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Create a **CULTURE OF KINDNESS** in Elementary School

126 Lessons to Help Kids Manage Anger,
End Bullying, and Build Empathy



Create a
**CULTURE OF
KINDNESS**
in Elementary School

Grades 3–6

126 Lessons to Help Kids Manage Anger,
End Bullying, and Build Empathy

Naomi Drew, M.A.

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to educators everywhere. You create the future every single day. May this book help you foster a generation of upstanders who collectively become the solution to bullying.

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You Belong

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Foreword

by Stan Davis

In your hands, you hold an important book. In recent decades, we've seen a proliferation of resources about bullying and bullying prevention. Yet now more than ever, there is an urgent need to teach students the critical understandings you will find in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*.

One element that sets this book apart is its focus on increasing kind and inclusive behavior. The longer I work with young people, the more I am convinced that fostering positive actions by students is a crucial element of our work to reduce bullying and to reduce the harm that cruelty can do. My research with Dr. Charisse Nixon at Penn State University, Erie, for the Youth Voice Project reveals the importance of this focus. We found that bullied young people who reported that they felt they belonged at their schools, or that they felt valued and respected at their schools, were significantly less likely to report negative outcomes from the bullying they experienced than those young people who described themselves as not belonging or not feeling valued at school.

The students we surveyed also told us that the most helpful things adults did after bullying incidents were listening and giving emotional support, while the most helpful things peers did were including and encouraging the targeted students. Inclusion by peers led to significantly better outcomes for bullied students than any other intervention by peers. Dr. Abraham Maslow wrote that belonging is a fundamental human need, and that when we experience belonging, we are better able to learn, grow, and become our true selves. When we build belonging, we also foster resiliency and empower young people to overcome negative life events. This book contains many activities and practices that will increase students' sense of belonging, and will help them strengthen that sense in each other.

Skill building and practice make up another powerful focus of this book. We all need practical, useful skills—and teaching strategies that build students' applications of these skills. I learned many years ago from Dr. Steven Danish to make a distinction between teaching knowledge and teaching skills. Knowledge, he taught me, can be gained by reading or listening. Skills, on the other hand, need to be practiced over time, and with feedback, in order to be mastered. When we focus on increasing kind, inclusive behavior and reducing hurtful actions, we do best when we teach specific skills over time.

That's what this book will help you do. Within its pages, you will find practical activities to teach skills that lead to kind actions, inclusion, self-calming, and positive conflict resolution. You will find activities to help your students develop skills in anger management and to strengthen their ability to make positive choices in difficult situations. And of the book's many activities, you can choose the ones that meet your needs and the needs of your students. These activities are built on a foundation of showing and modeling respect for students. This foundation is crucial, because, as James Baldwin wrote, "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

I thank Naomi Drew for her continuing work to improve children's lives, and I am confident that you will find *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School* a valuable addition to the work you do with young people every day.

Stan Davis has worked as a child and family therapist in residential treatment, community mental health, and private practice. Stan trains educators, parents, and students in effective bullying prevention. He is a certified Olweus bullying prevention consultant and a founding member of the International Bullying Prevention Association. Stan is the author of *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical Strategies for Reducing Bullying and Empowering Bystanders in Bullying Prevention*, and he maintains stopbullyingnow.com, an informative website for parents and educators.

Introduction

Guiding students to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world is one of our most critical jobs as educators. It's more important now than ever before that we teach and model respect, acceptance, empathy, and other traits that can help kids interact peacefully and work out differences. Bullying, aggressive conflict, and other cruel behaviors can be prevented when we address them at their roots.

In *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*, you'll find research and data showing how educators can best prevent bullying, confront cruelty, and build compassion. The purpose of the book is, as it has always been, to help teachers and kids by providing concrete ways to stop cruel behavior and strengthen prosocial attitudes and skills. And while the book's primary goal is to counteract bullying, its approach to doing so is broad. When we work to encourage kindness and respect, we plant the seeds of positive and lasting change.

