



Preventing Peer Cruelty & Promoting Kindness: A Broader Approach to Bullying

Dr. Thomas Lickona

Center for the 4th & 5th Rs

www.cortland.edu/character


Free character education resources:

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs website:

- www.cortland.edu/character
- See the forthcoming (January, 2012) issue of our *excellence & ethics* newsletter on bullying

When students are victims of peer cruelty, it:


- Interferes with their learning.
- Disrupts their social and moral development.
- Makes school a miserable experience.
- Causes some to seek revenge.
- Causes others to become depressed and even suicidal.



Children remind me of chickens,
seeking out the weak and wounded
and pecking them to death.


They have discovered that my 9-
year-old son, who is autistic, is
bothered by loud noises, and they
scream and whistle in his ear until
he cries.

—A mother



All my life I have been teased. I love you very much, but I just couldn't stand it any more.

—An 8th-grade girl's suicide note to her parents



Your children who have
ridiculed me, who have
treated me like I am not
worth their time,
are now dead.

—Email suicide note from
Columbine High School shooter
Eric Harris, to the parents of his
classmates



U.S. Secret Service Study:

- **Two-thirds of the student shooters had been bullied by fellow students.**



How can we prevent peer
cruelty and promote
kindness in our schools and
classrooms?

Psychological Principle:

- If you wish to inhibit a negative behavior (such as cruelty), develop the opposite positive behavior (such as kindness).

What Research Shows


Bullying is strongly related to overall school climate. Bullying *decreases* when:

- overall respect increases as a result of character education
- students have a greater responsibility for solving problems and making decisions that improve their school.

—*Dr. Maurice Elias, Rutgers University (based on a study of more than 100 schools)*

7 Strategies for reducing peer cruelty:

1. Create a safe and caring school environment, with student voice.
2. Use character-based discipline.
3. Create a caring classroom community.
4. Teach character through the curriculum.
5. Teach empathy.
6. Have students set personal goals.
7. Use class meetings to problem-solve.



1. Create a Safe and Caring School Environment, with Student Voice

Schoolwide Assessment

1. Gather baseline data, using a survey such as: *School as a Caring Community Profile (SCCP)*, www.cortland.edu/character.
2. Implement program.
3. Repeat survey.

Sample SCCP Survey Items

1= Strongly disagree

5= Strongly agree

- “Students in this school respect each other.”
- “Students help each other, even if they are not friends.”
- “When students see someone being picked on, they try to stop it.”

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (www.olweus.org)

1. Adults' awareness and involvement.
2. **School steps** (assessment, anti-Bullying Committee, staff training, ongoing staff discussion, and effective supervision).
3. **Classroom steps** (clear rules about bullying, class meetings).
4. **Individual steps** (meetings with bully, with victim, with parents of both, and development of individual plans).



What Research Shows

The Olweus program has:

1. Reduced bullying by 50%
2. Reduced anti-social behavior such as vandalism, fighting, stealing, and fighting
3. Improved classroom climate and students' liking for school.

See www.olweus.org for recent high school data.




The Challenge:

- How to reduce the remaining 50%?



An Ethical Learning Community

We shape the culture;
the culture shapes the
character.

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- Develop a school touchstone or “way.” (S & G, p. 35)
 - Written by staff and students together, the touchstone expresses the school’s core moral and performance values.

THE PLACE WAY

At Place School, we pursue excellence in scholarship and character.

We celebrate and honor each other by being respectful, honest, kind, and fair.

We give our best inside and outside the classroom.

This is who we are, even when no one is watching.



TOUCHSTONE RESOURCE:

***Building an Intentional
School Culture***

—Charles Elbot and David Fulton



The 4 KEYS

- How can we use the 4 KEYS to *maximize the power* of a school touchstone, so that students understand it, care about it, and act upon it in their daily lives?



THE ROOSEVELT WAY

(S & G, p. 36)

“There’s a way that students here are expected to act, and a way that they expected *not* to act.”

—High School Counselor

Developing a Touchstone Rubric

- Suppose one part of a School's Touchstone is:

“We respect ourselves, each other, our school, and our community.”



SELF STUDY: Respect rubric for littering

Underdeveloped:

You litter and/or don't clean up after yourself.

Developing:

You don't litter and do clean up after yourself.

Highly accomplished:

You don't litter, clean up after yourself, and pick up any trash you see.



Respect rubric for bullying

Underdeveloped:

You bully others physically or emotionally.

Developing:

You never bully.

Highly accomplished:

You never bully, and when you see someone being bullied, you do something to try to stop it.



Self-Study: Touchstone Implementation

Visibility

The touchstone is displayed in all classrooms and included in all school documents.

Academics

Teachers make connections with the touchstone when teaching their subject area.

Discipline

Staff refer to the touchstone when disciplining.

New students

There is a plan for teaching the touchstone to students who enroll during the school year.



WELCOMING FRESHMEN

- Seniors plan and lead a half-day welcome for the new freshmen.

Smart & Good, p. 38



FRESHMAN TRANSITION PROGRAM

- Older students are assigned as mentors to all freshmen.
- The school trains the mentors.
- Mentors and their freshmen meet weekly.



BUDDY CLASSES

- An older class is paired with a younger class.
- The buddy classes get together weekly or bi-weekly.
- The older kids read to their little buddies, help them with their schoolwork, do a special project together, and so on.

SCHOOL “FAMILIES”

- Students are grouped in “families,” one child from each grade. The 2 oldest kids are the “parents.”
- “Families” come together for beginning-of-the-year activities, regular events such as assemblies, and special occasions.

Create Safe Bus Rides

1. Conduct bus meetings:
 - "What does a safe and respectful bus ride look like? Sound like?"
 - "What can each of us do to create a safe and respectful bus ride?"
2. Hold follow-up meetings: "How are we doing?"

Get students to take responsibility.

- Canadian study: Bullying typically stopped if even one student expressed disapproval.
- Have counselors create anti-bullying "intervention teams" at each grade level. (Team members step in when they see someone being picked on.)

Molly Angelini:

"If a student calls someone a name, or is unkind in any other way, I ask that child to write a **sincere letter of apology** to the person he or she has offended."

Participatory Student Government

1. Each classroom elects 2 representatives.
2. They lead their classroom's discussion of how to solve school problems such as peer cruelty.
3. All class representatives report their class's suggestions at the student council meeting.
4. Rep's then bring the student council's proposed solutions back to their class for further discussion.
5. Rep's then report their class feedback on the proposed solutions to the student council, and so on, back and forth—until a final action plan is ready for school implementation.




2. Implement Character-Based Discipline.

Character-Based Discipline

- Deters and corrects negative behavior
- Teaches good character

Two essentials:


- Clear rules
- Clear consequences.



Kim McConnell, a 6th-grade teacher, asks her kids in groups of 4 to write on butcher paper:

“What rules do we need that will help us:

- *Get our work done?*
- *Feel safe?*
- *Be glad we're here?”*

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- The small groups then present their lists of suggested rules.
 - The teacher helps the class combine the lists to create one list of 5-6:

“OUR CLASS RULES.”



In your classroom discipline plan, include **restitution** . . .

"What can you do to make up for it?"

. . . as a consequence for hurtful behavior.





Behavior contracts have proved helpful with kids who bully.

"I will not hit or hurt anyone. If I do, I will have to call my parents and report what I did."

TIME OUT

1. Settle down and get control.
2. Make a plan and show it to the teacher.
3. Get back in the game.



3. Create a Caring Classroom Community



Quality cooperative learning: Brainstorm

WE WORK BEST TOGETHER WHEN ...

1. We help each other and don't fight.
2. We are kind to each other (no put downs).
3. Everyone contributes.
4. We listen to all ideas. (and so on)



What Research Shows

Berkowitz and Bier's *What Works in Character Education* reports:


the power of cooperative learning to promote positive peer relationships.

www.characterandcitizenship.org

Friendship Time


"What is a nice thing you saw someone do during the morning or while you were at lunch or recess?"

- I give each child who is named by a classmate a sticker to put on a laminated card.
- We do 3-4 kids on a given day.
- All get recognized eventually.

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- **Seat lottery** ("Draw a number; that's your seat for the next week.")

Anonymous Compliments


1. Each student draws the name of a classmate.
2. By the week's end, the student writes an anonymous compliment about that person on a strip of paper, shows it to the teacher, and puts it in the **Compliment Box**.
3. On Friday, the teacher posts all the compliments on the bulletin board.

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- Use children's literature to teach caring.



*Jan Gorman, 1st-grade teacher,
asks her students:*

1. What is caring?
2. Who can show caring?
3. Where does caring take place?
4. How can each of us show caring?
 - In our classroom?
 - In our school?
 - In our families?




She then reads the book, *Teammates* (the story of baseball players Jackie Robinson and Pee Wee Reese) and asks:

- Who in the story showed caring?
- Who did *not* show caring?


She then challenges her class:

- "Remember this story, and make it a goal to show caring toward each other during the rest of the day."
- When a child behaves in a caring way, she publicly compliments that child.
- When a child behaves in an uncaring way, she privately corrects that child:
 - "Did that behavior show caring?"
 - "Remember our story, remember our discussion."



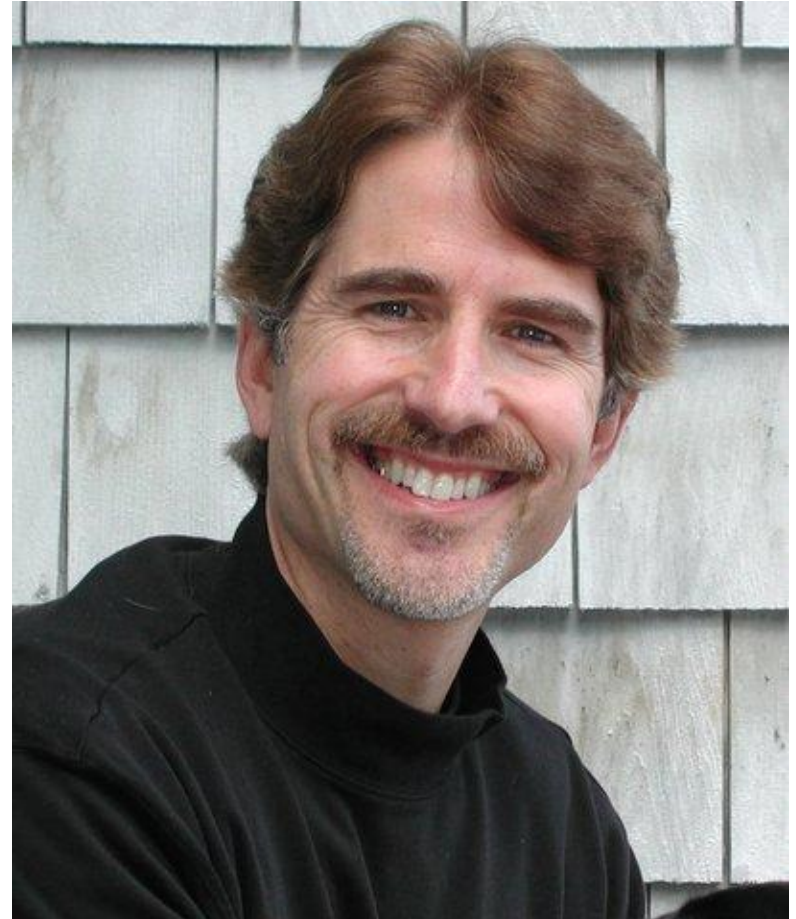
On each subsequent day of the week, she reads a different book about caring and repeats this process. She says:

“By the end of the week, caring has been established as an expectation in my classroom.”



4. Teach character through
the curriculum.

***An Ethic of
Excellence:
Building a Culture
of Craftsmanship
with Students***





Work of excellence is transformational. After students have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less.

—Ron Berger



Berger's 5 Practices

1. Work that inspires
2. Models of excellence
3. A culture of critique (feedback)
4. Multiple revisions
5. Opportunities to present one's work to classmates and other audiences.

Senior Biography Project

Berger had each of his 6th-graders:

1. conduct a series of interviews with a senior citizen
2. write that person's biography in the form of a small, bound book
3. give that as a gift to the senior citizen.



