

**Safe, Caring, Collaborative Environment  
Organizational Structures Maximize Learning**



## **BRIGHT FUTURES CORE PRACTICES**

- 7. Faculty, administration, and students collaboratively build a safe and caring climate that nurtures the individual while creating a sense of community where everyone is valued.**
- 8. Students benefit from organizational structures within the middle grades that maximize the sense of community, support meaningful relationships, and optimize curriculum delivery.**



## **Outcomes for this session:**

### **Participants will**

- understand ways to create a safe and caring environment so that all members of the school community can work and learn effectively.
- understand how the school's organizational structures significantly impact teaching and learning



## **Let's introduce ourselves!**

**Please use the chat box to  
introduce yourselves:**

**first name, last name,**

**school name**

**your role.**



## Our Guests for Today!



Biddeford Middle  
School



Gert Nesin  
Leonard Middle School



Warsaw Middle  
School



## What Research Says...

**“Adolescents who feel valued and respected by their peers have higher levels of achievement and motivation.”**

Nelson and DeBacker 2008  
Journal of Experimental Education



## Research continued...

**“Stress releases the hormone cortisol in moments of physical, academic, emotional, or environmental danger. It suppresses the immune system, affects the ability to remember and organize thoughts, and the ability to retrieve information. It increases the likelihood of making rash decisions and is related to depression in adolescents.”**

Sheryl Feinstein, EdD

*Secrets of the Teenage Brain 2004*

## CREATING A SAFE, CARING, INCLUSIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL



THE KINDNESS PROJECT  
AT  
BIDDEFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL



## 9 elements

of a kind heart...

- Attentive
- Authentic
- Compassionate
- Courageous
- Enthusiastic
- Charitable
- Patient
- Grateful
- Inspirational

## 9 elements

of a kind heart...

- **Attentive**

an attentive heart is one that recognizes the needs of others.

## 9 elements

of a kind heart...

- **Authentic**

an authentic heart is one that is genuine and acts from truth.

9 elements

of a kind heart...

## Compassionate

a compassionate heart is one that is sensitive  
towards all living things.

9 elements

of a kind heart...

## Courageous

a courageous heart is one that acts from love  
rather than fear.

9 elements

of a kind heart...

## Enthusiastic

an enthusiastic heart is one that displays  
limitless energy and passion.

9 elements

of a kind heart...

## Charitable

a charitable heart is one that gives yet  
expects nothing in return.

**9 elements**  
of a kind heart...

## Grateful

a grateful heart is one that is content and filled  
with appreciation

**9 elements**  
of a kind heart...

## Inspirational

an inspirational heart is one that encourages  
and motivates others.

## 9 elements of a kind heart...

- **Patient**
- a patient heart is one that waits and responds at the proper moment.

Examples of each of the *9 elements of kindness* were created and shared with students. Here is a sample page for **Attentive**.

Attentive in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pay attention to friends, teachers, and friends</li> <li>•Listen, especially when it is difficult</li> <li>•Ask clarifying questions</li> <li>•Lend a helping hand when you notice someone needs help</li> <li>•Smile and say "thank you," to your bus driver</li> <li>•Praise a teacher when you notice they have helped</li> <li>•If someone looks sad, ask if they need to talk</li> <li>•Recycle papers!</li> </ul>
Attentive in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Stop for a person waiting to cross the street</li> <li>•When you notice that someone is in a hurry, let them go ahead of you in line</li> <li>•If you notice litter, pick it up and dispose of it or...</li> <li>•Recycle!</li> </ul>
Attentive at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•If you notice dishes in the sink, wash them</li> <li>•Reuse, renew, recycle!</li> <li>•Take time for yourself</li> <li>•Offer to take on a task for a parent or sibling</li> <li>•Do a favor or chore for a loved one</li> <li>•Call a relative just to say, "I am thinking of you"</li> </ul>
Attentive in nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Notice the sun shining on the beautiful fall leaves</li> <li>•Really "see" the green in the grass</li> <li>•Listen to the calls of the birds flying South</li> <li>•Write a poem about the greater world around you</li> <li>•Watch the stars on a clear night</li> </ul>

Examples of each of the *9 elements of kindness* were created and shared with for **Teachers**.  
Here are the examples for **Courage**.

1. Smile and say hello to a fellow staff member you have not yet taken the time to talk to very much.
2. Stand up for something you really believe in. Follow your belief. Write a letter to a congressperson, write a letter-to-the-editor, donate money to an organization that supports the same belief, etc.
3. Set up a time to have lunch with a new staff member. Really welcome them to BMS.
4. Forgive yourself for a poor decision you have made.
5. Forgive someone else - especially parents of your students. They are not trying to act like "bad parents." Have the courage to believe that all parents/guardians do care about their kids. They just sometimes show it in negative ways.
6. Have the courage to accept that sometimes you are wrong.