We have many reasons to continue focusing on this important work. Past decreases in bullying have shown us that our efforts to promote acceptance, empathy, conflict resolution, and other bullying prevention strategies are paying off, but we still have much more work to do. Consider the words of students and teachers who were surveyed and interviewed for this book:

"They called me names because of the color of my skin."
—5th-grade girl

"This kid and his friends told me to go back to where I came from." —6th-grade boy

"Even though I knew what he said wasn't true, it killed me inside." —4th-grade boy

"Anger and bullying are among the major issues I see as a teacher." —4th-grade teacher

"How do you end the name-calling? This is a BIG problem. I have tried many things, and I have not found a way that really works." —3rd-grade teacher

Many students and teachers shared similar stories, questions, and concerns in the survey and face-to-face interviews my publisher and I conducted for the original edition of this book. The survey was administered to 2,171 third through sixth graders and 59 teachers across the United States and Canada and confirmed a truth that

we know continues to persist: Bullying is one of the greatest challenges kids face. Educators consistently reported being troubled by bullying, name-calling, and meanness among their students. Seventy-three percent of kids we surveyed said other kids are somewhat to very mean to each other. Forty-four percent said bullying happens often, every day, or all the time, and over forty percent said they see conflicts happening often or every day. Students also expressed, sometimes longingly and often poignantly, that they don't want to be hurt by bullying. Sixty-three percent of kids said they wanted to learn how to stay out of physical fights. Eighty percent said they wanted to learn ways to stop the bullying, avoid fighting, get along better with peers, and work out conflicts.

And while educators and others have made significant gains in their work to reduce and prevent bullying and cruelty, data shows that in 2015 and 2016, U.S. schools and communities experienced a sharp increase in the use of hate speech and in hate crimes against immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people, non-Christians, and other marginalized groups.¹ The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) defines hate crime as "the violence of intolerance and bigotry, intended to hurt and intimidate someone because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability."² The DOJ also states, "Hate crimes have a devastating effect beyond the harm inflicted on any one victim. They reverberate through families, communities, and the entire nation, as others fear that they too could be threatened, attacked, or forced from their homes, because of what they look like, who they are, where they worship, whom they love, or whether they have a disability."³

In response to the spike in hate crimes, in 2016 the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) conducted an online survey of over 10,000 educators across the United States. Ninety percent reported that school climate had been negatively affected by hate speech, racist remarks, and negative actions, including many incidents specifically targeting immigrant children. Eighty percent described "heightened anxiety and concern" in their students. Respondents to the survey also reported seeing an increase in "verbal harassment, the use of slurs and derogatory language, and disturbing incidents involving swastikas, Nazi salutes, and Confederate flags." Additionally, four out of ten educators said they didn't believe their schools had action plans for dealing with incidents of hate and bias.

The SPLC urges all schools to seriously confront any actions that target or marginalize an individual or group and cautions that incidents of this nature tend to have “long-lasting impacts” and require long-term solutions.⁴ Such solutions are exactly what this book provides. A lesson addresses, head-on, the importance of combating hateful actions and words, including those that stem from prejudice and bias. Yet hate can’t be stamped out by a single lesson or discussion. Disentangling its roots requires steady attention, focus, and understanding. And every minute you invest will be worth your time.

Over my decades working with teachers and students across the United States and beyond, I have witnessed firsthand the self-efficacy and pride students gain when they learn how to stop and think before acting, and when they learn to handle disagreements respectfully by using deep breathing, self-calming, respectful listening, and conflict resolution skills. I have also seen the remarkable changes that occur when kids experience the power of compassion—both in giving and receiving it. Navigating the world in a decent, humane way requires understanding that respect is a fundamental human right. It requires remembering that inside every person is a heart that beats and a mind that feels pain when cruel words are spoken. It requires that we accept people and groups we perceive as different from ourselves, and that we choose to do the right thing even when no one is looking. These are the concepts and behaviors kids need to absorb in order to eliminate hatred and bullying and, ultimately, to lead healthy, rewarding lives. And when we teach these skills and concepts as part of every student’s daily routine, classrooms and schools transform. Instilling these attitudes and practices in your students is just as important as teaching academic skills, and by doing so, you can establish a peaceful classroom environment while giving kids the tools they need to have positive, respectful relationships throughout their lives.

