

A group of five diverse children (three girls and two boys) are standing behind a large, light-colored rectangular sign. The children are smiling and looking towards the camera. The sign contains text and a circular graphic.

9 Weeks to a 'Make A Difference' Year



The Educator's Companion Guide to the book

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

with the Power of

Connection

MARY ROBINSON REYNOLDS

9 Weeks to a Make A Difference Year!



MARY ROBINSON REYNOLDS

Heart Productions & Publishing
www.MakeADifference.com

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Getting Started

Before you begin to study **The 9-Week School Curriculum for a 'Make A Difference' Year**, we recommend that you read Mary Robinson Reynold's powerful new book, *Make A Difference with the Power of Connection*. It's a little book that speaks volumes; it's concise and a quick read that is amazingly comprehensive and thought-provoking. It will make a difference somewhere in your life the day you read it.

Resources for Educators

✓ **Make A Difference with the Power of Connection,**

as an online flash book,
or in print, as a gift book:

www.MakeADifference.com/FlashBook

✓ **The Teacher's Package**, including:

- **Make A Difference with the Power of Connection Book**
- **Make A Difference Movies**
- **'I make a Difference' Wristbands**

www.MakeADifference.com/TeacherPackage

You'll find it online as a virtual book, available at no charge, or in print, as a splendid little gift book for everyone who strives to make a difference in our schools today. It's perfect for every person on your faculty and staff, to pick up and re-read on those days the problems seem greater than the solutions. Online, the book can be viewed or purchased at:

www.MakeADifference.com/FlashBook

Other Resources for Educators

Another excellent resource is a "Teacher's Package" which includes:

- *Make A Difference with the Power of Connection*
- *Make A Difference DVD*, which includes:
 - *The Teddy Stallard Story Movie*
 - *The Blue Ribbon Story Movie*
- Mary Robinson Reynolds' 1-hour video, *Makin' Magic with At-Risk Youth Training*
- 30 purple 'I Make A Difference' wristbands.

To learn more about the Teacher's Package, go to:
www.MakeADifference.com/TeacherPackage

The Impact of the "Make A Difference" Movies

In 2006, Mary Reynolds was sent a musical rendition of the Teddy Stallard story. This had, as its inspiration, a story that was autobiographical in nature, written by Elizabeth Silance Ballard in 1974, about a little boy who almost fell through the cracks of the school system. Mary knew in a heartbeat that it needed to be a flash movie. A year later, she received in the mail another story, about an actual Blue Ribbon Ceremony created by Helice "Sparky" Bridges—a ceremony that literally saved the life of a 14-year boy.

Over 6 million people have watched the *Teddy Stallard Story* Movie, and at the time of this writing, the *Blue Ribbon Story* Movie is already at 3 million views in its first two months.

To watch these movies free online go to: www.MakeADifferenceMovie.com – for the *Teddy Stallard Story* & www.BlueRibbonMovie.com – for the *Who I am Makes A Difference Blue Ribbon Story*. More movies are in production...so stay tuned.

Let's Make A Difference

Thousands of schools are ordering the Make A Difference Movies, Gift book & Wristbands to build self-esteem and to help children, adolescents and adults remember that they each matter as individuals –and that they alone can make a difference. Administrators are using our movies, books and wristbands for their in-service and professional development trainings, in order to create sustainable district- or school-wide momentum.



About The Author: Mary Robinson Reynolds

Mary Robinson Reynolds holds an M.S. in Educational Psychology, Counseling & Development. She considers herself a TurnAround Specialist and is the author of six books. Her entrepreneurial trek, which has included work with adults and children in educational, corporate and personal settings, began nearly twenty years ago when she realized that as a teacher, and later as a guidance counselor, she was having success with at-risk youth that a large percentage of the educators would want to know about.



I dedicate this curriculum to:

- 🌸 First Year Teachers, to “hold dear” their idealism and purpose.
- 🌸 Teachers who feel Burned-Out, to “rekindle” their idealism and purpose.
- 🌸 Teachers “In It to Win It,” to “sustain” their idealism and purpose.
- 🌸 Parents, to raise Emotional Intelligence through compassion.
- 🌸 Staff & Administration, because they set the pace.
- 🌸 And to the children, because they are our future.

Reaching out to make a world of difference ...

Mary Robinson Reynolds



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The 9-Week School Curriculum

From the desk of Mary Robinson Reynolds

You just need ... 9 Weeks to achieve a 'Make A Difference' Year!

Why nine weeks?

Every school year, I felt the first nine-weeks of school set the stage for the entire year. I knew—down to my toes—that if my students' social and emotional needs were met, they would be highly functional for the rest of the school year. Life in my classroom would be very, very good. It just takes nine! Any nine weeks will do. You begin when you begin.

