

Character Connector



Franklin Township School



Building a Positive School Climate

Welcome back to school!
We hope that your summer was relaxing and peaceful. This year we are proud to continue with our school-wide character education program, Community of Caring. Our program is built around five core values that will empower our students to be responsible and caring members of our school community. It is our belief that the values of

caring, respect, responsibility, trust and family are the foundation on which responsible decisions and behaviors are based. As a Community of Caring School, these values will be taught everywhere: in the classroom, hallway, cafeteria and playing field. A student's ability to reflect upon and act upon values is essential in shaping their lives, illuminating goals and guiding responsible decisions.

As a caring school community, we also want to insure that all our students feel safe, respected and part of the FTS family. In order to achieve this goal, it is important that students learn basic social skills that will enable them to communicate effectively with others. Good communication skills lead to healthy interpersonal

relationships, and help us learn how to solve problems with others when they arise. These are also called Conflict Resolution Skills. Teaching conflict resolution skills helps students learn how to navigate conflicts with others peacefully, without resorting to teasing or bullying. As a caring school community, it is our goal to build a bully-free environment at FTS.

This year, we will continue to discuss how to use the Win! Win! Guidelines developed by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation to help students solve conflicts with others peacefully. In addition, we will incorporate lessons from Second Step, a Violence Prevention Curriculum developed by the Committee for Children. This research-based program has been designated an “Exemplary Program” by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. Our lessons will concentrate on teaching students to act responsibly and take responsibility. We hope it

helps open dialogue at your dinner table.

We cannot do this without the whole Franklin Family working together. To help insure that the lessons discussed in classes also become lifelong lessons for our young citizens at home, we will continue to keep you updated about our efforts in the FTS newsletter. The Character Connector will be the link that communicates to you what we will be focusing on in school in the area of character education. We hope it opens another door to a more efficient home/school communication.



The commitment that we have is strong, and we know that you will be supporting and encouraging our endeavors. Our collaborative efforts, and the modeling of integrity at school, at home and at play will set a sturdy

foundation. This foundation will assist us in providing a positive school climate where students can focus on academics. It will also help build life-long pro-social skills that will allow your child to be successful throughout his/her life.

Your child will be learning some basic essential lessons that will help them to better deal with normal, everyday conflict. The first lesson teaches children the difference between aggressive, passive and assertive behavior. For elementary students, this lesson is called, “The Monster, The Mouse and Me.” They also learn about the consequences that may be associated with these behaviors. For example...

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR (THE MONSTER) –

Sometimes we act like a Monster. Monsters take care of their own feelings, state their opinions, or stand up for their rights without caring about the rights or feelings of others. “What are some of the problems that might come up

if you act like a Monster?” (We may hurt other people’s feelings, others won’t like us, others might be scared of us, may lose good friends, etc...)

PASSIVE BEHAVIOR (THE MOUSE) – Sometimes we act like a Mouse. A mouse doesn’t express its feelings or stand up for itself. Although mice take care of other people, they don’t take care of themselves and often feel pushed around. “What are some of the problems that might come up if you act like a Mouse?” (We may get pushed around, taken advantage of, feel resentful if we give up our rights, feel like you always lose, feel like a doormat, etc...)



ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR
(ME) – Try to solve problems or arguments without being a Monster or a Mouse. Respect

each other's opinions, feelings and rights. Take care of yourself while caring for others. Act towards others, as you would like them to act towards you. That's being YOU.

How about trying some role-playing? Here's a common school scenario...

You are waiting on line for the slide and someone steps in front of you on line.

MONSTER – “Get out of my way!” (child pushes others out of their way in order to get in front).

MOUSE – “Okay, you can go first.” (child does nothing but feel sad and angry inside).

ME – “I felt upset when you cut in front of me in line because I was waiting my turn like I was supposed to. Can you please go to the end of the line and wait for your turn?” (This child feels proud for standing up for his/her rights in a respectful but assertive way. This is also an example

of an I-Message, which will be explained shortly.)

The second lesson that the children will learn is how to give an I-Message. An I-Message is defined as a clear, assertive, non-threatening, respectful way of telling another person how you feel and what you want. I-Messages help you communicate your needs and wants in a non-threatening manner. There is no blaming or name-calling. The I-Message should be neutral and should not put the other person down in any way. An I-Message follows this format...“I felt _____ when you _____ because _____. Next time I want you to _____.” It's time for some more role-playing. Here's another common scenario...



Mary's mother bought her 5 new pencils for school. One

day, Justin takes one of her pencils without asking.

YOU Message – “You’re always taking my stuff without asking. You are such a pain, I’m going to tell on you!”

I-Message – “Justin, I felt angry when you took my pencil without asking because it belongs to me. Next time I want you to ask me if you can borrow it.”

The next lesson is defining and deliberating against “Reporting vs. Rattling” (for the middle school student) and “Telling vs. Tattling” (for the elementary student.)

Telling/Reporting is defined as the act of informing if someone is doing something harmful. Tattling/Rattling is defined as the act of trying to get someone into trouble. The children will learn how to tell the difference between the two, and they will also learn when it is appropriate to “tell” on someone, and why tattling is wrong. Here is an example...

You overhear someone on the playground saying that they are going to beat up Timmy after school. (Telling – because you are reporting that someone plans on doing something harmful to another person).

Someone took your purple crayon without asking. You give them an I-Message and they return the crayon, but you tell the teacher anyway. (Tattling – because you are just trying to get someone into trouble).

You feel badly because someone calls you a name on the playground. You give an I-Message, but the name-calling continues. (Telling – This is an example of bullying. Bullies do not respect I-Messages. They continue their behavior even though they were asked to stop.)



You may be asking yourself what the differences are between bullying and normal everyday conflict. Bullying occurs when there is an imbalance of power, and the act of bullying is often repeated over time. The bully seeks power and control. They may be trying to gain material things or power. They show no remorse and they put forth no effort to solve the problem. Normal conflict occurs when there is equal power. Thus, it can happen between friends. This happens occasionally and most times it's accidental, and not serious. Neither party is seeking power or attention, nor trying to get something. Responsibility is taken and an effort is put forth to solve the problem.

We encourage you to reinforce these lessons at home with your child. Consistency is the key when role-modeling and shaping positive behaviors in children. We hope this information is helpful and allows us as educators and you as parents

to begin using the same language both at home and in school. This will further reinforce the importance of demonstrating caring, respectful, responsible and trustworthy behavior at home with our families and in our school community.

If you have any stories or feedback dealing with these lessons, please feel free to share them with us. We are all working towards a goal of creating a bully-free environment at Franklin and beyond!

Ms. Kresch, School Counselor