Research on Bullying and Its Impact on Children’s Lives

Bullying: *deliberate, aggressive behavior intended to harm another person. It frequently involves an imbalance of power, is often repetitive, and can be done face to face or through electronic media.*

According to the 2015 “Indicators of School Crime and Safety” report from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 15.7 percent of public schools reported that bullying took place among students once a week or more.⁵ Additionally, the report stated that roughly one-third of students who said they were bullied at school reported being bullied “at least once or twice a month during the school year.” Among students who said they were cyberbullied, about

27 percent reported that the cyberbullying took place at least once or twice a month. Other research shows that, when it comes to cyberbullying, kids who are bullied at school are also bullied online, and kids who bully at school also bully online.⁶ Additionally, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center surveyed over 11,000 kids in third through fifth grade and found that cyberbullying and in-person bullying both increased steadily between third and fifth grade.⁷

More data comes from the 2014 “Bullying in U.S. Schools” status report, which summarized surveys of students in grades three through twelve and found:⁸

- An average of 14 percent of students reported being bullied, and 5 percent reported bullying others.
- Bullying behavior was most common among third-grade students, with about one-quarter of kids reporting that they bullied, were bullied, or both.
- When students who are being bullied reach out to others about it, they are least likely to tell their teachers or other adults at school.
- Among boys in grades three through five, 25 percent didn’t tell anyone about being bullied. (Among boys in sixth through eighth grade, this number increases to 34 percent.) While girls are more likely to speak up than boys are, they are also less likely to confide in others about bullying as they get older.
- Regardless of grade level, girls are more likely to try to help a fellow student who is being bullied than boys are.

Gay and transgender students are particularly at risk for being bullied. According to the “2015 National School Climate Survey” of students by GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network), more than 50 percent of LGBTQ students said they heard homophobic language “often or frequently in their schools.” Additionally, “nearly three quarters of students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; more than half were verbally harassed because of their gender expression.” Physical bullying is also problematic, as more than 25 percent of LGBTQ students said they’d been “physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; one in five were physically harassed because of their gender expression.”⁹ Although this survey was conducted with students in grades six through twelve, younger students you’re teaching may well have had similar experiences. GLSEN also commissioned a study of students in grades three through six in more than 1,000 elementary schools across the United States, which revealed the following:¹⁰

- “Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are twice as likely as other students to say that other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about them . . . and three times as likely to report that another kid at school has used the internet to call them names, make fun of them, or post mean things about them.”

- “Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are less likely than other students to feel very safe at school . . . and are more likely than others to agree that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel unsafe or afraid there.”
- Only 24 percent of teachers surveyed said that their schools’ anti-bullying policies made specific mention of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. However, other studies (conducted in secondary schools) have shown that comprehensive anti-bullying policies that specify protections based on these and other personal characteristics are associated with “a lower incidence of name-calling, bullying, and harassment.”

Among all students, bullying and cruelty can create an undercurrent of fear and mistrust. They can also affect learning, development, and even a child’s future mental health. Whether bullying takes place in person or online, and whether it is verbal, relational, or physical, it takes a steep toll on kids and can contribute to problems ranging from depression to disengagement in school and, in rare cases, suicidal ideation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “victimized youth are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and poor school adjustment.” Similarly, another study found that students victimized by their peers were 2.4 times more likely to report suicidal ideation than youth who reported not being bullied and 3.3 times more likely to report a suicide attempt.¹¹ And the risks are true not only for those who are targeted, but for those who target others as well. Kids who bully others are at an elevated risk for “substance abuse, academic problems, and violence later in adolescence and adulthood.”¹²

The negative impact of bullying goes beyond students who are bullied or who bully others, affecting those who see it take place as well. The CDC reports that kids who have observed bullying “report significantly more feelings of helplessness and less sense of connectedness and support from responsible adults” than those who haven’t been witnesses. Similarly, according to the American Psychological Association, research suggests that “students who watch as their peers endure the verbal or physical abuses of another student could become as psychologically distressed, if not more so, by the events than the victims themselves.”¹³

The children who suffer most are those who both bully and are bullied. They are at greater risk for mental and behavioral problems than students who only bully, or who are only bullied.¹⁴ The CDC notes, “Youth who report both being bullied and bullying others . . . have the highest rates of negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and thinking about suicide.”¹⁵

And despite the severity of bullying’s impact, a survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics found that 20 to 30 percent of kids who were

bullied didn’t tell an adult what was going on.¹⁶ This has to change, since telling an adult is one of the most effective tools kids have against bullying. Through the understandings in this book, we hope kids will feel safer approaching teachers and more able to help each other. Too many kids are struggling, often in silence. We all have the capacity—and the responsibility—to help.

