

Guidance Home Page

Mr. Rauschenberger

“Building Empathy and Compassion for Others ”



First Grade

This week during your child’s guidance classroom lesson, children learned about the importance of empathy and compassion for others.

This lesson was a follow-up to last month’s lesson on bully prevention. Research has proven that one of the best deterrents to bullying behaviors is to teach children about the importance of empathy and compassion for others.

Children learned the difference between sympathy and empathy. Sympathy was defined as, “feeling sorry for someone else.” Empathy was defined as, “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.” The ability for children to learn empathy at a young age is so important. This definition comes from the NJ State Bar Association which is based at Rutgers University. Today’s guidance lesson focused on building empathy for others as well as building a stronger more cohesive classroom community.

The term Tolerance was also discussed and was defined as “Accepting other people’s differences no matter what they look like, how they act, or where they come from.”

Children were read the story, “The Teddy Bear” by David McPhail. This is the story of a little boy who loses his teddy bear that he loves so dearly. His bear is found by a gentle and kind homeless man who takes care of his bear for him until the boy and his mom come across this man in the park. This story helped open up a wonderful discussion about tolerance, empathy, and kindness toward others.

Children in both grades shared times when someone’s word or actions (Put-Downs) hurt their feelings. We also talked about how we can make others feel good about themselves by offering one another “Put-Ups!” These are anything nice you can say to another person. Children practiced handing out “Put-Ups” to classmates.

To help internalize the lesson, children listened to another short story. This story involved the main character being the victim of numerous “put-downs.”

Before the story was read, Mr. Rauschenberger brought out a tube of toothpaste. The toothpaste was used to show the power and negative consequences of hurtful words and that, once they are said, they can never be taken back. Some children were asked to come up one at a time and squeeze out some of the toothpaste onto their finger. The squeezed out toothpaste represented hurtful words that are said to somebody or done to somebody. Next, they were asked to try and put the toothpaste from their finger back in the tube, pretending that those hurtful words were never said. The children were unsuccessful in putting back the toothpaste and ended up with messy toothpaste residue on their fingers and outside the tube of toothpaste! What the children learned is that we cannot take back hurtful words or hurtful actions and that we need to think about what we say before saying something.

Empathy is such a powerful social skills learning tool for all children.

**As Gandhi once said, “Be the Change That You Want to See!”
*Our children can be the change that they want to see in their world!***

