

From the Superintendent's Desk
Dr. Jeff Athey
December 16, 2016

After having written a trio of articles that dealt with "technology" and before I begin writing a series of articles dealing with "the formative five" (successful skills that every student needs), I would like to write an article about "kindness." While being kind to others is important 365 days a year, it is particularly important this time of year around the holidays.

This month's theme in the elementary school is "The Gift of Friendship" and "Winter Holidays: Peace, Hope, and Charity." A number of activities that have been planned this month center around the theme of "friendship." It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that "if you want to **have** a friend, you have to be willing to **be** a friend." So, how does one go about doing just that?

Each morning, I enjoy reading daily devotions from [Our Daily Bread](#). Just last week I read one called "Constant Kindness." The verse from Ephesians 4:32 was, "Be kind and compassionate to one another." We demonstrate kindness through how we communicate with others and by our actions. What I remember most from that reading is that we want to be sure that the things we say (words) serve as encouragement to others.

I was in Mrs. Mayne's 5K classroom the other day and observed Mrs. Fohey, our elementary Guidance Counselor, teach a lesson to our kindergartners about "choosing one's words carefully." She conveyed this message in several helpful ways. For example, she talked about some words make us feel "warm and fuzzy" (e.g., "that's a cool sweatshirt you're wearing", "I like the way your hair is cut", "Your song at the Christmas concert sounded great!). Opposite of warm/fuzzy words are words that are "cold and sharp." These words tend to make us feel bad or hurt our feelings (e.g., "You're stupid.", "You smell terrible!", "Nobody likes you."). Nobody likes to hear "put-downs." Instead, they'd much rather hear "put-ups" (compliments). Mrs. Fohey further illustrated the point about how we affect the feelings of others through the words we say by reading aloud a story titled [Andrew's Angry Words](#). The various characters in the story said some hurtful things to others causing them to say hurtful things to someone else. Following the story, she held up a smooth red heart made of construction paper. When the students gave examples of words that hurt, she crumpled a piece of the heart. After a number of "put-downs", the heart was very crumpled. It's no wonder someone would feel beat down after hearing nothing but hurtful comments. At the conclusion of her lesson, she gave each student a smooth red heart and reminded them of making healthy word choices for what they have to say to others.

During this time between now and New Year's, I want to encourage everyone to be kind. Are you impacting others through your kindness, your courage, and compassion? Are you sharing hope? Are you focused on helping others rather than being concerned just for yourself? Whether it is a kind word or an action, make a positive difference in the life of someone else this holiday season!