Through teaching children, educators, and parents how to build a compassionate community, we dramatically raised emotional intelligence—EQ—and therefore academic performance.

How did I do this?

My goal was simple. I placed the children's social and emotional needs above my concern about making it through "X number of pages" per week.

First Things First

In the first 9 weeks of the school year, every – and I do mean "every" – single time a social or emotional situation played out in the classroom, lunchroom or play ground, we had an open discussion – no matter how long it took. Take it exactly as it comes. Don't avoid, dismiss or ignore what's in front of you to take care of right here, right now. The payoff in nine weeks will be huge.

Start with The Fundamentals

With the pressure to get kids to score high on achievement tests today, you simply must deal with the emotional and social issues first. Everything after that ... becomes the foundation for everything you could ever want the educational experience to be.

And now, I'm giving you my 9-Week School Curriculum so you can Pass-It-On.





Week 1:

Community Building

Week 1 introduces the important concept of 'Community Building.' It's fascinating to watch students of all ages discover that they can be responsible for the success of their community.

Materials Needed:

One 'I Make A Difference' wristband for each student and teacher.

Activity: Community Rules for the school year.

Have the students create a list of the rules they think are *best* for creating their "best learning" school year ever! Have them make a list on a piece of paper and open the first "Community Meeting" to discuss what rules and guidelines would be best for each member of their class to excel academically this year.

When describing what kind of year this can be and explaining that you want them to decide just how great they want to do this year, both as individuals and as a "great" class – you will, of course, determine what's age/grade appropriate.

Blackboard:

Write their "rules" on the board as they offer them.

Discussion:

There will be students who can't believe you are putting the responsibility on them! There will be students who make fun of this ...at first. There will be students who don't participate. There will be students who are uncomfortable with this and make distracting remarks.

Do not be deterred.

I was always surprised how "severe" the students' own rules were. They were much harder on themselves than I would have been. They will also have a tendency to list very harsh rules that no one learns by. This makes for a lively discussion.

Week 1

Teach the class
how to
Build a Community.



Let the students decide
how to make this their
"best learning"
school year ever.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Ownership:

These are “their” rules. As the teacher, you will most certainly have the “overseeing” word and will coach them toward the results you feel will be the best for the entire group. When most people think about community, they think about a helping hand.

Discussion:

- What does community mean to me?
- What would I like it to mean for me?

Blackboard:

Make a list of what the students say that community means to them.

Bulletin Board:

Create an attractive display of the results of this discussion, showing the meaning of “Community” and rules that they’ve agreed on.

Conclusion of this activity:

Each student now receives one ‘I Make A Difference’ wristband to give to the person sitting behind him or her, and so on around the room, saying out loud: You Make A Difference and this is our **best** ‘Make A Difference’ School Year Ever! The last child in line gives the wristband to the teacher.

Tell them that they can wear it every day, and when they are having a tough day, to simply rub their finger over the words on the wristband to remind them that they **do** make a difference. Help them understand that by showing compassion for others, they’ll feel better themselves.



Week 2:

How I Can Make A Difference

Week 2 introduces the concept of “How I can Make A Difference” in the life of others--a concept many students have not considered.

Materials Needed:

Make A Difference Movie—the Teddy Stallard Story.

Activity #1:

Watch the Teddy Stallard Story movie together. While this is not a true story, it is autobiographical in nature, and was based on a childhood experience of author Elizabeth Silance Ballard.

Discussion:

Discuss with the students how they felt after viewing it:

- What did you think about the movie?
- How did they feel about Teddy when the movie started?
- What did they think about Miss Thompson at the beginning of the movie?
- If they knew someone like Teddy, what could they do to make a difference?

Conclusion of this activity:

Help the students to evaluate the following:

- What do they think compassion means?
- Why is compassion important in creating the Best Community ever in their classroom?

Week 2

Introduce the idea of
Compassion.



Help students
understand how
one individual can
make a difference
in the life of another.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Activity #2:

“In Your Shoes”

Divide the class into pairs. Have each child bring to mind someone they do not particularly get along with. Without giving that person's name, each child is to “act out” to their partner, pretending to be the person they have trouble getting along with. (It can be another child, a family member, a teacher, etc). Take turns, so each one gets to “act out” their most challenging person to see what it's like to be in “their” shoes.

Discussion:

- How does it feel to be in the shoes of the person you are having a difficult time with?
- As you were watching your partner “act out” this challenging person, what were your thoughts?
- Did you have any ideas about what might make this situation better?
- What did you learn about how you treat this person?
- What do you now feel you could do that might make a difference with this person?

