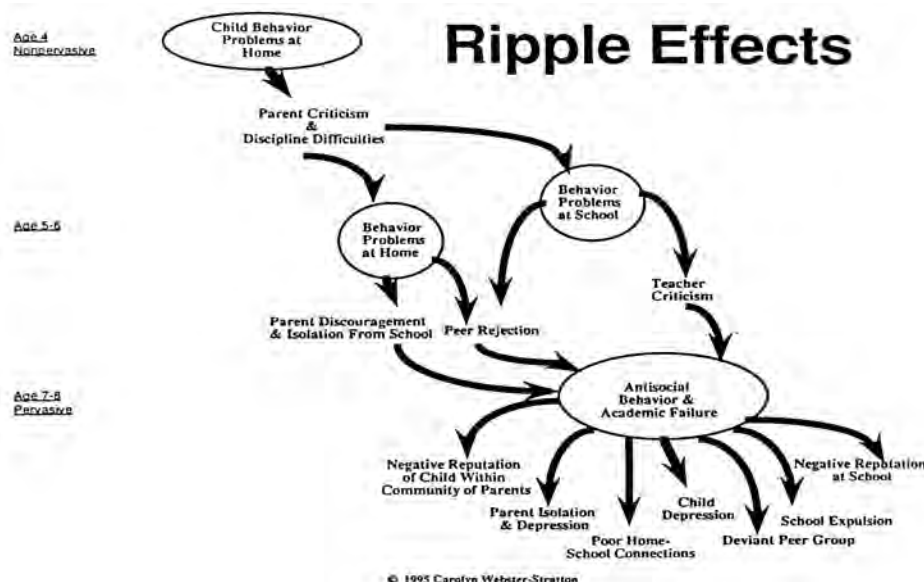
The school should let parents know that if it is discovered that students are bullying others or being bullied, the school will contact the parents concerned and ask for their cooperation in bringing about change. They should meet together to discuss the situation with them and collaboratively arrive at a plan for solving the problem. Parents who suspect their children are bullying can help by praising their children for cooperative behavior, setting up reward sys-

tems for good behavior, applying nonviolent or punitive consequences for misbehavior (e.g., loss of privileges, Time Out, work chores) and setting up rules that make it clear that they take the bullying seriously and will not tolerate the behavior. If both the school and parents are applying negative consequences, then it is less likely to reoccur. For the family who is chaotic and disorganized, teachers can help parents define a few family rules which are written down and displayed and plan a set of consequences for violations of those rules. They can encourage parents to praise their child when he or she follows the rules. Parents should be urged to spend time with their child and get to know their child's friends.

Parents who suspect that their child is being bullied should let their child's teacher know as soon as possible. They can also try to increase the self-confidence of the victimized child by helping him or her establish friendships and stand up for himself or herself assertively. Although it is understandable to want to protect a child who has been bullied, parents should avoid being overprotective, as this attitude on the part of parents can increase a child's sense of isolation from peers and thus exacerbate the problem.

8. Parents educate their children about the problem. Parents need to make clear to their children that bullying is unacceptable. They can introduce the issue by talking to them about the problem and asking them if anyone in their class is often "picked on" or left out. Parents should increase their children's understanding of the problem by explaining the concepts of passive participation in bullying and of "covert" bullying (excluding the child). Parents might attempt to determine whether their child has sympathy for the victim and whether s/he would be willing to do anything to help the student. They should discuss the importance of their reporting the problem to teachers, explaining why "tattling" actually is not wrong but actually helps the bully (and potential victims) in the long run. They can strive to develop their child's empathy for the victim and involve their child in ending the victimization by inviting a "victim" to a picnic or home after school. Any of the classroom strategies discussed earlier for teachers could also be used by parents in the home.

When parents and schools break the silence, share information with each other, and collaborate in finding solutions without blaming one another, they can make great strides towards reducing the problem. (Olweus, 1993)



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Ideas for Building Positive Relationships with Students

Dialogue Journals. When the children first come into the classroom in the morning they are asked to spend 10 minutes writing anything they want in their “dialogue journals.” Students are encouraged to share this writing with the teacher by putting their diaries in his or her “in box” when they are ready for the teacher to read them. The students are given the choice of when or whether they want the teacher to read their dialogues. These diaries are referred to as “dialogue” journals because the students often will ask the teacher questions to which she or he can respond with comments, questions, stickers, or special notes to be taken home to parents. The dialogue journal approach allows teachers to have more personal discussions with each individual student as well as allowing for privacy.



While this dialogue approach requires that the student be able to read and write, it can be adapted for use with younger children. This could be accomplished by having the teacher write in the child’s journal describing something that happened that day at school, which the parent can then read to the child when he or she picks up the child at the end of the school day. The parents may be encouraged to write a response of their own in the journal or to write a response that the child dictates. This approach fosters close communication between parent, teacher and child.