The Need to Foster Respect for Diversity

Day by day the world is becoming visibly more diverse. People from different cultures interact in schools, communities, workplaces, and online more than ever before. Schools strive to meet the needs of diverse students, including dual-language learners, students with learning differences and disorders, students with disabilities or behavioral challenges, students who identify as gender variant, and students whose families have recently immigrated.

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”
—Audre Lorde

An essential component of confronting bullying and building compassion is to weave the threads of kindness, respect, and acceptance into every interaction that takes place in our schools and classrooms, and to consistently and gently remind students—and ourselves—that our differences are our strengths. Our world’s vast diversity has helped shape musicians, artists, writers, doctors, scientists, teachers, builders, problem-solvers, and the many others who improve and sustain communities and societies. By embracing each other in all our variety, we support and nurture every one of us.

Yet the challenges are many. Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, and other forms of bias and bigotry impact students on a daily basis. People who are not part of a society’s dominant group (or groups) may be subject to unfair treatment, restrictions on their rights, physical attacks, bias-motivated crimes, and more. And a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* about the negative impact of bullying on kids concludes that “bias-based harassment is more strongly associated with compromised health than harassment.”¹⁷

Helping kids develop respect and appreciation for diversity decreases their likelihood of harming others due to perceived differences. Therefore, teaching students to respect and value differences—and modeling these attitudes for them—is a critical part of bullying prevention.

What Works in Preventing and Addressing Bullying?

A first step in preventing, reducing, and responding to bullying is to instill in students the understanding that everyone's actions matter. A National Institutes of Health (NIH) study shows a direct link between kids' mindsets and their willingness and ability to support peers who are mistreated. If students believe they can make a difference, and if they feel capable of doing so, they are more likely to take action when someone is being picked on.¹⁸

This is why it's so important to teach kids specific steps they can take to support peers who are mistreated—to serve as upstanders rather than looking on as bystanders. In addition, it's essential to provide frequent opportunities for kids to role-play what they're learning. This practice helps them take action. Making time for practice and reinforcement will help students feel more prepared, confident, and capable, and they will be more likely to apply these strategies where it matters most—in real life.

The NIH study also gave the following key actions that educators can use to foster upstander behavior:¹⁹

- *Clearly communicate* that kids are expected to include and support anyone who's mistreated.
- *Show kids how* to include, support, and encourage others so they feel confident doing so.
- *Encourage the understanding* that bullying is wrong and that helping others is the right thing to do.

Kids also have a lot to say about what works to prevent bullying based on their personal experiences. The Youth Voice Project survey looked at data from more than 13,000 students. While it focused on students in fifth through twelfth grades, its valuable findings on bullying and victimization can be applied to students of all ages. This study's conclusions challenge some long-held ideas and shed light on the strategies that work best. Here's some of what the survey revealed.²⁰

The single most helpful strategy for kids who are targets of bullying:

Seek support from an adult at school or from a friend. (Despite how helpful this strategy is, only 33 percent of the kids surveyed told an adult.)

Another highly effective strategy for kids who are targeted:

Don't think like a victim. Kids who told themselves that the bullying wasn't their fault, and that nothing was wrong with them, proved to be more resilient in the face of bullying.

The least helpful strategies for kids being targeted:

- Telling or asking the person bullying them to stop.
- Telling the person how they felt.

The most helpful things bystanders can do to support kids who are being bullied:

- Walk with them and spend time with them at school.
- Help them get away.
- Help them tell an adult.
- Distract the person or people bullying them.
- Give them advice and hope.
- Encourage them.
- Talk to them at school and show them that others care.
- Call them at home to give support.
- Hear their concerns without judgment.

