

**Guidance Home Page**  
**3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Guidance Lesson**  
**Mr. Rauschenberger**  
**Self-Awareness and Empathy Training**  
**“The Power Shuffle-Crossing the Line”**

During our **November** classroom guidance lesson, 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. Today’s guidance lesson focused on building empathy for others as well as building a stronger more cohesive classroom community. Children began the lesson by reading short stories from *Chicken Soup for the Children’s Soul*. Third graders read “Nine Gold Medals,” fourth graders read “Goodwill” and fifth graders read “The New House and the Snake.” All three stories teach us important lessons about having empathy and compassion for others.

The activity children participated in was called **“Crossing the Line”** (a.k.a “The Power Shuffle”). The children were read several statements about different events and incidents that may have occurred in their lives. If those incidents pertained to them, they were asked to “cross the line.” In our case, students moved from one part of the classroom or hallway to the other side of the classroom or hallway. Some of the prompts that were read included the following:

- 1) *“Cross the line in silence if you’ve ever been teased, called a bad name or made fun of.”*
- 2) *“Cross the line if you’ve ever been picked last in games or sports or felt left out of a game”*
- 3) *“Cross the line if you’ve ever felt alone, unwelcome or afraid”*
- 4) *“Cross the line if you’ve ever felt pressure from your friends or an adult to do something you didn’t want to do.”*

Children in third, fourth and fifth grade were each given different prompts. Some discussion questions that followed the activity included:

- *“What are some feelings that came up for you during this activity?”*
- *“What was the hardest part about crossing the line?”*
- *“What did you learn about yourself?”*
- *“What did you learn about your classmates?”*
- *“What do you want to remember about this experience?”*
- *“What do you want to tell others about this experience?”*

Once this activity was completed, children were asked to return to their seats where they were then given a piece of paper and asked to write about their thoughts and feelings as they pertained to the activity. At the conclusion of the lesson, children were given the opportunity to share some of their thoughts and feelings. This activity can be very powerful because, if nothing else, children can see that they are not the only ones who’ve experienced difficult times in their lives and that there’s “strength in numbers.”

**Guidance Lesson Home Page**  
**Mr. Rauschenberger**  
**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades**  
**Empathy, Tolerance, and Acceptance**

*During our November classroom guidance lesson, children learned about the meaning of empathy and tolerance. Empathy was defined as “Putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.” Tolerance was defined as “Accepting other people’s differences no matter what they look like, how they act, or where they come from.”*

**Children in first grade were read the story, “The Teddy Bear” by David McPhail. Second graders were read the story “McDuff Moves In” by Rosemary Wells and Susan Jeffers. Both stories 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. “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!***