

Guidance Home Page

Mr. Rauschenberger

“Building Empathy and Compassion for Others ”



Second 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, building a stronger more cohesive classroom community and being “Bucket Fillers!”

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 McDuff Moves In by Rosemary Wells and Susan Jeffers. The story tells of a puppy who has never had a true home, until one day he befriends a family who take him in and make him part of their family. 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 showed each class a cup of water for the activity, “Bucket Fillers/Bucket Dippers.” The cup of water resembles our self-esteem. We start out feeling good about ourselves and our cups are full. Every time someone puts us down, it’s like punching a hole in our cup, and the self-esteem leaks out.” Every time a put-down was read to the class, Mr. Rauschenberger asked a student in the class to poke a hole in the paper cup. Band-aids were then put over the holes to try and “take back” all those hurtful things that were said. Children discussed that the band-aids soon wear out and the water once again leaks out of the cup.

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!