The most important adult strategies to help kids who are bullied:

Kids surveyed by the Youth Voice Project also said that the three most helpful things any adult can do are:

- Listen to them.
- Encourage them.
- Check back later and over time to see if they're okay.

The least helpful things adults might do:

- Say, "You should have . . ."
- Tell a student that the bullying wouldn't have happened if he or she had acted differently.
- Tell a student to stop tattling. (This was the most harmful adult action.)

Other recommendations for adults:

- Reduce or eliminate the following messages in bullying prevention: "Stand up for yourself" and "Just pretend it doesn't bother you."
- Teach kids ways to support and include those who are being picked on or excluded, rather than to confront the person doing the bullying.
- Build a school climate that encourages inclusion and belonging for all.
- Give kids skills that foster connectedness and resilience. When kids feel connected to each other and to their school as a whole, bullying is less likely to occur, and kids are more likely to respond proactively when it does happen.

The lessons in this book will help you integrate all of these recommendations and tools. Communication, problem solving, and emotional management are just a few of the many prosocial skills you will find explored throughout the book.

Additional Data on What Impacts Kids Positively

Anyone who teaches knows how "contagious" emotions and behaviors are. If you've ever spent a year with a conflict-ridden class where bullying is prevalent, you probably know the feeling of throwing your hands up in frustration as bickering and meanness infected the atmosphere in your room.

But there's good news, too: Positive emotions and behaviors also are contagious. Dr. Nicholas A. Christakis, a researcher at Harvard Medical School, explains, "Emotions have a collective existence—they are not just an individual phenomenon." He goes on to say that how you feel depends "not just on your choices and actions, but also on the choices and actions of people . . . who are one, two, and three degrees removed from you."²¹

People one, two, and three degrees removed . . . as in a class. And when positive emotions and behaviors are sparked in a class, they spread. Christakis and his research partner, James Fowler, hypothesize that "behaviors spread partly through the subconscious social signals that we pick up from those around us, which serve as cues to what is considered normal behavior." Another likely cause of social contagions is mirror neurons in our brains, which cause us to mimic what we see in others.²²

We've all seen that mimicking effect as a mood or message spreads through a classroom or social group, often through seemingly small gestures such as facial expressions, looks exchanged between students, eye rolls, and other body language. When we create a school climate where positive interactions are the standard, and negative interactions the exception, kids benefit in a variety of ways. According to a report published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, there is "powerful evidence that school climate affects students' self-esteem." Kids both learn better and feel better about themselves in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The report stresses that positive school climate supports the acquisition of "essential academic and social skills, understanding, and dispositions."²³

Similarly, Search Institute in Minneapolis conducted a comprehensive review of studies on the impact of a caring educational environment on kids.²⁴ This review found that safe, supportive schools foster in students the following critical outcomes:

- higher grades
- higher engagement, attendance, expectations, and aspirations
- a sense of scholastic competence
- fewer school suspensions
- on-time progression through grades
- less anxiety, depression, and loneliness
- higher self-esteem and self-concept

These findings affirm the importance of making concerted efforts to build empathy, kindness, social skills, upstander behaviors, and conscience in students.

Consider the following, as well:

- A 2013 review of school climate research concluded that "school climate has a profound impact on students' mental and physical health." This review also reported that "feeling safe in school powerfully promotes student learning and healthy development," and that schools with positive climates have less aggression and violence, as well as "reduced bullying behavior."²⁵

- A meta-analysis of school programs involving 270,034 students found that kids who were engaged in social-emotional learning "demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance."²⁶

"How we behave matters because within human society everything is contagious—sadness and anger, yes, but also patience and generosity. Which means we all have more influence than we realize."

—Elizabeth Gilbert

By assiduously fostering empathy, conscience, and kindness along with teaching kids how to work out conflicts, deal with anger, and be upstanders for those who are bullied, I believe we can start reversing the trend of youth cruelty. At the same time, we can create a more peaceful atmosphere in our schools, ultimately setting the foundation for a healthier future for all of our children. Think of it as creating a contagion of kindness, compassion, and respect that spreads through your entire class and lasts all year—a contagion that dramatically reduces bullying and conflict.

