

## **Explore Kindness**

### Teacher Training Lessons

#### **Lesson 1: Introduction & Implementation**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

Designed to foster social skills for preschool through grade two, Explore Kindness features cooperative lessons, hands-on activities and multimedia resources.

A series of 15 Teacher Trainings provide guidance, tips and ideas for making the program a fun, engaging experience for you and your students. We suggest completing two lessons per week. Each lesson takes about 8-10 minutes. After 12 informational lessons, you will view a Strategy Review and two Comprehensive Evaluations.

##### **GETTING STARTED**

Step One:

Begin by exploring the online lessons. They are designed to require minimal preparation, with supplemental activities available as time and need allows.

Step Two:

Sign and duplicate the Family Letter. Have students bring the letter home before you begin the first lesson.

Step Three:

Browse each section of the Explore Kindness website. Here, you will find printable materials to reinforce the program's messages in a fun and colorful way.

Step Four:

Decide when and how often you will implement the program. Lessons are divided into segments, with five to eight segments per lesson. Each 10-15 minute segment works well with young attention spans.

##### **Typical Lesson Broken into Segments**

Segment 1: Introduce the topic with discussion, story or puppet play

Segment 2: Move deeper into topic with role-play activity or game

Segment 3: Complete a hands-on project or activity sheet

Segment 4: Discuss what was learned and share ideas

Segment 5: Access students and distribute Take-Home sheets

## **Lesson 2: Building Teacher-Student Connections**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research shows that teachers have a powerful impact on student behavior, not only through what they teach, but also through what they do. Children watch our day-to-day interactions closely, naturally imitating those who treat them with kindness and respect. Our goal is to help you use these opportunities to teach social skills during your daily routine.

### **RESEARCH**

In a recent study, preschoolers who experienced more responsive teacher interactions showed stronger vocabulary and decoding skills at the end of first grade. (Connor, Son & Hindman, 2005)

Teachers who provided emotional support in a consistent, safe classroom had students who were more self-reliant. (Hamre & Pianta, 2001)

Studies show low-achieving students have less personal interactions with teachers than high-achievers, yet low-achievers benefit most from these supportive interactions. (Baker, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The techniques of Robert Pianta help students feel heard and included, while correcting undesirable behaviors. It also strengthens the teacher-student connection, improving the class environment for everyone.

Using Acknowledge + Direct responses can help teachers connect to students through guidance and inclusion, rather than scolding and exclusion.

**ACKNOWLEDGE** what the student is doing or feeling, even if you feel frustrated or disappointed by the situation.

**DIRECT** the student with clear instructions, encouragement or praise. This will make an impression on all students who are observing.

Examples:

“I see you’re upset. Tell me what happened before you pushed Hannah. What made you angry?”

“You’re being very patient. Let me help by holding this while you connect the other piece.”

### **Lesson 3: Cultivating Respect and Kindness**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this lesson, we'll talk about ways to build a firm foundation for the program by cultivating respect and kindness in your classroom.

#### **RESEARCH**

Caring, respectful classrooms help young students learn how to communicate, solve conflicts and build healthy relationships with others. (Johnson, 2007)

A kind, respectful classroom can be created by:

- Using daily interactions to encourage and praise kindness and respect.
- Recognizing students as equal citizens of the classroom community.
- Using praise and thoughtful correction to help students feel secure about sharing answers and ideas. (Johnson, 2007)

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Developmentally, most preschoolers still struggle with egocentrism. They need guidance to widen their perspectives and consider the feelings of others. As caring role models, teachers can nurture empathy with a variety of learning tools:

- Picture Books: How did Toby show he was sorry? How did the crab help his friends?
- Role Play: What if Ellie had no one to paint with? Show us what you would do to help.
- Creative Activities: Draw a helpful thing you can do when you arrive in the classroom.
- Puppets: Use your puppet to invite someone to play.