Listening Bear. Another fun strategy for getting to know students is a “Listening Bear.” “Listening Bear” (an actual teddy bear) goes home each day with a student who has demonstrated exceptional listening in class that day. When Listening Bear is at a student’s home he is listening, watching and participating in all that goes on in the family (he may go to restaurants, baseball games, etc.). The family members are asked to write in the journal about the bear’s visit to the family—that is, what he saw and did while he was there. If the child cannot write, she or he may dictate to the parents. The next day the student brings Listening Bear back with his or her journal which is read aloud to the class. This is a very effective way to get to know students and their families, and it reduces some of the pressure on the child because the story is told from Listening Bear’s perspective. It also fosters a home experience between the parents and child which can be shared at school. While it is fun, it also reminds everyone of the importance of listening. (Teachers should be sure that all the students get to take Listening Bear home at some point.) The same idea could also be used for a shy child such as a “Sharing Bear.”



Survey To Parents—Important Information About Child. The teacher may choose to send a survey form home at the beginning of the year asking for some personal information such as whether there have been any recent divorces or illnesses in the family, what the current living arrangements are, what forms of discipline the parents use, the nature of the child’s temperament and special interests, what helps calm the child down, and any particular concerns the parents have regarding their child.

Home Visits. Home visits at the beginning of the year (even prior to school starting) are a powerful way to get to know students and their families and to learn a wealth of information about the child and family in a short period of time. While it may not be feasible to do home visits for all the students in your classroom, it could be invaluable for students who have some special social and/or academic problems. These visits can be initiated with a letter sent to the families ahead of time (perhaps in the summer) explaining the purpose of the home visit and asking the child to be the host or hostess for the visit. The child then has the task of deciding what to share with the teacher when he or she visits and showing the teacher through the home.



Special visits with students. Another way a teacher can get to know students outside of the classroom is to attend an event in which they are participating—baseball or soccer games, ballet or music recitals. Making this effort demonstrates the teacher’s caring and commitment to developing relationships with students. Other options include spending some individual time with the student at lunch or joining them in a play activity on the playground.



Getting to know the parents. One sure way to build closer relationships with students is to get to know the parents. Teachers can get to know parents through some of the means we discussed above such as home visits at the beginning of the year and surveys about family life. Through “dialogue journals” teachers can foster closer relationships with parents. Other strategies which foster supportive and collaborative relationships with parents might include phone calls, notes home about children’s successes, invitations to parents to attend informal brown bag lunches with teachers, invitations to participate in the classroom by sharing something (e.g., a trip or special skill), or reading to students in class or helping with some classroom activity, and so forth.



Seeing with the heart. The teacher places a big red heart on the board and explains that this heart has feelings. The teacher explains that when someone pushes you, takes a crayon or says something rude, the heart gets smaller and folds up. Then the teacher asks, “How can we make the heart unfold?” and the students will talk about apologizing, sharing, and helping others. When the teacher notices these things happening she can add to the heart and show it growing.

Play box. One idea to foster playfulness is for the teacher to keep a special box near his or her desk in which he or she keeps some items such as a wig, glasses with springing eyeballs, a microphone, funny t-shirts and so forth. The teacher can surprise students when they arrive by wearing something from this box, and can turn to it when students’ attention is wavering. For example, the teacher might put on the wig and pull out the microphone to announce a special instruction or transition to a new activity. This playfulness serves to keep children engaged so that they can be learning.

When teachers follow students’ lead, they show respect for their ideas and demonstrate compliance with their requests. This modeling of compliance to appropriate requests from students helps students become more compliant with teachers’ requests in other situations. Moreover, it contributes to reciprocity in the relationship—a power balance, so to speak. Such reciprocity leads to closer and more meaningful relationships.

Role-play between teachers and children is also important because role-plays encourage students to take another’s perspective. Fostering this ability to take another’s perspective is important in the development of empathy. Role-play also builds creativity in children.



Happy Grams. Giving out “Happy Grams” is another strategy for building positive relationships with students. A “Happy Gram” is a brief written statement given to the child announcing his or her success or accomplishment, or a description of something we have particularly enjoyed about the student’s participation in class. Students can be given a box on their desk for their Happy Grams and each day the teacher reads them with the students and sends them home to their parents. These Happy Grams may say things like, “Today I enjoyed hearing about Anna’s pet rabbits at home. She is good at sharing with others in class.” or, “Patrick was very friendly today. I noticed when he helped Robbie after he fell down on the sidewalk.” or, “Gregory controlled his anger and was able to talk about his feelings—he is building good self-control skills.”



How I am Incredible!