Conclusion of this activity:

Compassion turns “me” into “we” in that, when we “get outside” our own problems with others and put ourselves into their shoes, we access understanding and then can better communicate to find solutions.



Week 3:

Community = Team

Week 3 teaches teamwork, and allows students to distinguish between “Me” and “We” as they work toward building their Best Community.

Activity #1:

“Human Spider Web”

Objective:

To build upon the idea that community takes teamwork. This exercise is fun, and it provides an opportunity to work as a team to explore the dimensions of a compassionate community.

Procedure:

This exercise works best with small teams. If you have a larger group, divide it into groups of 6 to 8 individuals. Have each group move to a location that allows them to stand in a small circle.

Instruct members of each group to extend their left hands across the circle and grasp the right hands of one of the other members who are approximately opposite them.

Then have them extend their right hands across the circle and grasp the left hands of one of the other individuals.

Tell them that their task is to unravel the spider webs of interlocking arms without letting go of anyone’s hands. If you have one team, inform them that they will be timed (as a way to place pressure on them); if you have several groups, tell them they will be competing with other groups to see who finishes the task first.

Week 3

Show students that a
Community
requires teamwork to
function well.



Help them to recognize
self-centered
behavior.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Discussion:

- What was the most difficult part of this exercise?
- What did you learn about yourself in this activity?
- Were you a leader or a follower?
- What does this say about how you like to learn?

Conclusion of this activity:

There are different ways to accomplish the same goals and objectives. By failing to honor differences, we often make other people “wrong” or “bad” because they don’t see things or do things in the same way we do. To build a successful community, requires everyone’s participation.

Activity #2:

“The “Ts” Have It!”

Objective:

There is no “I” in TEAM ... or “ME” in community. This activity shows that we all may tend to be more self-centered than we might realize. It demonstrates the importance of focusing on others.

Procedure:

After a discussion about the Human Spider Web, bring up the subject of focusing on ourselves, and how impeded or “put off” we may be by feeling rather than focusing on what was going on for others.

Team each child up with one other child. Their assignment is to talk for the next two minutes about anything in the world they want to discuss. There is, however, one rule: They may not use the word “I.” They can talk about any topic they like, but they just must not say “I.”

Discussion:

- How many of you were able to talk for the two minutes without using the pronoun “I?”
- Why do so many of us have difficulty avoiding the (over) use of “I” in conversation?
- How do you feel when talking to (or listening to) someone who starts every sentence with “I?”



Week 4:

Who I Am Makes A Difference

Week 4 focuses on the *Blue Ribbon Story*, a true story of a class that learned to make a difference in the lives of others—actually saving the life of a teen.

Materials Needed:

The Blue Ribbon Movie

The Who I Am Makes A Difference Story

Blue Ribbons: 4 for each student (one for the student, plus 3 additional ribbons to “pay forward.”) Blue Ribbons may be purchased online from www.MakeADifference.com/BR

Activity #1:

Watch the *Blue Ribbon Movie* together. This is a true story.

Activity #2:

The Who I Am Makes A Difference® 10-Step Blue Ribbon System™ by Helice “Sparky” Bridges.

Step 1 - Focus on the good:

Find someone to acknowledge. Sit or stand in front of the person you want to honor. Show him or her the Blue Ribbon, words facing them, make eye contact (if it is appropriate to that culture), smile, speak their name, and...

Step 2 - Affirm the words:

Say, “This is a Blue Ribbon that says Who I Am Makes A Difference®.”

Week 4

Watch the
Blue Ribbon Movie
together.



Award the students their
Blue Ribbons and teach
them to
“pay forward.”

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Step 3 - Express your appreciation:

Tell the person how he makes a difference! Examples: “I admire you for pursuing your dreams.” “You always have a good word to say about people.” “You take time to help me with my work.”

Step 4 - Respect the person's choice to receive your gift:

Ask if she or he would accept your gift, and when they say “Yes,” then ask for permission to place the Blue Ribbon on them (if they can't wear it, ask them to put it in a place where they will be able to see it and always be reminded that who they are makes a difference.)

Step 5 - Give them this lasting symbol for positive change:

Place the Blue Ribbon above their heart pointed slightly upwards and say, “I'm placing this ribbon above your heart toward all your best dreams coming true!” Say, “YOU ROCK! I BELIEVE IN YOU! GO FOR YOUR DREAMS!”

Step 6 - Lighten them up and cheer them on:

Point to the globe on the ribbon and tell them “Inside this globe are cheerleaders, cheering you on for your dreams. I am one of them. To get the whole community jumping for your dreams, I'm going to put a “Spark” by placing my finger on the cheerleaders and saying BING! (You both ought to get a laugh out of doing this, which helps people to lighten up and know that positive change can be fun).