It's not enough to tell children to be kind. We need to teach them HOW through repeated guidance. The following strategy can help in many day-to-day situations:

**PRAISE:** I really like how you asked Tim to draw with you.

**OUTCOME:** Did you see how he smiled when you asked?

**PRAISE:** You're getting so good at being helpful.

**OUTCOME:** It only took a few seconds for you to put those books away!

**PRAISE:** You really helped Tara when she got hurt.

**OUTCOME:** Did you see how quickly she calmed down when you helped her up?

## **Lesson 4:** **Establishing Behavior Guidelines**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Establishing and maintaining guidelines for behavior can make your classroom a safer, more enjoyable space for everyone.

### **RESEARCH**

Setting clear guidelines for good behavior conveys high expectations. It tells students you believe in their ability to behave well.

All students—even those with behavioral problems—can learn to follow guidelines if teachers expect it of them.

When given a structure for good behavior that is equally applied to everyone, students with behavior problems learn by watching other students do well.

(Canter, Canter, 1992)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Involve students in creating or revising your classroom's behavior guidelines. Start by asking them to name Helpful and Hurtful actions. Guide them in naming specific actions and their outcomes.

Most children know it is wrong to hit and push others, but they're unsure about behaviors like excluding, bossing, ignoring or telling secrets. Give them specific guidelines about these kinds of social aggression. Be clear that these behaviors are wrong and hurtful.

Likewise, help them name positive social behaviors, such as saying hi to someone new, inviting others to play, sharing toys and offering help to someone who feels sad.

Use your list of Hurtful and Helpful actions to vote on official Class Rules. By having their voices heard, students will feel like valued citizens of their classroom community. Aim to phrase rules in a positive manner, and limit the total number of rules to seven or eight. Too many rules will overwhelm young students.

## **Lesson 5: Praise, Rewards and Correction**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Children learn best when they rehearse social skills over and over, while receiving praise, direction and support from teachers. In this way, they learn to apply behavioral guidelines to a variety of situations.

### **RESEARCH**

If we want children to get better at reading or math or spelling, what do we tell them?

**PRACTICE!** If we want them to get better at developing self-control and responsibility, what do we tell them? **BE GOOD!** Children need opportunities, under the caring guidance and support of adults, to practice these essential skills without criticism or judgment. (Chip Wood from *Rules in School: Teaching Discipline in the Responsive Classroom* by Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton & Deborah Porter, 2001)

Most teachers recognize praise as an important component of good behavior, but research suggests it is often underused or misused in the classroom. For instance, a vague statement like, “Great job!” can actually be counterproductive. Let’s explore better ways to use praise. (Burnett, 2007, Kern, 2007; Hawkins & Heflin, 2011)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Effective praise has two primary elements: a specific **DESCRIPTION** of behavior or achievement and a signal of **APPROVAL** or success from the teacher.

**DESCRIPTION:** You shared your paint with Jesse when his paint ran out.

**APPROVAL:** I really appreciate your thoughtfulness!

**DESCRIPTION:** You asked Gus if you could play with the puzzle, then waited your turn.

**APPROVAL:** You’re really learning to be patient!

Praising a specific accomplishment has been shown to be more effective than praising a general ability.

**LESS EFFECTIVE:** You’re a really great listener!

**MORE EFFECTIVE:** You listened with your ears and eyes through the whole story. Great job!

Experts agree that correcting a behavior works best if it happens immediately. As a class, work together to decide on consequences for breaking class rules, and enforce them quickly and without fuss.

## **Lesson 6: Emotional Recognition & Regulation**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Young students need help managing strong emotions like anger and frustration. By teaching them to recognize and regulate their feelings, we support them in their emotional development.