About This Book

At the core of this book are 126 easy-to-use lessons that have been carefully designed to help you create an atmosphere free of bullying, where kids can learn and thrive. These twenty-minute activities require very little preparation and include key strategies to foster empathy and appreciation of differences, prevent bias-based bullying behaviors, and reinforce a culture of care and respect. The intent is to make it realistic and realizable for you to integrate bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and social-emotional skill building into your already busy school day.

How the Book Is Organized

"Conducting the Lessons and Working with Students" (pages 7–15) provides background information to help you use the book and instill its concepts and skills effectively. It includes information on how to help kids mediate conflicts, top ways of preventing bullying and conflict, and techniques for implementing the book's lessons into the daily routine.

Following that, the book is divided into two main parts:

Part One: Instilling "Get-Along" Skills and Attitudes. These fifteen Core Lessons are the cornerstone of *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*. They introduce

the concepts and skills that are the basis for all the other lessons in the book. See page 8 for more information about the Core Lessons.

Part Two: Getting Along and Building Respect. Here you will find 107 lessons arranged in seven topic areas:

- Fostering Kindness, Compassion, and Empathy
- Managing Anger
- Preventing Conflict
- Responding to Conflict
- Addressing Name-Calling and Teasing
- Dealing with Bullying
- Accepting Differences

The structure for each lesson begins with a list of the key character traits and skills the lesson reinforces, a quick activity summary, and “Students will,” which highlights specific things students will learn. Each lesson also includes:

Materials. The materials you will need to conduct the lesson, including reproducible handouts, are listed here. Other materials are easily obtained, such as chart paper or drawing materials.

Preparation. This is included as needed.

The Lesson. Each lesson begins with an introduction followed by discussion, the main activity, and a wrap-up. The activities vary and may include role plays, large- or small-group tasks, writing, drawing and other creative arts, and learning new information.

Follow-Up. Most lessons include a follow-up activity or suggestion to reinforce and help you monitor how students are doing incorporating the skills and concepts.

Extensions. Many lessons include optional extensions. These are often activities that require more time and have students do creative projects, practice skills, or share what they are learning with others.

Reproducible Forms. Most activities include handouts. These are noted in the materials list and can be found at the end of each lesson; they are also included in the digital content for this book. Unless otherwise noted, you will need to print or copy a handout for each student prior to the lesson.

At the back of the book are several additional resources:

Review Lessons. Use these short lessons anytime to revisit and reinforce concepts from the other lessons.

Pre- and Post-Test. This brief assessment, also in the digital content, lets you measure students’ attitudes and use of skills before and after taking part in *Create a Culture of Kindness* lessons.

Survey About Conflicts. A blank form is provided so you can conduct your own survey with students in your class or school; the survey also is included in the digital content.

References and Resources. This is a selection of recommended books, websites, and other resources you may find helpful.

Index. With the index, you can look up a particular topic (such as calming strategies, gossiping, or physical bullying) or character trait (such as respect, collaboration, or self-control) and find lessons with that focus.

Digital Content. The digital content includes all of the reproducible forms from the book, additional resources for leading the lessons, and forms for sharing information with parents. The parent forms provide background about the concepts children are learning and suggestions for ways parents can support this at home. See page 291 for instructions on how to access the digital content.

Using the Book in Your Setting

Yours may be one of the many classrooms using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Second Step, Responsive Classroom, or another social and emotional learning model. The activities in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School* can easily be integrated with programs like these. If you’re not using any particular curriculum to build social skills, this book will be an important tool for introducing them.

Depending on your needs, you may use as many or as few lessons as you like. Use them as a full curriculum from start to finish or as a shorter unit. In the latter case, conduct the Core Lessons first and follow up by focusing on a particular section (such as Managing Anger) or by conducting several activities from each section. You can also turn to specific lessons when you have an incident of bullying, unkindness, or conflict you want to address promptly.

Using the lessons first thing in the morning is ideal. If you’re already doing morning meetings, you can weave these lessons in after the greeting. If another time of the day works better for you, that’s fine, too. The whole idea is to make the lessons work for you and your setting. Three times a week will give you maximum results. Even doing one lesson a week will make a big difference. The more you do, the better.

