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# School News



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## **Stand Up to Bullying— Together We Can...**



**Special Issue: Bullying and Gang Prevention**

# I am a PeaceBuilder...



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It's a tough time to be a kid and parents know it! We have access to resources like never before and at the same rate (or faster) it seems there are countless issues working against us. In our work as PeaceBuilders over the last nearly 20 years, we have opportunities to talk with young people, and the parents and educators that support them all across the U.S. and we have learned a few things from them in the process. Doesn't matter if you are in Brooklyn, Salt Lake, or Long Beach, the stories are the same. Believe it or not, keeping your kids safe from all that worries us as parents are essentially the same kinds of things that our ancestors used to keep their kids safe; teach your kids the skills they need in the real world, model the behaviors you expect of your kids, and stay connected and keep teaching them, even in the years they seemingly don't need you to (or want you to).

Our kids need skills. Of course, tech skills, communication skills, mathematical skills, and creative skills will allow our kids to be competitive in this new world, but our kids will also need social skills and, most of all, resiliency skills. Resiliency skills are those skills that help us handle stress and if taught, modeled, and reinforced daily, work to build the kind of child/teen/young adult/adult that can keep friends, maneuver adolescence, finish what they start, avoid involvement in the justice system, get in/stay in the work force, and generally make us proud to be their parents.

According to *Child Trends Magazine's* March 2011 issue, "Positive social skills are recognized as critical for healthy social development. Children with positive social skills are more likely to have high self-esteem, have positive relationships with peers, and achieve in school. Moreover, research finds that positive social skills are associated with positive later life outcomes, such as successful marriages and careers. On the other hand, deficits in social skills are related to aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, fighting and delinquency. Identification of intervention strategies and practices that promote social skills can help increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for children and adolescents, and reduce the occurrence of negative outcomes."

Here's how they suggest we do it:

- Implement school-based programs for all kids and add community-based programs in vulnerable populations
- Involve parents for children in middle childhood (elementary school) and peers for children in middle childhood and adolescents (pre-teens and teens)
- Employ multiple instruction strategies and include technology when possible
- Use teachers as intervention facilitators and include paraprofessionals and/or researchers when possible
- Teach problem-solving skills and target multiple skill sets

Modeling behavior that we want from our kids is serious business. Like good business, it has excellent return on investment. Our kids are bombarded with lots of role models, and not all good ones. Teach your kids how to recognize characteristics of people that you admire, help them find people who have those characteristics in their daily lives, and ensure they are surrounded with those people throughout their lifetime. Studies have shown that our social circles affect our behaviors more than any single other teacher. This has been proven true for both good habits (people who exercise surround themselves with other people who exercise) and bad (people who smoke surround themselves with other smokers). A parent can set the good example for behavior they want from their children (patience, acceptance and tolerance) and encourage them to pick a social circle that also exhibits the same behaviors. Successful parents support their kids in practicing these skills, even when it is tough.

Jackie McKay, a parent at Fremont Elementary has three sons, two of which participated in PeaceBuilders while in elementary school. As a 5th grader at

Fremont, their class said the PeaceBuilders pledge each morning in both Spanish and English. That served to remind him to "build peace, at home, at school and in the community" each day. Jackie recalls here were two classes of fifth graders and her son had friends in both of them. In the spring one friend was being "really nasty, being mean to others, and causing conflicts." PeaceBuilders gave him the courage and language skills to speak up about it to him. Unfortunately, the former friend wasn't ready for the change in behavior her son was requesting and they gave up being friends. She remembers that was hard for him at first, even adults had tried to "make them be friends" but it's a very brave thing to stand up to a friend. He had been taught (both at home and at school) to look for certain characteristics in a friend and expect those behaviors from friends in his social circle.

Jackie and her husband work to stay connected to their kids, even when they don't appreciate it. Our kids are growing up at a time when, as a generation, they are both highly connected and highly disconnected to other people. They are highly connected to a large circle of online friends (some statistics show that the number of on line friends a teen has represents ten times the number of their local friends). They can have real time video/text conversations with kids from

half way around the world, a task virtually impossible (or expensive) in past generations. Their connections can be made through mutual interests and those connections can span distance, age and gender.

With this ability to connect, we also suffer from disconnect like never before. Kids often lack appropriate boundaries and safeguards in this virtual world. That is why their connection to parents and other trusted adults (extended family, teachers, coaches, and religious leaders) are so very important. We can struggle to balance our "right" to privacy with our "right" to guide our young people to making good choices, being safe and honoring appropriate boundaries. But that struggle is a worthwhile one, with safety being paramount.

Schools have a responsibility to help support parents in teaching these social (and resiliency) skills, modeling good behavior and enhancing strong connections with the young people they serve. The most effective models

have schools and parents in partnership to ensure these concepts are consistent and reinforced daily.

Over 1700 schools in the United States use PeaceBuilders as the common language for these strategies. Science-based and research-validated, the PeaceBuilders experience is designed to become a "way of life", not merely a curriculum. It assists adults in teaching kids to develop a core sense of safety, belonging, support, and competency in dealing with life's most stressful situations and disappointments.