Step 7 - Connect heart-to-heart:

Hug, shake hands, smile or do whatever comes naturally to you and the other person.

Step 8 - Give them a chance to be a Spark for others:

Present two extra Blue Ribbons and two copies of the Who I Am Makes A Difference® Story so that others will have the opportunity to become Difference Maker “Sparks” and make a positive difference in the world. www.MakeADifference.com/Story

Step 9 - Always acknowledge the best in yourself and others:

In the spirit of the Blue Ribbon always display your ribbon on your computer, wall, mirror, visor or wherever you can see it to remind you to think good thoughts about yourself and others as often as you can.

Step 10 - BONUS ... Have fun making a difference:

If you can't always think good thoughts about yourself and others, take your Blue Ribbon off, turn it upside-down and you can think anyway you want. When you're ready to think good thoughts again, turn your ribbon right-side up and experience, once again, how much you can make a difference. This ceremony was created in 1983 by Helice “Sparky” Bridges, founder of Difference Makers International.



Week 5:

Who You Are Makes A Difference

This week's activities are a continuation of the previous week's activity, with a discussion of The Blue Ribbon Movie and Ceremony.

Discussion:

- What do you remember most about last week's Blue Ribbon movie?
- How did the students feel about the teacher's gift of a Blue Ribbon to each of them when the movie began?
- Do you know anyone who might feel like the 14-year old boy?
- How did you feel when you were receiving your Blue Ribbon?
- How did it feel to acknowledge someone else by giving a Blue Ribbon?
- Has anything changed for you personally—that you feel it's safe to share—since receiving the Blue Ribbon?

Activity:

"I Make A Difference by Acknowledging Others"

The teacher asks the student to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name.

The assignment, "The Nicest Thing About You Is ...," challenges the students to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down.

Week 5

Teach the Class
to acknowledge others'
best points.



Let the students decide
how to make this their
"best learning"
school year ever.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

This should take a full class period to finish. Ask students to hand in their papers to the teacher.

The story that inspired this class activity is available for you in the in Appendix, on page 28, to read at the opening of this activity—depending on age appropriateness: *Too Busy for a Friend*.

Discussion before starting the writing assignment:

The act of acknowledging other people gets us outside ourselves and helps us think about what strides others are making.

Acknowledgment is a necessary skill for our own contributions to the greater good: our classroom community. Everyone has some insecurity . . . it's normal. But the degree of insecurity depends on situations outside of school (in personal life) that we may not know about. Acknowledgment is good for everybody. Think of it this way: if everyone received a standing ovation for their life, they would know for certain that they mattered and made a difference. Acknowledging others not only feels great, we are actually acknowledging ourselves. What I can see that is great about you can be what's great about me that I'm just beginning to learn about.

Whether or not the students really know each other is irrelevant, because it is human nature to form impressions. If we've not thought of someone else in a positive light, this moves us into an activity that "asks" us to find that special something about each person in our classroom community.

Conclusion of this activity:

The teacher compiles a page for each student and hands them out at the beginning of the next week's activity.



Week 6:

Community = Connection

Week 6 brings Connection into the mix of necessities for a functioning Community. It teaches children how to rely on their Inside Voice vs. the Outside Voice of Others.

Activity #1:

Hand out the compilations of each student's Nicest Thing About You Is ... assignment from the previous week.

Discussion:

- How many of you were afraid to look at your Acknowledgement Papers?
- What was going through your mind as you were thinking about each of your classmates?
- What insights did you notice about yourself as you were coming up with nice things to write about other people?
- What were some of your concerns?
- Were you concerned with your sincerity?
- What did you enjoy?

Activity #2:

Community Building Trust Exercise

Materials Needed:

2 Blindfolds

Week 6

Connection is
an essential ingredient
for the Building of a
Community.



Teach students how to
build Community trust
and rely on their senses.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

This is an activity that should be done in a gymnasium or on the play ground. The children form a big circle and two are selected at a time to do this activity.

One child is “it” and the other child is the chaser. The goal of the group is to keep the one that is “it” safe from the child who is chasing. They pass the child who is “it” around the circle, to keep him or her from the child who is the chaser as long as possible.

Plan on enough time to do this with as many children as possible getting to be in the circle.

After everyone who wants to have a turn has been in the circle, come back to the classroom for a discussion.

Discussion:

- What was it like to be “it” ... the one being chased and having to trust your classmates to keep you safe?
- What was it like to be the “chaser” and to have your classmates protecting someone from you?
- Did you feel safe?
- Did you start to use your senses more: hearing, feeling, touch, intention?
- What did this do for your ability to focus?

