

## **Creating a Positive Learning Environment**

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At Bountiful Elementary, we strive to make school a safe place for all students, faculty, and staff. Creating a positive learning environment is essential to support academic growth and social and emotional well-being. To establish such an environment, teachers and staff, administrators, students, and the school community must work together to support common goals. A positive environment develops when implementing best practices that support a healthy and positive culture.

### **Respect**

Respect is fundamental to a positive learning environment. When students, teachers, and staff feel valued and safe, learning occurs. At Bountiful Elementary, we follow our Bobcat C.A.R.E. motto. Students are reminded daily in morning announcements to be Courteous, Aware, Responsible, and Enthusiastic. Teachers also practice respect by modeling respectful discussions and problem solving. Teachers have small Restorative Practices reminders on their ID lanyards to remind them how to deal with students who have offended or have been offended. The reminder card encourages teachers to ask the appropriate questions to help students solve their own problems. The emphasis is less on punitive consequences and more on restoring the damage that has been done.

### **Clear School Expectations**

During the first two days of school, teachers rotate their students through stations to be reminded of school rules and expectations. Students learn the appropriate behavior for walking in the halls, eating in the cafeteria, playing outside, attending an assembly, and using the bathrooms. Posters of the expectations with the noise level indicators (0-4) are hung in designated places to remind students of appropriate behavior. Teachers have a mini poster of all expectations in their rooms to consistently reinforce school expectations. We spend time practicing the rules the first

few weeks of school and reward students with popsicles or an extra recess when the teachers indicate that the students have practiced the expectations.

### **Positive Encouragement**

Students are encouraged to earn “Pawsitive Points” for classroom activities. Teachers and students set a goal and plan an activity to do when they reach the goal. Students earn Pawsitive Points by following school rules. Individual students can earn points to go toward their classroom activities by exhibiting kind and positive behavior in the classroom, cafeteria, or playground. Our recess duties, lunch monitors, teacher aides, and teachers of special classes give points to individual students or to classes that are being respectful and kind. Teachers, staff, and administrators are reminded to look for opportunities to reward individuals or classes when they see outstanding and appropriate behavior. When each class in the school has met the appropriate goal and held their own class activity, we celebrate their success by having a school-wide activity. School-wide activities, which are planned quarterly, may include having an extra recess, wearing pajamas, having a 30-minute read-a-thon, playing a school-wide BINGO over the intercom system, participating in a teacher vs. student “Minute to Win It” assembly, or being allowed to “buy” small prizes in a school store.

In addition to classroom and school wide activities, each month teachers select one student who has demonstrated excellence in following the monthly C.A.R.E. theme. Those students get to participate in Pizza with the Principal with a signed certificate and special Student of the Month pin. Teachers also select two C.A.R.E. Champions who earn a pin and have a chance at winning a prize from the office. All Student-of-the-Month candidates and C.A.R.E. Champions get to have their photo proudly displayed in the main hall.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

Each day a member of our Jr. HOPE Squad leads the school in a “Mindful Minute” over the intercom. All students are encouraged to practice mindful breathing and to get prepared to learn. Starting off with a united Mindful Minute throughout the school sets a positive tone for the day. We also encourage student leadership by having our student council members be responsible for morning video announcements that encourage students to follow the monthly C.A.R.E. motto.

To support individual students’ social and emotional learning, each teacher has a designated “calm down corner” with a bin full of quiet activities that support students who need to reset their intense emotions. The bin items include mindful breathing activities, fidget toys, and coloring pages. Students also have a 5-minute timer to remind them to re-engage with the classroom learning.

For those students who need additional support in dealing with emotions beyond the classroom setting, we have a behavior support coach, who we affectionately call our C.A.R.E. Coordinator. Our C.A.R.E. Coordinator takes time to talk with individuals about what is triggering their behavior. She offers students problem solving strategies and allows students extra time to process when they are feeling dysregulated. Our C.A.R.E. Coordinator and our school counselor

work together and share ideas for ongoing support for students who are struggling socially or emotionally.

Creating a positive learning environment also involves social and emotional learning for our teachers and staff. We take time to celebrate academic success by giving shoutouts to our teachers and aides when their students have achieved academic growth in literacy or other core areas. We have had teachers share success they have had with their students by celebrating with cake or a celebratory treat each quarter and reading teachers' individual success stories. Each week we also give accolades to our fellow educators in our "Friday Focus." Faculty and staff email special shoutouts to their colleagues, who are then highlighted in the weekly "Friday Focus" memo. We also encourage positive connection by holding special activities throughout the summer that are optional for all employees at the school. We have participated in a movie night, hiking, lunch at the park, and paint night for those educators that want to stay connected during the summer. We have held optional book clubs where we have read the books, Unselfie, Bold School, and Teachers These Days. These books have inspired discussions about supporting each other in becoming excellent educators.

### **Community Involvement**

The community plays an important role in establishing a positive environment. Because we value our community and their involvement, we try to hold frequent community events with the help and support of our wonderful PTA. Some of the activities that have helped create unity with our school community are family movie night, family S.T.E.A.M. night, family dance night, and Hogwarts night with activities that students earn by reading books. In addition to these activities Bountiful Elementary holds a school play each year that is highly supported by the community during the week of March.

Creating a positive learning environment at school is a collaborative effort that involves teachers, administrators, students, and families. By prioritizing respect, clear school expectations, positive encouragement, social and emotional learning, and community involvement, our school cultivates an atmosphere that helps nurture student and employee growth, happiness, and well-being.