Child's Name and Age: _____

Adults that Support My Growing and Learning:

My Temperament (*e.g., activity level, adaptability, physical sensitivity, intensity, distractibility, persistence, predictability, quiet, anxious, angry*):

My Social, Language and Academic Level (*e.g., plays alone, anxious or withdrawn, wants to initiate play with others but doesn't know how, social interactions are inappropriate, very few words, lots of language, inappropriate language, limited or strong academic skills such as reading or math level*):

My Favorite Activities/Things I Am Good At (*e.g., reading, soccer, games, music, cooking, building activities, drawing, pretend play, doing science projects*):

Social, Emotional, Persistence, Language and Academic Skills I am Learning (*e.g., helping others, calm down methods, speaking politely, taking turns, listening*):

My Teacher's Goals for Me (*e.g., helping child follow directions, make a friend, improve child's academic success, reduce my own anger and stress*):

Brainstorm/Buzz—Promoting a Sense of Responsibility

Break up into small groups or buzz pairs to share ways teachers promote responsibility in their students.



Goal:



Brainstorm/Buzz—Changing Students’ Negative Reputations



Break out into small groups or buzz pairs to share ways you, as a teacher, can change a student’s negative reputation into a more positive reputation



Goal:

Brainstorm/Buzz—Building Relationships With Students

In your group, share things you do to promote positive relationships with your students.



Goal:



Brainstorm/Buzz—Building Relationships With Parents



Share with your buddy or group strategies you use to build positive relationships with your students' parents.

Goal:

Brainstorm/Buzz–Goal Setting

Think about possible barriers to building positive relationships with a difficult child and how you will overcome these barriers. Set goals for yourself.



Barriers to Building Positive Relationships	Ways to Overcome these Barriers
Goal:	



The Incredible Years®
Teacher Classroom Management Self-Reflection Inventory
Building Positive Relationships With Students

Date: _____ **Teacher Name:** _____

Teachers learn extensively from self-reflection regarding their classroom management and the teaching strategies they are using that are working or not working. From these reflections teachers determine personal goals for making changes in their approaches to bring about the most positive learning climate they can. Use this Inventory to think about your strengths and limitations and determine your goals.

1 – Never 3 – Occasionally 5 - Consistently

Building Positive Relationships with Children	
1. I greet my students upon arrival with personal and positive greeting (e.g., using child's name).	1 2 3 4 5
2. I interact with my students with warmth, caring and respect.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I speak calmly and patiently to my students.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I listen to my students and avoid judgmental or critical responses.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I provide sincere, enthusiastic, and positive feedback to my students about their ideas.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I personalize my communications with individual students (e.g., asks about life outside of school, their special interests, hobbies or favorite books, shares something personal about self to children, acknowledges birthdays).	1 2 3 4 5
7. I spend special time with each of my students (e.g., on playground, during meals, unstructured play time).	1 2 3 4 5
8. I send home positive message cards to parents to tell them about their children's successes or accomplishments (e.g., happy grams).	1 2 3 4 5
9. I make positive calls to parents to tell them about their children's successes or positive behavior.	1 2 3 4 5

10. I communicate belief to my students that they can succeed and promote their positive self-talk.	1 2 3 4 5
11. I individualize each student's needs, interests and abilities (e.g., planning activities or stories based on special interests of children)	1 2 3 4 5
12. I help children in the classroom to appreciate each other's special talents and needs.	1 2 3 4 5
13. I am child-directed in my approach and behave as an "appreciative audience" to their play.	1 2 3 4 5
14. I avoid question-asking, directions and corrections when possible.	1 2 3 4 5
15. I share my positive feelings when interacting with my students.	1 2 3 4 5
16. I invite my students to help with classroom jobs and responsibilities.	1 2 3 4 5
17. I adjust activities to be developmentally appropriate for each child.	1 2 3 4 5
18. I play with children in ways that provide teacher modeling, prompting and guided practice.	1 2 3 4 5
19. I work convey acceptance of individual differences (culture, gender, sensory needs) through diverse planning, material and book selections, and discussion topics.	1 2 3 4 5
20. I participate in pretend and imaginary play with my students.	1 2 3 4 5
Future Goals Regarding Ways I will Work to Build Relationships with Identified Students:	

Building Positive Relationships with Parents	
1. I set up opportunities for parents to participate or observe in classroom.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I send home regular newsletters to parents and positive notes about their children.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I have a regular call schedule for calling parents to give them positive messages about their children.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I have regular posted telephone hours or times parents can reach me.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I schedule parent evenings/meetings to share classroom activities with parents and to present ideas for carrying over classroom activities at home.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I consider parents' for ideas, materials and support for classroom activities.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I recognize the importance of partnering with parents and collaborating in order to develop strong connections with children.	1 2 3 4 5

Future Goals Regarding Involving Parents:

