

Parents, educators,

providers and well-

informed consumers

are finding creative

challenges of those

who struggle with

issue of Attention,

program, model, or

practice and pass

on appropriate contacts so you can implement

similar efforts in your community.

Appearance in this

column, however,

does not imply

endorsement by

CHADD.

AD/HD. In each

we highlight

one innovative

ways to address the needs and daily

health-care

# **Promoting Six Universal Principles of Behavior: An Update on PeaceBuilders**

by Mark Katz, PhD

#### FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING LEARNING, BEHAVIORAL OR EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES,

school can be a dangerous, threatening, and at times very lonely place. That's because others can sometimes be pretty mean in the things they say and in the ways they act. And while a number of research-validated practices can potentially help these children do better in school, the very idea of publicly accepting help may only further highlight their differences, resulting in an even greater sense of threat and danger. To truly address their needs the first order of business is to create a school climate that takes the danger out of feeling different. Fortunately, there are programs that provide the necessary tools and strategies for doing just that—among them, PeaceBuilders.

Character education

Changing the social climate at school, say experts in the field of schoolwide behavior supports, requires that all students learn a small number of universally agreed upon schoolwide behavioral expectations. PeaceBuilders takes this a step further. Not only are children asked to learn and live by PeaceBuilders' six universal behavioral principles, adults are asked to as well.

Teaching children universal behavioral princi-

ples is one thing. Requiring that all adults model behavioral principles is another. PeaceBuilders is character education for adults. The program is also remarkably simple to understand, simple to implement, and simple to maintain, unlike other effective programs that some find too difficult and complex, too time consuming, and too cumbersome. It's simple, that is, if you're willing to model, teach, practice and celebrate these six universal principles on an ongoing basis.

# PeaceBuilders' Six Universal Principles of Behavior

**Praise People** 

All relationships stand to improve when those closest to us recognize our accomplishments, value our contributions, encourage us to try our best, and praise us for our efforts. It's true at home, at work, and for struggling schoolage children. The curriculum provides a series of activities designed to catch us at our best and reinforce us for our efforts.

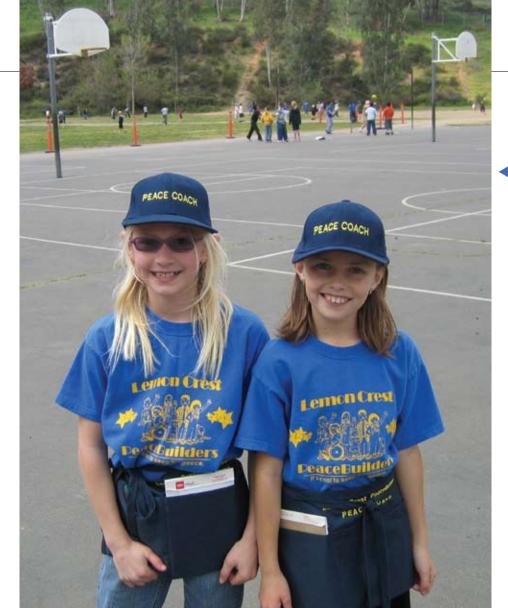
**Give Up Put-Downs** 

For children prone to meltdowns, angry outbursts or moments of rage, serious behavioral incidents can start with a put-down. The solution? No more put-downs. Using ongoing role-plays and other activities, children learn how to recognize them in subtle and not-sosubtle form, how to ignore them when they occur, and how to execute new replacement behaviors that are much less likely to lead to disagreements, fights, or for some children, eventual suspension.

Seek Wise People
Mentors

Mentors are wise people, and mentoring relationships flourish at successful PeaceBuilders schools. Adults on campus are coached on ways to serve in this capacity, and children are provided ample opportunities to form these attachments. By learning to seek out wise people, schools also have a new tool for preventing and reducing bullying. A child tormented by a school bully, for example, may choose to suffer in silence rather than tell an adult, fearing that getting the bully in trouble will make matters worse, not better. Not knowing what to do, other children who witness





These two PeaceCoaches, who are in fourth and fifth grade, patrol their school playground. They help with simple conflict resolution on the playground and write PraiseNotes to children who are being PeaceBuilders.