Conclusion of this activity:

There are no wrong answers to how individuals experienced this exercise. This exercise teaches us all how to take better care of other’s who may be more vulnerable than us. This also teaches us —whether we are “it” or the chaser—how to pay close attention to our senses to know if a situation is safe or not. If it’s not, get out of there. Move in another direction.

This teaches us to learn to listen more to the Inside Voice vs. Outside Voice of Others.



Week 7:

Community & Leadership

Week 7 emphasizes that good teamwork is essential for Community cooperation.

Materials needed:

Blindfold

Activity:

“Trust Me in Leadership”

Divide the group into teams of four. Participation should be voluntary. One person in each group is blindfolded; another is the leader, who will verbally instruct the blindfolded person to go from Point A to Point B in the room or adjacent area. The leader must not touch the blindfolded person. The other two persons assist the leader and make certain the blindfolded person doesn't bump into anything.

When the walk (2-3 minutes) is completed, switch roles and repeat the exercise using a different route.

Repeat as time allows.

Discussion:

- How did you feel when blindfolded? (Uncertain, frightened, dumb, etc.)
- Did you trust your leader? Why or why not?
- Did you trust your classmates? Why or why not?
- What did you need when you were blindfolded? (Support, assurance, advice, coaching, etc.)

Week 7

The Community needs
good teamwork for
Leadership, Support and
Cooperation.



Do you trust your
fellow team
members?

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Read story:

“Looking for the Good in Others” You’ll find it in the Appendix, on page 29..

Conclusion of this activity:

The objective of this activity has been to demonstrate teamwork for support, leadership, and cooperation. To build mutual support and trust, we must be willing to communicate and care for each other’s personal and emotional safety. Doing this for others creates a caring, safe, healthy community for yourself.



Week 8:

Re-Labeling

Week 8 illustrates the power of the labels we all carry with us from birth. The technique of Re-Labeling is one of the most powerful gifts we can give our students.

Materials needed:

1 Sheet of paper for each child and self-stick name tags.

Activity:

“Re-Labeling”

By now the class has had time to build trust and connection with each other, for differences to play out, and for likes and dislikes within the group to be revealed. So as the teacher, you can assess if the class is ready socially/emotionally from the previous weeks' work to do this activity.

This is one of the most amazing and potent activities I've done with children over the years. I've done it in every conceivable setting. My main objective is to set this exercise up so it's healing for all children.

The one issue with this exercise is the possibility of teasing and taunting after each one's labels are figured out. However, I do not see this as a bad thing, just another opportunity to teach and to heal if, in fact it does occur. In all of my years of doing this, because I'm conscientious in how I set it up for them, I have never had a child taunt or hurtfully tease another child once this exercise has been completed.

If this does happen, you simply go back to the, “What is going on for you that you would tease or make fun of someone else's new label?” question. (See pg. 87, MakeADifference.com/FlashBook.) It works every time to take care of whatever “is” going on for the child emotionally/socially.

Week 8

Recognize the power of labels, both negative and positive.



Help students to rewrite and replace their negative labels.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Each child has his or her own labels, and as they do their own relabeling of themselves and feel their own pain, they come to understand the pain for another.

TEACHER PREPARATION

To understand the potential impact this exercise will have on your class as a community, I highly recommend is that you do this exercise with other faculty and staff first, so you experience it yourself.

I am providing a FREE live performance for you all to listen to, so that you can understand how this works at: www.MakeADifference.com/Relabeling.

This live performance took place at Portland Community College campus for their entire faculty and staff of about 300 people. It was a very diverse audience. You will hear how I worked with people on stage to literally change their lives with this relabeling process. You'll also find an audio recording of their testimonials at this link.

As you work through the relabeling process, understand that this is not about blaming people in your life who've labeled you, even though you've now discovered how deeply that label has influenced you and affected your life. It's not about being disloyal to your parents or friends. This is all about you. It's about resolution. It's about dismantling your emotional triggers so you can experience your true self, your authentic and most powerful self.

Directions for this Activity are in the Appendix on page 31.



Week 9:

Community=2-Way Communication

Week 9 teaches that the success of the Community depends upon good two-way Communication—a skill that benefits students in learning how to think about what they are saying and how they are saying it.

Activity:

“Drawing Directions.”

Pair up the students. In this activity, Student A will give directions to Student B, while Student B draws a picture or object from the directions he receives.

Students A and B are seated back to back, with their desks facing opposite directions. Each student has a piece of paper and a pencil or pen.

On the paper, Student A draws an image that Student B does not see.

Student A then describes to Student B how to draw this picture/object, one line at a time, without telling Student B what the image is until it B has finished. Student B may ask any number of questions, as long as they're not about what the picture is.

