

PeaceBuilders Program Implementation



PeaceBuilders and Military Kids

How Military Kids and Their Families Can Benefit from PeaceBuilders

Problem:

School age children of military parents face unique and special challenges. Whether frequently moving from one duty station to the next or separation from deployed moms and dads, military students have certain social and emotional needs that are not always entirely met by schools.

"We have the culture of the warrior among our students," says Paul Bryner, Principal of Hill Field Elementary School, named for the military base it sits next to. "If there's a problem, they'll stand up and fight." Approximately 98 percent of Hill Field's students have at least one parent serving in the military.

A recent Rand Corporation study published by the Journal of Pediatrics found that children of military families suffer from more emotional and behavioral difficulties when compared to other American youths, with older children and girls struggling most when a parent is deployed.

Solution:

"We're teaching them there are different ways to handle problems," says Bryner. That way is PeaceBuilders – the renowned violence-prevention and character-education youth program.

PeaceBuilders was developed 18 years ago by Dr. Dennis Embry, who worked with children of deployed military parents during the first Gulf War and discovered that up to 40% of these kids exhibited symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, such as fear and anxiety. Rather than viewing these symptoms as mental illness, Dr. Embry concluded these behaviors were adaptations to a world they perceived as violent and unsafe.

Theorizing that if, instead, a safe, peaceful environment were built with simple actions, routines, and a common language, children would adapt, and their fear and anxiety would be replaced with resilience and a core sense of safety that are prerequisite to meeting behavioral expectations, achieving academically and enjoying success throughout their lives.

It became clear that peaceful, safe and productive environments could be created in virtually any setting where adults work with children. With the encouragement of his students, who challenged him to write a book about how to build peace, he developed PeaceBuilders.

Results:

PeaceBuilders sites enjoy dramatic reductions in negative, harmful, antisocial behavior and equally dramatic increases in positive, helpful, prosocial behavior and academic achievement. In a recent survey of PeaceBuilders sites, 75% of respondents reported a decrease in violent episodes, 76% reported a decrease in fighting injuries, 42% reported a decrease in vandalism – 70% reported an increase in positive peer relationships, 65% reported an increase in youth seeking adult help and 56% reported an increase in youth helping others.

About PeaceBuilders:

PeaceBuilders provides curriculum and staff development addressing the areas of resiliency skill building, violence/bullying prevention, character education, positive school culture, to certificated and classified personnel who work with youth in grades pre-K through 12 and beyond in after school and community based organizations.

Contact:

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