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Don't let the program's simplicity fool you. The six universal behavioral principles draw upon important cognitive, social and imitative processes that research suggests can potentially offset childhood risks associated with serious emotional, behavioral, and life adjustment problems down the road. In addition, while recognized as an effective primary prevention model, PeaceBuilders also incorporates research-validated secondary and tertiary prevention strategies, including specific self-management and responsecost procedures for improving children's behavioral inhibition skills. These strategies are infused into various settings (at the points of performance) throughout the school day. PeaceBuilders professional staff and advisors also point out that its practices can be woven nicely within and around schoolwide positive behavior supports (SWPBS), as well as within and around other programs, an important factor for those busy professionals wary of yet another program.

### Home, school, community

The model is very family-friendly. Parents, extended family members, and other important people in a child's life are shown how they too can model, promote, and reinforce these universal behaviors at

the bullying may look the other way, as unfortunately may some adults. Preventing bullying on and around the school campus requires changing bystander behavior, which successfully occurs when all agree to seek out a wise person if we think someone's in danger. Children learn that when it comes to our safety, there's a difference between telling and tattling.

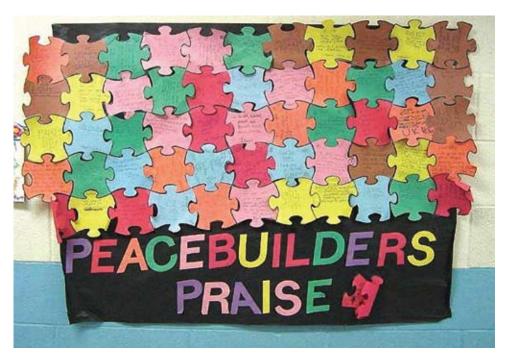
#### **Notice and Speak Up About Hurts**

Empathy for others can increase with practice. Noticing and speaking up about hurts we have caused provides us with the practice. It also serves as an effective replacement behavior for children who constantly externalize blame for wrongdoing. It's hard to recognize hurts you may have caused and deny responsibility for wrongdoing at the same time.

**5** Right Wrongs
If you make a mistake or inadvertently hurt someone's feelings, then it's time to "right the wrong." The curriculum provides strategies and activities that teach children ways to do this.

## Help Others

PeaceBuilders are ready and willing to reach out to help others. Coaching others through difficult situations or helping children feel safe and accepted at school are among the many different ways of reaching out.





Here are two examples of PraiseBoards. **In the top photo**, PraiseNotes take the shape of puzzle pieces indicating that we are all a piece of the peace--together we can build a peaceful world. **The bottom photo** shows a PraiseBoard in a second-grade classroom. Each child in the class is represented by a cutout figure; whenever a child receives a PraiseNote, it is placed on the appropriate figure.

home and during after-school activities. Businesses in the community are encouraged to help out as well. In some neighborhoods, local businesses prominently display the PeaceBuilders logo and the six universal behaviors in their windows so children can be reminded of them on their way home from school each day.

Successful PeaceBuilders schools report fewer acts of violence and aggression campus-wide, fewer discipline problems, fewer school injuries, less vandalism, less absenteeism and a warmer, friendlier school campus. While reports are still largely anecdotal, people also frequently report getting along better with each other. Not only do children report getting along better with other children or with teachers, but adults report get-

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Some principals and site leaders are attracted to the program for this very reason, according to Donna Burcher, Communications Director and lead PeaceBuilders trainer in San Diego, California. "They're asking us for ways to help adults get along better with other adults first, before focusing on ways to help children get along better with other children." While a number of successful programs can pride themselves on being strengths-based, PeaceBuilders can pride itself on nurturing what some prevention specialists believe may be our greatest strength of all—each other.

In 2000, the Centers for Disease Con-

trol named PeaceBuilders as a best practice in *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action* (part of the Safe USA Coalition). The US Department of Education's Office of Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools in 2001 designated PeaceBuilders as a Promising Program. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Prevention recognized PeaceBuilders as a Promising Program in the National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices in 2004.

Since last highlighted in this column, PeaceBuilders continues to grow in popularity. In 2005, the California Department of Education named PeaceBuilders to its Science Based Programs List. In the same year, it was cited as a Level 1 program in the White House publication, *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth* (www.helpingamericasyouth.gov). Level 1 programs have been shown to prevent youth problem behaviors or to reduce or enhance risk/protective factors using the highest quality research design.

Further information, including published outcome studies, can be found on the program's Web site,

www.peacebuilders.com. Those wishing to learn more, including program costs and training requirements, are encouraged to contact PeacePartners, Inc., which distributes the program throughout North America and U.S. territories. Contact PeacePartners at 1-877-4-PEACENOW. Staff can also share how the program is being successfully implemented in other settings as well, including after-school programs, sports programs, and camps. **Q** 

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