### **RESEARCH**

The ability to effectively identify feelings has been linked to lower levels of aggression in children. (Ostrov, et al., 2013)

As they learn to recognize their own emotions, children become more aware of how others feel. This helps them learn self-regulation from one another and allows them to practice empathy. (Levine & Tamburrino, 2014)

Children who have a supportive relationship with their teacher are more likely to succeed academically, follow rules and regulate their own behaviors. (Hughes, 2008)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The “Daily Check-In” helps students identify their current state of emotion using visual cues. Begin with a class discussion about feeling words, like happy, sad, angry, worried, jealous, surprised, silly, etc. Next, create a visual way for students to match their names or photos to the correct feeling.

After reading a story, talk about the feelings of the characters. How do their words sound if the feelings are switched—for instance, if a sad character becomes angry? Read the story with different voices to help students compare the feelings.

Invite students to role play by speaking as someone else with a strong feeling. Using puppets can help to make this process easier. After a conflict, ask them how they felt. How do they think the other person felt? How do they feel now? Act it out!

Let them know that feelings are okay and normal. It’s not bad to be angry or sad, but it is wrong to show those feelings in a hurtful way.

Above all, let students know you are there to support them. Praise those who ask for help before things get out of control. Make your desk a safe place to go if they need to regulate a strong feeling.

## **Lesson 7: Relational Aggression**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The term “childhood aggression” usually brings to mind physical acts, such as hitting, shoving, kicking and grabbing. However, research tells us children are more likely to show aggression in non-physical ways. This social or relational aggression is one of the most common and overlooked problems among children.

### **RESEARCH**

Relational aggression refers to behaviors meant to harm another person’s social status, self-esteem or friendships. It may be verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect. Examples include rejection, exclusion or ignoring, rumors or gossip, bossing, withholding friendship (“I won’t be your friend unless...”), insults, teasing and humiliation. (Underwood, 2003; Casas, Weigel, Crick et al., 2006)

While most adults have rules regarding physical aggression, they are much less likely to have clear rules about relational aggression. As a consequence, children often don’t recognize these behaviors as wrong or hurtful. (Goldstein & Boxer, 2013)

Children also learn aggressive behaviors through exposure to the media. A recent study measured social interactions in the most popular TV shows for 2- to 11-year-olds. 92 percent contained some form of social aggression, at an average rate of one incident every four minutes. (Martins, Wilson, 2011)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Explore Kindness works to help you reduce social aggression in 8 specific ways:

#1) Encourage Friendships: The program’s group activities provide a safe way for children to get acquainted and establish positive social status with their peers.

#2) Talk About It: Children need clear guidelines about what is socially acceptable and what isn’t.

#3) Be Consistent: Make guidelines a consistent source of classroom pride by posting them in a visible place and referring to them often.

#4) Focus on Effort: All relationships require effort, and we all make mistakes. Help students find opportunities to work on solutions and repair the damage.

#5) Praise the Positive: Discourage negative behaviors by rewarding the positive. This will encourage children to repeat kind behaviors like sharing, empathy and inclusion.

#6) Encourage Getting Help: Students will take pride in standing up to relational aggression if they feel like an important member of a team effort.

#7) Know the Signs: Relationally aggressive children are often social leaders with advanced social skills. However, these same children often have trouble keeping friends. Be aware of this dynamic and keep an open mind when it comes to relational aggression. (Russell et al., 2003; Bonica, et al. 2003; Jonson & Foster, 2005)

#8) Involve Parents: In order for any social skills program to succeed, parents must address and counteract these messages of aggression.

## **Lesson 8: Growth Perspective**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Dr. Carol Dweck, a psychologist who has spent decades studying the growth mindset—a way of thinking focused on effort and improvement, rather than fixed limitations.

### **RESEARCH**

FIXED MINDSET thinkers believe their abilities are set, no matter what they do.

“I failed my math test again. I’m just no good at math.”

GROWTH MINDSET thinkers understand that intelligence and other skills can be constantly developed and improved.

“I failed my test because I didn’t understand the problems. Next time, I’ll ask the teacher for help.”