PeaceBuilders' goal is to alter the climate and culture of any environment (home, school or community) by positively changing characteristics of the place that can trigger aggressive behavior, developing positive relationships between peers, leaders, and adults; directly teaching nonviolent attitudes, values, and beliefs; and by providing incentives for young people to display these behaviors in home, school, after school and/or community setting. In a PeaceBuilders environment, it is these positive behaviors that are more likely to earn attention from peers and adults alike.

PeaceBuilders is recommended for parents, schools and community members, young and old, and is practiced daily in all places at home and on & around campus. PeaceBuilders teaches six simple principles through the use of flexible, skill-based curriculum and adult training along with follow-up coaching and support: Praise People, Give-Up Put-Downs, Seek Wise People, Notice Hurts, Right Wrongs, Help Others.

These daily practices, which are based on scientific studies, become routine, and, when taught, modeled and practiced faithfully, move youth, according to the writers of *Antisocial Behavior in School: Evidence-Based Practices*, in the direction of "caring, altruism, self-regulation and positive relationships with key social agents in their lives (peers and adults)".





**PeaceBuilders Says:** Start early: The PeaceBuilders journey begins as early as preschool and continues throughout elementary, middle and high school. PeaceBuilders message stays consistent at home, school and in the community with instructional delivery at appropriate developmental levels.

**Science Says:** Youth violence can be reduced by initiating prevention early in childhood, increasing children's resilience and reinforcing positive behavior.

*Walker, H.M., Colvin, G., & Ramsey, E. Anti-social behavior in schools, strategies and best practices, New York: Brooks/Cole, 1995, Second Edition, 2004*

**PeaceBuilders Says:** Enhance everyday parenting competence prior to adolescence: Parents are critical team members and active participants in building the PeaceBuilders village, and they are afforded individualized training in PeaceBuilders skills, routines and rituals to use at home.

**Science Says:** When parents are given very specific tools and techniques to improve daily family routines, there is significant reduction in aggressive acts leading to youth crime.

*Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 102 (1987), 187-203*

**PeaceBuilders Says:** Increase rewards and praise for daily pro social behavior: Routines support all members of a community to be involved in daily rewards and praise for pro social behavior, because PeaceBuilders praise behavior they want repeated. Repeated pro social behaviors becomes good habits, and good habits become healthy lifestyles

**Science Says:** When a systematic plan to increase daily praise and reward for positive behavior in schools and other places in the community significantly reduces the risk of youth crime.

*Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, vol. 16 (1983), m 355-369; Aggression and anti-social behavior in childhood and adolescence. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979.*

**PeaceBuilders Says:** Reduce children's use of insults and other acts of aggression: PeaceBuilders learn, practice and acquire skills through directed instruction and infusion across the curriculum for managing conflict in their own lives by understanding what creates opposition and how to solve problems without violence.

**Science Says:** Learning selected positive social (or PeaceBuilding) skills reduce violent behavior and referrals to juvenile court.

*American Psychologist, vol. 48 (1993), 142-154; Behavior Modification, vol. 17 (1993), 287-313; Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, vol. 11 (1978), 503-512; School Psychology Review, vol. 15 (1986), 289-295*

**PeaceBuilders Says:** Increase live and symbolic models of positive behaviors: PeaceBuilders has a school-wide (or community-wide) universal delivery system. It is an appropriate setting for a comprehensive program across people, places and time. PeaceBuilders becomes a way of life, not just a time or subject-limited curriculum.

**Science Says:** Frequently presented printed, video, and live models of adult-child interactions and use of PeaceBuilding skills increase cooperative behavior, which reduces the risk that young people will engage in aggression and violence.

*Journal of Social Issues, vol. 42 (1986), 155-159; Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, vol. 48 (1990), 718-729; American Journal of Community Psychology, vol. 10 (1982), 317-329*

**PeaceBuilders Says:** Distribute practical tools to improve school climate: PeaceBuilders provides instructors with materials and resources which present the concepts, backgrounds and suggested activities along with supported and reproducible materials for daily use in the classroom as well as parent training and community outreach.

**Science Says:** Both long and short-term behavior changes by students, teachers and families that will reduce youth crime are much more likely to occur if interventions are packaged, disseminated and promoted in a user-friendly way.

*Project LIFE (Living in Family Environments): Final Report of USDOE Grant #G008303002, National Institute for Handicapped Research of the US Department of Education; Education & Treatment of Children (1986) 307-319*

**PeaceBuilders Says:** Promote the adherence of PeaceBuilding skills across many areas of the community: PeaceBuilders works with adults to design individualized and comprehensive school-wide plans to infuse concepts, strategies and lessons into the regular curriculum, classroom management practices, and school activities. PeaceBuilders helps facilitate relationship building between school site, parents, community members, law enforcement and local officials to ensure consistent messages and modeling are received by youth.

**Science Says:** Repeated scientific studies show that limited interventions often fail to sustain their efforts, and that very specific actions must be taken to ensure that positive benefits last.

*Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, vol. 5 (1972), 209-224, vol. 12 (1977) 285-310*

For more information about PeaceBuilders, contact us at: 562-590-3600 or at [peacebuilders.com](http://peacebuilders.com) or [facebook.com/BeAPeaceBuilder](https://facebook.com/BeAPeaceBuilder), 1-877-4-peacenow • [www.peacebuilders.com](http://www.peacebuilders.com)