Although designed with a classroom in mind, this book can easily be used in other settings, including youth groups, faith-based programs, before- or after-school settings, counseling groups, scouting, camps, or any other environment where children are served. You will find the book useful if you are a classroom teacher, resource teacher, school counselor, youth group director, community program leader, camp counselor, religious educator, or parent.

Each lesson can be conducted in twenty minutes. You can spend more time if you wish, and reinforce concepts as time permits by using the follow-ups and extensions.

Several lessons in each section address similar topics in different ways, helping you reinforce important skills and practices. There are also review lessons, including “10-Minute Time Crunchers.”

Conducting the Lessons and Working with Students

Before you begin, acquaint yourself with the following seven tools to enhance the experience you and your students have with the *Create a Culture of Kindness* lessons:

Circle. The lessons in this book will be most effective if done in a circle. This helps with listening, focus, and empathy. One of the most basic ways people connect is by looking at each other’s faces when speaking. So many children spend hours each day behind a cell phone, computer screen, or video game; they’re often more connected to a screen than to each other. As a result, some kids may have become oblivious to each other’s feelings and may find face-to-face interactions awkward. By seating your students in a circle, you can get them used to looking at the person who is speaking. Coach them to look around the circle when it’s their turn to speak, and to wait to begin speaking until everyone is looking back at them.

Cueing kids to look at each other and tune in to what’s being said can drastically improve communication skills and develop a greater sense of connectedness. The good listening and respectful attitudes fostered in the circle can also spill over into the rest of the day and make it easier to teach.

Globe. For many lessons, I strongly recommend having a globe handy. If you can, pick up the soft kind that’s a cross between a ball and a pillow. You can order these through AAA, Amazon, or many other places online. Here are three ways to use your globe as you conduct the lessons:

1. Let it serve as a visual reminder that we are part of the larger world. Hold up the globe periodically to remind kids that our actions make a difference and everything we do affects the people around us. They can make the world a better place starting right in their own classroom. Peace begins with each person.
2. Use it as a “talking object” to pass in the circle when you do the activities in this book. The person holding the globe is the only one to speak. When he or she is finished, the globe is passed to the next person.
3. If you have a soft globe, you can use it as a ball to throw during review activities (for more on review activities, see the digital content), allowing you to review concepts easily and quickly.

Working in pairs. Many lessons in this book have children working in pairs and, in some cases, small groups. These interactions enable kids to immediately put into practice many cooperative behaviors they are learning: listening, compassion, kindness, openness to another’s ideas. Studies have shown that using pairs and cooperative learning in teaching situations improves students’ ability to learn new concepts.²⁷

My favorite way to get students into pairs is to prime them by saying, “In a moment we’re going to partner up. Your most important job is to make sure no one is left out. Look around and make sure everyone is included.” I always follow this up with immediate acknowledgment of kids who make sure no one is left out, especially if they forgo sitting with a friend to be a partner to someone who doesn’t have one. If I see students start rushing to be with friends instead of looking around to see if someone needs a partner, I stop the whole process and give a gentle reminder.

Assuming you have your kids in a circle, another way to get them to partner up is to randomly ask one child to raise his or her hand. After that, every second child raises a hand, alternating so half the students have hands raised. Kids with raised hands turn to the person on their right; this person becomes their partner. If there’s an odd number, have one group triple up, or have the extra child be your partner.

Once students are in pairs, whether in chairs or seated on the floor, have them sit “knee to knee”—directly facing one another with their knees facing but not touching. This enables good eye contact and less distraction.

Charts. Many activities include creating a chart for or with students. Among these, there are seven that I recommend laminating and keeping up all year long as a visual reminder of the most important bullying prevention concepts in this book:

- **Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom:** Keep this chart somewhere in the front of the room for easy reference, high enough for everyone to see, but not so high you can’t reach the agreements with a pointer. (This chart is introduced in Lesson 1.)
- **Respectful Listening:** This chart can be used all day long for every subject you teach. Display it where kids can’t miss seeing it. (Introduced in Lesson 2.)
- **Peace Pledge:** You’ll probably be using this every morning, so keep it in easy access for kids to view. You might want to have a different child lead the class in the pledge each day, so post it in a spot a student can stand next to. (Introduced in Lesson 6.)
- **Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts and Rules for Using the Win/Win Guidelines:** Place these near your Peace Table or Peace Place (see page 9). Post them so they’re readily accessible when two students sit down together to work out a conflict. (Introduced in Lesson 8.)

