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# S·C·H·O·O·L Climate report

PROVIDING IDEAS AND RESOURCES FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE THROUGH PBIS

## Proactive Strategies Yield Positive Benefits

Putting in place proactive strategies will take time initially, but the payoff will provide lasting positive benefits.

Here are three proactive strategies that help build relationships, prevent a power struggle, and creates a teachable moment.

### "Take ten" for each learner.

Students should feel that teachers are on their side. Set aside 10 minutes each day to sit with one student (focusing on each of your students in turn). Talk about something non-school-related that's of interest to that child. When educators build strong, caring relationships with their students, each student naturally wants to protect that relationship and avoid anything that might damage it. Students' behaviors and approaches to learning in the classroom are then driven by relationships, not fear.

Teachers need to know as much as possible about what makes each student unique and special – her personal interests, what excites him, what delights her, what he fears. We need to understand much more than their academic strengths and needs; we need to know the whole child – who they truly



are – and allow them to know our true selves, too.

### Keep it off-stage.

Stop making discipline for poor behavior visible. Students tend to react negatively when they're called out in front of others. Instead, when a student's inappropriate behavior needs to be addressed, have a one-on-one conversation with the student, staying calm but firm. When possible, avoid

publicly calling a student aside for this talk. Publicly – and perhaps angrily – telling a student to come talk with you can have a humiliating effect. Instead, after class invite that student to have a conversation with you or quietly ask them to talk with you at a time when other students are otherwise engaged.

Be calm and supportive in discussing the behavior. To maintain your relationship with the student, always conclude by ensuring the student understands that although you are unhappy with the behavior, you still care about them and are there to support them in their growth.

### Hear students out.

Before acting on any student behavior, try to understand why it happened. When a student needs a corrective conversation, first ask to hear his side of the story. Generally, students prefer to have a conversation *with* a teacher rather than having a teacher conversation happen *to* them.

*Proactive Strategies*

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# September Is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

In Georgia, suicide is ranked as the tenth leading cause of death by the [CDC](#). Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10-34 in the U.S., according to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#).

While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, Suicide Prevention Awareness Month during September provides a dedicated time to come together with collective passion and strength around a difficult topic.

The truth is, we can all benefit from honest conversations about mental health conditions and suicide, because just one conversation can change a life.

Suicide statistics are sobering.

- Of all people who die by suicide, 78 percent are male.
- Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are nearly 4 times more likely to die by suicide.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10–34 and the tenth leading cause of death overall in the U.S.
- The overall suicide rate in the U.S. has increased by 35 percent since 1999.
- Of the people who have died by suicide, 46 percent had a diagnosed mental health condition.
- While nearly half of individuals who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental health condition, research shows that 90 percent experienced symptoms.
- Annual prevalence of serious thoughts of suicide, by U.S. demographic group:
  - 4.8% of all adults
  - 11.8% of young adults aged 18-25
  - 18.8% of high school students
  - 46.8% of lesbian, gay and bisexual high school students



- Some of the highest rates of suicide in the U.S. are among American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic white communities.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth.
- Transgender adults are nearly 12 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for people held in local jails.

So, what can a person do? NAMI offers five no-nonsense tips to help someone in crisis.

- 1. Ask direct questions.** Even though it's hard, ask a person directly if they're thinking about suicide.
- 2. Listen to their answers.** People with suicidal thoughts often feel alone, so be sure to let them know that you care deeply about what they have to say.
- 3. Do a safety check.** If you're concerned for their well-being, try removing anything they could use to harm themselves, such as alcohol,

drugs, medications, weapons, and even access to a car.

- 4. Don't keep this a secret.** Let them know you'll help come up with a plan that involves telling a professional who can utilize the many services and resources available to help.
- 5. Ensure they seek professional help.** It's important to suggest they seek additional help from other people, such as a doctor, counselor, psychologist, or social worker.

Numerous resources are available. Review the warning signs and risk factors, and read suggestions for providing support in crisis on the [NAMI website](#).

For parents, [Nationwide Children's](#) has a blog by behavioral health expert Amy Coleman on how to talk with their children about suicide and depression.

The Georgia Department of Education has provided a list of [evidence-based suicide prevention programs](#) for school systems. California's mental health movement Each Mind Matters offers a free [suicide prevention activation kit](#).

# Teacher Innovation, Dedication to Be Featured

Georgia educators have done a tremendous job during an extremely challenging time, and GPB Education wants to showcase those efforts in a documentary.

The PBIS team at the Georgia Department of Education is collaborating with GPB Education to produce a documentary on Georgia teachers overcoming challenges from the past year.

The goal is to feature a feel-good story that also highlights the incredible work teachers do every day and their innovation and dedication during an unprecedented school year.

The documentary crew is looking for a teacher who was able to not only overcome extra-ordinary challenges during the pandemic, but who also went above and beyond for their students, school, or community despite those challenges. The challenge can be personal or school related.

If selected, a GPB film crew would need access to film the educator in action at his or her school for one or two days, tentatively set for an October time frame.