Fixed thinkers link their successes to unchangeable traits, such as intelligence or talent. However, they also see failures as a fixed condition. They don’t believe they are capable of improvement. (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007)

Instead of using fixed labels like “bully” and “victim,” students taught growth mindset saw aggressors as immature. Instead of blaming themselves, they were better able to forgive the person who mistreated them. They understood the person could change. (Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Davis & Nixon, 2013)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

General praise of a child’s intelligence actually undermines motivation and performance. By naming a specific action instead, we reinforce a good behavior and give the child a clear motivation.

FIXED: “Wow, you’re so smart. You got all the problems right. I can see you’re really good at math.” (Child thinks, “I guess I don’t need to do anything differently. I’m smart and I’m good at math.”)

GROWTH: “Wow, you got all the math problems right. You must have studied very hard.” (Child thinks, “I like the feeling of doing well. I’ll study next time, too.”)

As with praise, we can correct students by naming a specific choice or behavior. Avoid using fixed labels, as they can make children feel stuck in a certain role. The word “bully” is a common example of using fixed mindset to try and correct a behavior.

FIXED: “You hurt Sam’s feelings. No one likes a bully.” (Child thinks, “I’m a bully. I guess it won’t help to do anything differently.”)

GROWTH: “Did you see what happened when you left Sam out? He seems hurt.” (Child thinks, “I didn’t mean to hurt Sam. I could ask him to join us. That might make him feel better.”)

## **Lesson 9: Friendship Building**

### **INTRODUCTION**

How to make and maintain friends is one of the most important, beneficial skills a person can learn.

### **RESEARCH**

Children with this valuable ability experience both short- and long-term benefits. For instance, kindness in primary students is linked to lower aggression, better verbal skills and greater popularity among peers. (Slaughter et al., 2002; Landon et al., 2010)

Children begin learning friendship skills by interacting with family members. Babies with secure family attachments go on to be more socially competent in school and more likely to have secure friendships as teens. (Simpson et al., 2007)

Although teachers cannot control what happens outside the classroom, they can help students find positive ways to make friends through simple acts of kindness. When researchers asked primary students to perform three acts of kindness per week, the children became more popular than those in a control group. (Layous et al 2012)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Children who shine socially have four important skills: empathy, good communication, self-control and conflict resolution.

EMPATHY can be practiced through the Daily Check-In and by modeling, encouraging and praising empathetic behaviors.

COMMUNICATION is a vital skill for friendship building. A great way to give children practice is to place them in small groups with a common goal. Studies show children can improve their social status in a group by being good listeners. Teach and practice the components of whole-body listening.

SELF-CONTROL and learning to control impulses is also a valuable friendship skill. When you know students well, you can redirect their impulses to seek attention and status. Studies suggest children develop better emotional self-control when their emotions are acknowledged with sympathy and respect, rather than dismissal or punishment. (Denham et al 1997)

Dismissal: No one's laughing at you, silly.

Punishment: Sit by yourself until you can be a big girl.

Acknowledgment: Are you feeling upset? What happened?

## **Lesson 10: Constructive Conflict Resolution**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Classroom conflicts can be disruptive and stressful for everyone. However, recent studies have highlighted the many benefits of conflict, especially when it is handled correctly.

### **RESEARCH**

Conflict helps children learn to consider the feelings of others and adjust their behavior to different situations. However, during the early school years, a child's emotions are often stronger than his reasoning skills. (Trawick-Smith, 2003)

Despite their limitations, children as young as 3 can talk about conflicts and come up with ideas for solving them. The key is getting support and guidance from adults. (Trawick-Smith, 2003; Dennis, Colwell & Lindsey, 2004)

Conflicts help children improve their interpersonal skills. In fact, research shows children with more conflicts actually have higher social competence and lower levels of aggression. According to one study, awareness of this dynamic even helped teachers see these students in a more positive way. (Dennis, Colwell & Lindsey, 2004)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

#1) **DEFUSE:** If the conflict is centered around an object, make it clear you will hold the object until things are sorted out. If a harmful behavior is involved—such as shoving or grabbing—make sure bodies are separated.