- **Stop, Breathe, Chill:** This is another good chart for your Peace Table area, but if space is limited, any place in the room will do. (Introduced in Lesson 9.)
- **No More Hurtful Words:** This is a pledge for students to live by and for you to refer to whenever they need a reminder to be kind. (Introduced in Lesson 22.)
- **Ways to Chill:** This chart can go in any spot where it's easily seen, even up high at the top of a wall. It will serve as a constant reminder of all the things students can do to calm down when angry. (Introduced in Lesson 40.)

Other charts recommended in lessons throughout the book can be left up as long as you need them, whether that's a day or two after you've completed the lesson or longer as a reinforcement. If possible, save any charts you take down. They can serve as helpful reminders of concepts you might want or need to review as the year goes on.

Student journals. Journals are used throughout the lessons in a variety of ways: for responding to a topic, airing personal experiences, brainstorming ideas, and more.

Provide students with notebooks to use as their journals. Have students decorate and personalize the cover. Keep a journal yourself and do the same exercises your students do. This will broaden your own understanding of the concepts in this book and expand your ability to empathize with what kids are going through. If you choose to share any of your journal entries with your students, it may help them open up even more.

Automatic writing. Some of the lessons employ automatic writing, a technique that can spark spontaneous thought and release ideas. In automatic writing, students should let their words flow out freely and land on the paper like coins spilling out of a bag. Neatness, grammar, and spelling don't count. After stating the given prompt, direct students to "write, write, write" for about three minutes straight without lifting pencil from paper until you say "Stop."

Automatic writing is about the unfolding of what's inside. Let students know that sometimes they may be surprised at what comes out. Whether they keep what they write confidential or share it with you and others is always up to them.

Students who have difficulty writing can draw their response, speak their words into a recorder, or dictate their words to you, a classroom aide, or another student if this is comfortable for them.

Role plays. Role playing is a key learning strategy in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*. Role playing allows students to practice the bullying prevention and conflict resolution skills they are learning, making it easier to apply them in real-life situations.

Often the role plays provided are based on the Survey About Conflicts and interviews we conducted with

students. Your students' own experiences will also make good sources for role plays, so invite these wherever you feel it is appropriate.

Ask for volunteers to play the parts. If not enough students volunteer, take a part yourself. Do not have students act out aggressive behaviors or demonstrate the use of aggressive words, as acting out negative behaviors can reinforce them. Instead, describe what happened, then have students act out the resolution. The purpose of the role plays is to give students practice implementing the strategies they're learning.

If the actual situation being role-played resulted in a physical fight, allow only pantomimed movements.

Teach students these ground rules for role plays:

- Students who participate should never reveal personal information they're not comfortable sharing.
- No physical contact or swearing is allowed.
- Actors should not use real names.

If student actors get off track or start to act silly, stop the role play and remind them of its purpose and the ground rules.

Key Practices and Skills: The Core Lessons

The Core Lessons that make up Part 1 introduce the most critical skills and attitudes for creating a bully-free environment. Some of the strategies in Part 1 will be reintroduced in Part 2, but are included early on so you can start the year with them. The Core Lessons were designed to help you do the following:

- create agreements for a peaceful, "get-along" classroom
- foster empathy, kindness, and acceptance
- teach respectful listening
- build trust and collaboration
- introduce the Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts
- introduce the anger-management strategy Stop, Breathe, Chill
- foster responsibility for one's actions

These initial lessons also include some important practices that will help you maintain an atmosphere of respect and kindness throughout the year: breathing for calmness, the process of visualization, a Peace Pledge to be recited each day, a ritual for setting aside upset feelings when entering the classroom, and the class Peace Table or Peace Place.

Deep Breathing

I recommend starting the activities in this book by leading students in a few rounds of deep breathing. Most kids like this practice. Taking a few deep breaths together is a ritual they learn to look forward to. Doing so helps