If you or someone you know went above and beyond for students, apply to be part of the show: <http://bit.ly/3s7rhmN>.



# Digital SEL Tool Can Help Students Feel Seen and Heard



Teachers’ ability to connect individually with students went from tricky to downright challenging during the pandemic.

A new, free digital reflection tool, [Along](#), is available to help teachers create personal relationships with students while allowing each student to feel seen and understood.

Decades of research have shown that having at least one supportive and caring adult relationship is one of the strongest predictors of resilience to adverse life experiences in a child’s life. Research also tells us that

positive teacher-student relationships are associated with important student skills.

The digital SEL tool is [Along](#), which was piloted with hundreds of teachers last school year and now has launched for all teachers to utilize. Teachers send multimedia conversation-starting questions to middle- and high-schoolers via school email and have the students respond directly back, with video, audio, or text.

The tool is straightforward to use. Teachers log in and select from a series of reflection questions or create

their own with the assistance of the program. The question can be about anything, such as asking what students value and why, or having them share a positive moment they recently experienced.

The teacher records a short video asking the question and answering it, to help open the dialogue. The video is then emailed to students, inviting a response, and opening the door for further interaction.

Resources – and more – for teachers, school leaders, and parents are available on the site.

## Teacher Uses Band-Aids to Teach Concept of ‘Fairness’

TikToker Aimee (@AimeesEdventures) is a teacher who is going viral for explaining a complicated concept in a way that small children can understand.

In the video, Aimee explains that each year on the first day of school she uses regular bandages to teach her elementary schoolers an important lesson in fairness.

“I ask my students to raise their hands if they’ve ever scraped their elbow. As you can imagine, they all raise their hand,” she says.

“So, I get a Band-Aid. I pick on one student to tell us a story of how they hurt their elbow. Then I put the Band-Aid on their elbow,” she continues.

“Next, I ask who’s ever bumped their head. More hands go up, I have someone tell me a story, and then I say, ‘I am so sorry you hurt your head. Here’s a Band-Aid for your elbow.’ The kids are a little bit confused at this point,” Aimee goes on to say.

“Next, I ask who’s ever scraped their knee. More hands go up, and I say, ‘I am so sorry you scraped your knee. Here’s a Band-Aid for your elbow.’ At this point, the kids are super confused,” Aimee says.

“I’ll stop my lesson, and we’ll have a conversation about how, even though I gave everyone the exact same thing, in the exact same way, it wasn’t helpful to them,” the teacher goes on to explain.

“In conclusion, ‘fair’ doesn’t mean everyone gets the same thing. ‘Fair’ means everyone gets what they need to be successful,” Aimee smiles.



“After this lesson, students are much more understanding when their friends with diabetes need an extra snack, when their friends with autism need noise-canceling headphones, when their friends with ADHD need a fidget spinner and they can’t have one. It helps with everything,” the Aimee says.

## Teaching Discipline Can Help Students, Teachers Succeed

Arguably the most difficult students for teachers are those who misbehave. Student misbehavior is cited as one of the top reasons teachers leave the profession.

The approach to discipline with the goal of teaching is based on the following ideas:

- Kids do well if they can. Most problematic behavior is due to lagging skills.

- Kids know what to do, but they can’t do what they know.
- Most misbehavior is more about “can’t” than “won’t.”
- Every time students misbehave, they give us a chance to know what they need help learning.

So what should teachers do?

- Connect with the child with a calm face and voice.

- Define the problem as an observation. (“I noticed you just pushed Jack.”)
- Do not ask “why.”
- Stop talking and listen.
- Validate how child feels.
- Tell the student how the behavior affects others.
- Invite the student to a later discussion to find alternatives to the misbehavior.

# Proactive Strategies

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There's always a reason why students are acting as they do. Stop asking "What's wrong with that student?" and start figuring out what happened to that student. This may mean asking questions that prompt the student to reflect on the behavior and its effects on others. Students often have a hard time knowing why they acted in a certain way. It's only once their emotion has calmed –

and through a guided analysis – that they can identify the reason.

Once a learner understands the underlying reason, we can guide him or her to consider alternatives for next time and discuss any consequence that needs to follow. Even students who are caught in a pattern of disruptive or harmful behaviors – perhaps especially those students – benefit from being heard. Certainly, there are times when we must

intervene and stop a behavior, such as if it is causing harm or severe disruption. A teacher may need to remove the student from the situation immediately to restore a calm, safe environment – and later teach that student the self-regulation skills needed to prevent such behavior in the future. The key is that the subsequent conversation should be private and should be about the behavior rather than the person.

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## Graphics

- Student rolling her eyes: Image from [Pxfuel](#)
- Masked teacher in classroom: Image by Alexandra\_Koch from [Pixabay](#)
- Depressed teen: Image by Wokandapix from [Pixabay](#)
- Teen holding speech bubble: Photo from [Pxhere](#)
- Aimee @AimeesAdventure s: Image from [TikTok](#)
- YouTube play button: Image by Michael L. Hiraeth from [Pixabay](#)

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