#2) **GET THE FACTS:** With a calm and sympathetic voice, ask what happened. Remember, children live in the moment. They are more focused on what happened than the reasons behind it. Try using “what” questions instead of “why.”

#3) **LISTEN:** Most conflicts are rooted in emotions like anger, frustration, jealousy and sadness. Help children name their feelings, as well as the feelings of the others involved. Help them practice “putting on the other shoe.”

#4) **REFLECT:** State the problem again to make sure you understand all the information. This is also the time to explain underlying issues that egocentric children might not recognize.

#5) **FIND SOLUTIONS:** Give both students a chance to talk about how the problem can be solved. Based on their developmental level, some will be able to discuss ideas in detail. Others will need guidance and suggestions from you. Remember to praise their efforts afterward.

## **Lesson 11: Perspective Taking**

### **INTRODUCTION**

We all see the world differently, based on our personalities, moods, past experiences, cultures and so on. Effective social skills education must include the practice of perspective taking, or the ability to see things from another person's point of view.

### **RESEARCH**

Through life experiences, children gradually accept the idea of different perspectives. However, this doesn't rid them of egocentric patterns. In fact, research shows that people of all ages struggle with perspective taking. (Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001; Epley, Morewedge, & Keysar, 2004).

With guidance, everyone can learn to strengthen their perspective-taking skills. According to research, this reduces misunderstandings and defensiveness, leading to fewer conflicts. With practice, even young children can benefit from this strategy. (de Haan & Singer, 2013)

As those with different backgrounds or special needs enter the classroom, it becomes important to help students practice hearing and understanding different perspectives. (Trawick-Smith, 2013; Charlop-Christy & Freeman, 2001)

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Conflict Resolution Education Connection outlines three steps for helping children practice perspective taking:

**DESCRIBE:** Thea grabbed the crayon when I was using it.

**INTERPRET:** Maybe Thea forgot to ask first. Maybe she wanted the crayon, too. Maybe Thea was upset for another reason.

**CLARIFY:** Thea, why did you take the crayon?

With practice, this process can happen quickly and without fuss. Afterward, thank the students and redirect them.

**CONCLUSION:** Thank you for working together to talk about what happened. Remember, we use manners and ask before taking something. Let's find another crayon for Thea.

## **Lesson 12:**

### **Getting Families Involved**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the program, we will support you with materials and strategies designed to educate students' family members, encourage their support and address their concerns.

#### **RESEARCH**

Social skills programs that include training for parents consistently produce greater gains and higher levels of success. (Lochman & Wells, 2004)

Students also experience greater success when programs include a two-way exchange of information between home and school. Students and parents report that programs with take-home materials have a greater effect on social skills than those without. (Adams, Womack, Shatzer, Caldarella, 2010)

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Let's look at four key ways Explore Kindness helps teachers inform and involve family members.

##### **#1) Providing Clear Information**

Explore Kindness provides take-home sheets to help parents understand the social skills learned in class. Key concepts are reviewed in a way that encourages children to discuss the information in their own words.

##### **#2) Inviting Open Communication**

Once parents are informed, they will be better prepared to share their thoughts and questions. Explore Kindness provides resources to make this exchange more successful. In the Resources section of the Explore Kindness website, you will find templates to help you share information about the program and provide parents with regular updates.

##### **#3) Empowering Parents as Partners**

Explore Kindness helps parents find fun, simple ways to reinforce positive social skills at home. For instance, if a child reads a new book, that experience can be used to complete a take-home sheet. With open-ended questions, the child and parent can discuss the characters, their actions and whether those actions were helpful or hurtful.

##### **#4) Addressing Conflicts**

As we saw in previous lessons, conflict is a normal part of social interaction. However, some parents may resist discussing problems. Others may do the opposite, resorting to the aggressive behaviors.