7. Talk to your students in advisory about courage. What is it? What does it mean to be brave or to act with love versus out of fear? Have a discussion about this topic. Let students show share how they have acted with courage.

8. Believe in your students. Give them the courage they need.

9. Remember those who have fought with courage in this country, especially tomorrow on Veteran's Day. If those people are in your family and still living, personally thank them for their courage.

10. Teach students what Veteran's Day is all about and why we should celebrate having the day off tomorrow, not just because it gets them out of school.

11. Print out the quotes Diana sent to BMS News. Make them larger and put a few in your classroom for everyone to think about.

12. Set a goal for yourself.

13. Really read the formative assessment book. Now, THAT takes courage! (Just kidding, Mr. Lomonte!)

14. If you do not support the president-elect, try to have courage and the belief that things will work out OK in this country.
15. Reward students who take a chance, share their opinions, or raise their hands in class. That all takes courage- especially in front of judgmental peers.
16. Try something you have never done before but have always wanted to do.
17. Help someone up if they fall.
18. Really listen to another's point of view. Try to imagine yourself in her/his shoes.
19. Teach students not to use these words when they really mean a different word: "That's so gay/queer/retarded!"
20. Believe. Hope. Love. Learn.
21. Tell Chris Gebhardt that you are sending lots of courage to Baby Emma!



## Biddeford Middle School Kindness Pre- and Post- Assessment

1. I pay attention to the needs of others.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
2. I am genuine and act truthfully.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
3. I can give to others and expect nothing in return.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
4. I am sensitive toward all living things.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
5. I act out of concern/care rather than fear.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
6. I have a lot of positive energy and passion for things/people.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
7. I am content and appreciate myself and others.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
8. I try to encourage and motivate others.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
9. I wait and think before I react or respond.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
10. I consider myself a kind person. -
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely
11. I think BMS is a kind and safe place.
  - Usually/Almost always
  - Sometimes
  - Never/Rarely







## BMS STAFF KINDNESS SURVEY

- Most BMS staff pay attention to the needs of other staff and students.  
Usually/Almost Always    Sometimes    Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff are genuine and act truthfully at work.  
Usually/Almost Always    Sometimes    Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff give to others and expect nothing in return at work.  
Usually/Almost Always    Sometimes    Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff are sensitive toward all living things at work.  
Usually/Almost Always    Sometimes    Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff act out of concern/care rather than fear at work.  
Usually/Almost Always    Sometimes    Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff have a lot of positive energy and passion for things/people at work.  
Usually/Almost Always    Sometimes    Rarely/Never

- I believe BMS staff could improve on being kinder to one another when working together.  
Usually/AlmostAlways                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- I feel respected by all of my fellow staff members every day when working at BMS.  
Usually/AlmostAlways                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- I believe it is important to address and promote kindness with our student And staff.  
Usually/AlmostAlways                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- What already happens at BMS that you think makes it a fun and meaningful place to work?  
Usually/AlmostAlways                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- What could we add to BMS to make it the Most fun, meaningful and kind place to work?  
Usually/AlmostAlways                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never

- Most BMS staff are content and appreciate people around them at work.  
Usually/AlmostAlways                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff encourage and motivate others at work.  
Usually/Almost Always                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff wait and think before reacting or responding at work.  
Usually/Almost Always                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- Most BMS staff are kind people every day to other staff and students.  
Usually/Almost Always                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- BMS is a kind and safe place to work.  
usually/almost always                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never
- I believe that BMS is the kindest place to work.  
Usually/Almost Always                      Sometimes                      Rarely/Never

## “7 Choices”

- 1) Responsibility... or victim
- 2) Forgiveness... or resentment
- 3) Wellness... or abuse
- 4) Dream Big... or settle
- 5) A Life Of Purpose... or life without meaning
- 6) True Friends & Positive Relationships... or energy vampires
- 7) A Life Of Kindness... or unkindness

## The Living Kindness Pledge

“During this day  
I will choose kindness,  
In all that I think, say, and do.  
I will be kind to myself.  
I will be kind to others.  
I will be kind to the earth.  
By living kindness each day,  
I will create happiness in my life,  
And in the lives of others.”



## Ideas for the Kindness Crew 2009-2010

- Work with "At-Risk" Alternative Education program to start?
- Kindness Crew Leadership Support Group-Comprised of at-risk students-Purpose to help coordinate Kindness Crew activities.
- Kick-off Assemblies: TWO Grades 5,6 and 7, 8
- Mentoring.....grade 8 for grade 5; grade 7 for grade 6?
- Kindness Bracelets....for all 5th and 6th graders.
- Kindness Bracelets for all 7th and 8th graders who sign up and make an initial commitment to service hours.