When Student A has finished describing what to draw and Student B has asked all his or her questions, the two students compare their drawings. Then they switch roles.

Week 9

Help your students be good communicators.



Sometimes
we think we are
communicating clearly
when, in fact,
we are not.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

Discussion:

- What happened—how well did you each do?
- What was it you understood well from your partner?
- What was it that you didn't understand?

Conclusion of this activity:

We think we are communicating clearly, but many times we are actually not. This is an example of how everyone learns differently, hears differently, and sees differently. We must be careful to pay attention to the clues and be willing to ask questions until we are certain we understand.

Conclusion of the 9 Weeks:

Have a discussion with your class about how they feel the first nine weeks of the school year have gone.

How do they feel their classroom community is coming along for making this their best 'Make A Difference' school year ever?

To continue to create weekly Classroom Community with Team Building activities I recommend *The Big Book of Team Building Games* by John Newstrom and Edward Scannell by McGraw-Hill.

Resources

Other materials for education professionals and parents:

- Make A Difference with the Power of Connection: www.MakeADifference.com/FlashBook
- No Labels, No Limits: www.MakeADifference.com/NLNL
- Attitude Alignment: www.MakeADifference.com/Attitude
- TurnAround Specialist: www.MakeADifference.com/Relabeling
- Connecting with Colors: www.MakeADifference.com/Colors

Bonus Activities

Students will score even higher on achievement tests through ongoing empowering activities. The first is one that I suggest for use on a daily basis. I used this regularly with grades K-8, and I also recommend it for high school classes. And the second is a weekly activity with a wealth of benefits for your students and the classroom as a whole.

Daily Activity: “Brag & Blab”

Here’s an excellent way to build self-esteem, so I encourage you to schedule time for this on a regular daily basis, as I did with my classes. At the opening of each school day, the children are invited to come to the front of the room to Brag & Blab about any previous day’s successes or announcements. All Brags and Blabs are simply acknowledged as the class learns how to do this. Here are some of the benefits from this exercise:

- Skill acquisition for speaking at the front of the room.
- Acknowledgment for successes or announcements of things that were interesting.
- Shows the more fearful children how to do it and that it can be quick and easy.
- Teaches good communication. Students learn how to get to the point.
- Doing it becomes fun and improves self-esteem.
- Teaches everyone that it’s okay to “own” one’s gifts, talents and inner greatness in a way that encourages others to do the same.
- Celebration of good things happening for people... encourages us to appreciate and acknowledge good things happening in our own lives that we may be taking for granted.

Weekly Activity: “News TV Show”

This is an Ongoing Weekly Activity that continues to build community throughout the rest of the school year:

- The one activity that probably produced the most results for building a compassionate and empowered community of children in my classroom, other than daily cooperative learning, was producing a weekly “news” TV show that included the creation of commercials as well as World and Local News reporting.
- Many schools today still invest in Scholastic’s Weekly Readers. (I have done this with every grade level and modified it as was age appropriate.)
- You don’t need the Weekly Readers to do this. You could also use your local newspaper.

The 9-Week School Curriculum

I would recommend that you simply ask the publisher to provide you with 20-30 leftovers from Sunday's news, as it will have the most information. However I would not use the local newspaper for K-3.)

- Every Monday morning, we would receive the Weekly Reader. I would give the students some time to peruse the stories and then in an open class discussion, ask them to identify which stories they were interested in.
- If you have 2-3 students interested in the same story, that's fine, because they are going to research the story further for their news report. Each week you have X number of commercials created by X number of students, plus X number of news reports—until the top news items are taken and every one has a project.
- Each student will, at some point, do a commercial and each student, at some point, will do a news story. One student will get to run the video camera. One or two students produce the show. One student each week can hold the cue cards ... and so on.
- But every student will eventually do every single job for the news program.
- This is a week-long activity that they can work on (once the stories and commercials have been assigned) when they have completed their assignments. This is one of the reasons why I never had a quiet classroom. There were learning projects going on all of the time. As I would teach an assignment and then let them work on their assignments, those who finished early could work on other ongoing projects quietly at each other's desks, anywhere in the room.

This engages children and motivates them to:

- Become interested in current events and the world around them.
- Increase their determination to get their assignments done in class so they could do other projects with others.
- Do WELL on their assignments or they'd have to do them again, so they could do other projects.
- Try to top themselves each week.

It would be very quiet after I finished teaching the assignments and as they were getting started, unless I had them working in groups on their assignments. At any rate, because they are interested in what they are doing, they communicate quietly, as they are using their creativity to come up with a TV News Show.

Every Friday is TV day.

