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Published: May 09, 2012

[Home](#) / [news](#) / [local](#) /

West End Center tackles bullying with Roanoke City kids

By Jarett Henshaw



"I pledge to praise people, to give up put downs," recited the third grade class at the West End Center in Roanoke.

As part of their Peace Builders program, teacher Samantha Beard teaches them lessons and activities against bullying. The message is getting through to many of them like Gigi Brown.

"You're not supposed to be mean to people. When other people say something, you should help that person out and you should go tell an adult so they can handle it," said Brown.

While others like Isaiah Robinson admit he's been a bully...

"I hit him, so then he tried to hit me and i ducked. And then i slammed him and

kicked him in his face," said Robinson.

Beard says the toughest part is trying to reverse some of the messages they've learned outside the center.

"Some of the kids come in and I'll say, 'do we hit here at the center', and they'll say, 'well my daddy told me if someone hits me, I hit them back'. Well that's not what we teach here," said Beard.

It's all worth it to her. Beard says she gets Goosebumps when she sees the lessons paying off.

"I've noticed a lot more on the playground, if someone falls down, it's like a herd, running over helping them up," said Beard.

Even for kids like Isaiah, Peace Builders is starting to sink in.

"Sometimes I get confused and then I think about being a Peace Builder. Then I just don't do it. I tell people no," said Robinson.

Beard says the whole goal of the Peace Builders program is to teach these kids these principles while they're young, to keep them from being bigger bullies when they get older.

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