- To integrate "At- Risk" students into the leadership of the Kindness Crew.
- To have 7th and 8th grade Kindness Crew students mentor students in grades 5 & 6.
- To have twice monthly Kindness Crew meetings for grade 6, 7, & 8.
- . To set a goal of \_\_X\_\_ numbers of "Kindness Commitment. May Celebration of 2009-2010 Kindness Initiative
- Mike would meet twice monthly...October-May with grade 6,7,8 Kindness crew members... Total of 24-40 minute meetings (During Advisory....7:30- 8:10)
- Middle School Kindness Crew would mentor grade 5 students (chain links, etc.)

- May Celebration of 2009-2010 Kindness Initiative
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- Middle School Kindness Crew would mentor grade 5 students (chain links, etc.)
- Kindness Crew Sign-Up: Membership Form they fill out... commitment to \_\_X\_\_ hours of Kindness Crew initiatives/ community service/ kindness acts.
- Banner needs to be hung...Tom will take care of this
- Kindness crew t-shirts for students who meet commitment hours pledged.
- Kindness Crew awards at the end of the year to be presented at each Team Awards ceremony.
- Ask Chuck to purchase copies "Am I being kind" for each staff member.

# BMS Kindness Crew Blog

<http://bmskc.edublogs.org>



"Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others, cannot keep it from themselves."

Sir James Barrie - author of Peter Pan

Want to know more?

email:

Tom Sferes  
tsferes@bidschools.org

Diana Mullins  
dmullins@bidschools.org

Michael Chase  
michael@thekindnesscenter.org

Youtube-The kindest middle school in Maine

- To access a four minute video that demonstrates the impact this project had on our school community, please google “Youtube-The kindest school in Maine.”

[Questions for Biddeford Kindness Crew?](#)



## **What Research Says About Teaming and Common Planning Time**

### **Four Positive Effects of Teaming and Common Planning Time**

**Improves school climate**

**Increases parent communication**

**Increases teacher job satisfaction**

**Positively influences students achievement**

**Flowers, Mertens, Mulhall 1999**

**Middle School Journal**



## **Teaming Has Worked**

### **Everywhere!**

**Teaming increases productivity and creativity**

**New improved products**

**Time used more efficiently**

**Better sales**

**Contented workforce**

Hoerr 1989

“Payoff From Teamwork”, *Business Week*



# **Here's Gert!**



## **Organizational Structures That Support Good Middle Level Practices**

**2-3 person teams** (personal preference for 2-person)

**Make it easier to:**

- Think beyond individual subjects to consider entire curriculum
- Know students and their families well
- Easier to be flexible
- Advisory every day, in and beyond academics
- Build relationships



## **Looping or Multiage**

**Build relationships over several years**

- Teachers and students
- Students and students
- Teachers and parents
- Continue where you left off
- Curriculum continuity



## **Schedule:** **Blocks of time, scheduled by teams**

- Flexible to changing needs
- Easy to work around planned and unplanned events
- Team meetings as needed, scheduled or unscheduled
- Can meet unforeseen student concerns/needs

**Questions for Gert?**



## **Creating a Positive Climate** **Warsaw Middle School**

### **Teaming at Warsaw**

- A positive climate for staff
  - Family first
  - Fun
  - Focus on staff to staff and staff to student relationships



## **A Positive Climate for Students**

- **Advisory: FISH Groups**
- **What ? When? Where? Who?**
- **Extended FISH Time: Presidential Jeopardy/  
Veterans Day/ Civil Rights and MLK**
- **Exercise**
- **SSR**
- **Student Portfolios and Student- Led  
Conferences**
- **The Revealers/ Three Cups of Tea**



## **Integrated Curriculum**

- **Literacy Focus**
  - **Integrating social studies, science, ELA**
- **Student Planning**
- **Skills Blocks**
- **Teaching Practices**
  - **Age appropriate and integrative**



## **The Intangibles**

We have, over the past 2 years lost 7 classroom teachers...

So how much Positive Climate has seeped out the door???



## **The Intangibles**

- **Staff appreciation**
- **Community**
- **Friday's Funnies/ Thursday's Thinkers/ Real Men wear Pink ? Ugly Sweater Day**
- **Middle School Best Practices**

**Questions for Warsaw?**



What's happening in your school?

Please feel free to share in the chat box.

Or...If you would like to speak to the group,  
"raise your hand" and we'll recognize you.

Just press \*6 to unmute your phone!



**Be the change you want to see  
in the world.**

**Mahatma Gandhi**



# Evaluation

## Evaluation/Contact Hour

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XLPJS68>

Please take a few minutes to fill in our evaluation. You will receive a certificate for 1 contact hour. It will be mailed to you.

Thanks!

**Next Webcast: Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> (This is a change!)**

**Co-curricular Programs & Professional Development**