You may be amazed that I ended up giving as much time to newscast as I did, but the benefits to the additional learning that was going on all week long, paid off big time on our achievement test results.

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We would begin our newscast at the beginning of the day on Friday. We would film the entire show, with every news report and commercial. After taping was done, we would then watch ourselves and discuss what worked, what didn't. We laughed at ourselves, we were compassionate and protective of every single individual facing the fear of public speaking! Sometimes it took us all morning to do the show and critique it. It paid big dividends in fostering very high scores on their achievement test results. Children in my classroom, who started out behind their peers, not only caught up on the years they were behind, but averaged 2 to 3 years of growth because of these activities and social/emotional work we did together as a compassionate community.

Weekly News TV Show benefits:

- Builds Community
- Increases Self-Esteem / Empowerment
- Teaches Compassion
- Adds Variety
- Provides meaningful Connection
- Encourages "Teamwork"
- Gives practice in Speaking in front of the room / peers
- Makes A Difference
- Provides overall Mega Skill Acquisition on so many mental and emotional and even physical levels (because they would all, over time, dress extra nice on newscast!)

Appendix

Motivational Stories & Re-Labeling Exercise

Too Busy for a Friend...

One day a teacher asked her students to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name.

Then she told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down.

It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed in the papers.

That Saturday, the teacher wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and listed what everyone else had said about that individual.

On Monday she gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. “Really?” she heard whispered. “I never knew that I meant anything to anyone!” and, “I didn’t know others liked me so much,” were most of the comments.

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. She never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn’t matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another. That group of students moved on.

Several years later, one of the students was killed in Vietnam and his teacher attended the funeral of that special student. She had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. He looked so handsome, so mature.

The church was packed with his friends. One by one those who loved him took a last walk by the coffin. The teacher was the last one to bless the coffin.

As she stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to her. “Were you Mark’s math teacher?” he asked. She nodded: “yes.” Then he said: “Mark talked about you a lot.”

After the funeral, most of Mark’s former classmates went together to a luncheon. Mark’s mother and father were there, obviously waiting to speak with his teacher.

“We want to show you something,” his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket “They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it.”

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Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. The teacher knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which she had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him.

"Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said. "As you can see, Mark treasured it."

All of Mark's former classmates started to gather around. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home."

Chuck's wife said, "Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary"

Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vicki said and without batting an eyelash, she continued: "I think we all saved our lists"

That's when the teacher finally sat down and cried. She cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

The density of people in society is so thick that we forget that life will end one day. And we don't know when that one day will be.

-Excerpted from a story by Sister Helen P. Mrosia, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*



Look for Good in Others

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friend's tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him.

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So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, “Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.”

He looked at me and said, “Hey thanks!” There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him. And my friends thought the same of him.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, “Dang boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!” He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn’t me having to get up there and speak.

Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than me and all the girls loved him! Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, “Hey, big guy, you’ll be great!” He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. “Thanks,” he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. “Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach. But mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story.”

I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn’t have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. “Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable. “I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his Mom and Dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person’s life. For better or for worse. We are in each other’s lives to impact one another in some way. Look for good in others.

-by John W. Schlatter, *Chicken Soup for The Soul*

Re-Labeling™ Ourselves

The following are directions for the exercise listed in Week 8. This is an excerpt from Chapter 7 of the book:

Attitude Alignment – the Art of Getting What You Want, by Mary Robinson Reynolds

THE RE-LABELING™ PROCESS

Step One: List Your Negative Labels

Do not force any child to do this. If they don't want to, let them know that it's perfectly OK. Chances are that they will join in after they see the other's feeling better and enjoying the activity.

Assignment: Your first task will be to come up with as many negative messages and labels as you can remember receiving over the years, from early childhood up to the present time. Think about situations or locations where you were labeled by others:

- Home and family
- School
- Summer Camp
- Recreation
- Peers and Friendships

Now list all negative labels that come to mind on the left-hand side of the worksheet. Don't try to justify or explain—just list them!

Since it's easier to see by illustration, I'll go first, using my own labels, which you can see in the left column of the chart on page 32.

Discussion: After you've given the students 3 to 5 minutes to write down their labels, ask them how they feel right now. Is their energy low? Are they feeling happy or sad, depressed, angry, hopeless?

Lesson: They have the inner power to decide how they prefer to “see” themselves. We each have an image of ourselves that we hold in our minds. We can change that image anytime we choose. One of the first things we can decide to do is turn it around. We don't have to accept what other people have said or believe about us. It is an “inside” job. It's not an “outside” job to get other people to see us differently. It's up to “us” to see ourselves as we prefer to be and then hold that “image” firmly in our “own minds” and let that drive our behavior so we can be that more and more.