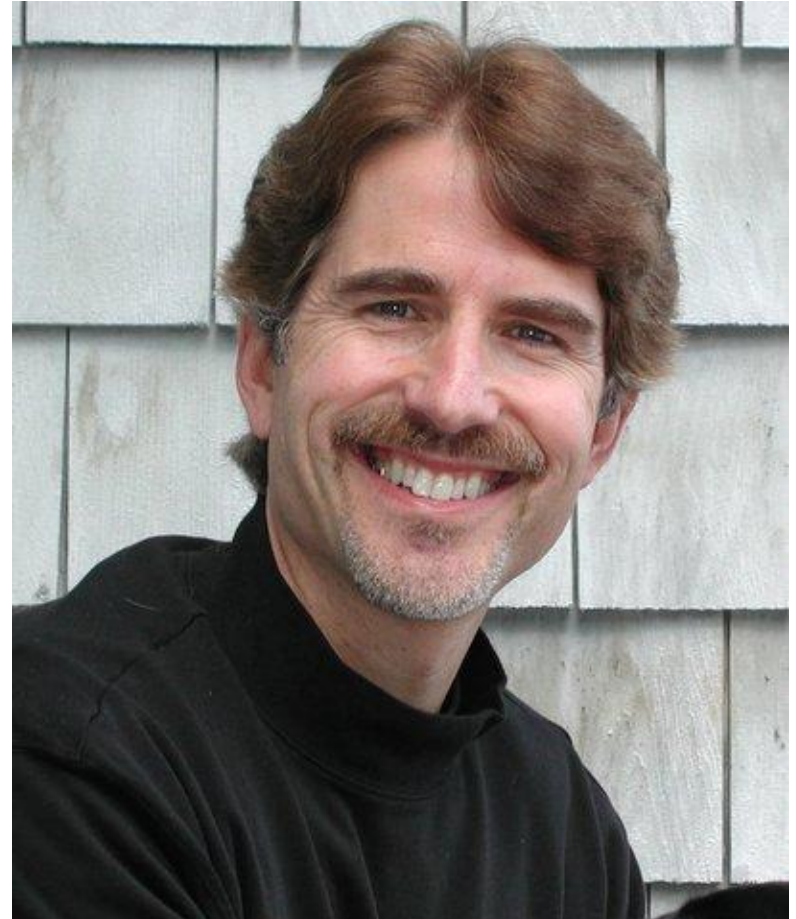
The Power of Meaningful Work

Berger comments:

“Because my students’ work was going to be presented to someone else (the senior citizen), they read the drafts of their biographies to the whole class for their suggestions. They did many drafts of their cover designs. They wanted their books to be perfect.”

Culture of Critique:

- Be kind.
- Be specific.
- Be helpful.



Steps in the Culture of Critique

1. “I would especially like suggestions on”
2. Students give positive feedback.
3. Students offer suggestions in the form of questions:
“Would you consider?”
“Have you thought of?”



In Berger's classroom, students are:

- Developing *personal* responsibility by striving to do their best work
- Developing *social* responsibility by helping each other do their best work (by giving each other feedback on projects).



5. Teach empathy

(understanding and caring about how someone else feels).


What To Do When a Child Calls Another a Name?

Five-year-old Brian called Jonathan, a kindergarten classmate, "Tan Man"—because his skin was light brown.


Jonathan's mother called the teacher and said that the name-calling upset Jonathan so much, he didn't want to go back to school.


What would you say to Brian?

The teacher met with him and said . . .




Brian, there are two kinds of hurts: **outside hurts** that you can see, like a cut or a bruise, and **inside hurts** that you can't see—like a hurt feeling. The inside hurts actually hurt more and last longer.

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- Have kids with disabilities (handicaps) teach their classmates about their disability.




With a parent present, I'll meet with the child and ask:

- "What would you like to share with the class?"
- "*How* would you like to share it?"
- "What *don't* you want to share?"




6. Have students set personal goals.



At the end of the day, all students take out their **Character Record Book** and answer 3 questions:

1. How did I show kindness today?
2. How did I *not* show kindness today?
3. How will I show kindness tomorrow?



At the start of the day, all students
take out their Good Deeds Journal
and write:



1. A good deed I did yesterday . . .
2. A good deed I will do today . . .

Character Behavior Journal

- Each month, students choose one specific behavior to work on for the whole month:
 - “**Don’t call names.**”
 - “**When someone says ‘hello,’ say ‘hello’ back.**”
 - “**Say ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’**”
- Students each have a partner to remind them of what they are working on.
- At the end of the day, students write a sentence in their Journal on how they did that day.

Goal Strips

- Fold a colored strip of paper into 3 sections.
- Write I will on the first section, what you will do on the second section, and when you will do it on the third section.
- “I will say only positive things about others this week.”
- I will do a kind deed for someone each day this week.”
- “I will report or try to stop any bullying I see this week.”




7. Conduct Class Meetings.



Foster Interdependence

In a class meeting, ask:

"Who has a problem the rest of us could help solve?"

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- Use class meetings to discuss bullying:

"Give examples of bullying, but no names please."

"How do you feel when someone does these things to you?"



Case Study: A Teacher (Jenna Smith) Who Integrates Multiple Strategies

1. Character-based discipline (Class Pledge)
2. Class meetings
3. Talk It Out space (for solving conflicts)
4. Monthly goal-setting
5. Curricular integration
6. Reflection time (self-assessment and goal-setting)



By placing respect and caring at the center of its moral life, the school meets the deep human need to belong.

It becomes a place where every student, without exception, feels valued, safe, and significant.

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