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Step Two: Turn It Around!

Now it's time to decide differently about your labels. When I first developed my Re-Labeling™ Process, I was trying to figure out how I could turn things over to the opposite of what I was repeating in my experiences.

I would ask myself, "What is the opposite of what is happening that I would actually prefer instead?"

For things to change, you must get a picture of the way you prefer them to be.

The IMAGE of yourself that you hold in mind is what will drive and sustain your behavior and choices. Begin first with what IMAGE you are deciding for yourself.

On a sheet of paper, each child is to start writing down a NEW LABEL on the righthand side of the paper with an adjoining *Statement of Intention* about the IMAGE they are now DECIDING to hold of themselves.

NEGATIVE MESSAGES/LABELS	I HAVE DECIDED THAT I AM NOW RESOLVED & HOLDING FIRM to the IMAGE of myself I intend to become more of every day in every way.
Just too nice	Nice: I "own" this. I AM nice. I prefer being kind, generous and I really do care.
Just too sensitive	Sensitive/Intuitive: I "own" this. I AM sensitive. Appropriately sensitive. Emotionally oriented. In-tune with attitudinal energies and have valid concerns about injustices. I have reasonable preferences and expect them to be acknowledged. I will give voice to my concerns as is good/necessary for me.
Bad	Good: I am a good person who is human and am now learning to make better and better decisions and reaction choices.
Stupid, Dumb, Idiot	Intelligent: As smart as I decide to be. I am smart in my own special way, and I can accomplish whatever I set my mind to.

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Incompetent	Competent: At what I decide I am and what's important to me. I make a difference being me.
Controlling/ Perfectionist	Love Order: I am Lightening Up! I accept that I feel safe with order. I absolutely love order and beauty of things well done. I now relax more about this.
Stubborn & Strong Willed	Leader Qualities: I am learning how to be a leader who uses the power of cooperation. I am discerning, focused, achievement oriented. I accept that I am driven by my bliss and enjoy competition.
Hot Tempered/ Angry	Compassionate: with myself first and with others second. When I'm afraid or feel shamed by someone, I will be compassionate and loving with myself until I feel better.
Irresponsible	Responsible: I am learning every day in every way to grow into being able to handle more and more responsibilities.
Can't be trusted	Trustworthy: I am learning to be trustworthy, high integrity, even when that means I'm concerned that it will upset or disappoint someone. I am truthful to myself.
Talks Too Much	Gift of Gab: that I now manage in the ways that involve and include every one around me. Sometimes I fill in the awkward silences. I now enjoy listening to others too.
Unwanted	Wanted: I want, cherish and love me right here, right now, just as I am. I can make a difference by helping others. I matter.
Abandoned	Cherished: I always have me. I love me. I never abandon me. I approve of me. I want me. I am going to make it.
Lazy	Creatively orientated: and I now manage my gifts and talents in a timely, responsible manner.
Liar	Courageous: I am learning how to become more and more brave about being truthful. It is so much more powerful for me to tell the truth every time regardless of the error I made.
Overweight/fat	Lightening Up! I am oversized at this time. I am now learning, every day in every way, how to take better care of myself, by loving myself enough to hold a happy, healthy image of myself and modify my eating habits accordingly.

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The teacher can do one of three things here:

- You can let the children work together on the “re-labeling” process in groups. *Again, if any child does not want any one to see their labels, do not make them work with a group.
- You can have them work by themselves, walking around the room helping them get each and every one of their labels – relabeled.
- You can collect their papers with their new labels, go over them yourself and make necessary revisions/corrections to improve the label they are going for. Hand their papers back to them the next day and continue with the Re-Labeling Process Step 3.

The last audience I did this with was with 500 adolescents Grades 6 – 12 in a large auditorium. I don’t recommend that you do it this way. It’s much better at a classroom level.

At first, many tried to cover their papers so no one would see. As I worked with those were not afraid to work with me in front of every one, the rest of the audience began to work with those around them. Some got out of their seats to walk over to other sections to help others with their labels.

Do not be put off by the initial discomfort and fear in the room. As soon as they write down those negative labels, you have them emotionally, and they want to know from you how to deal with this... because it’s on their hearts and minds every single day.

So, whatever you do, do not minimize what’s happening for these students. Move them through this emotion quickly with the Relabeling part of the process. HOPE is a powerful thing when constructed correctly and directly.

Showing children the power within themselves to decide differently is a huge gift! And once you, as the teacher, find out what’s really driving each child, you will know better how to help them find their own inner voice, their own individual, inherent greatness and their own success.

You now have everything you need to know about the children in your classroom to teach them, to help them SEE themselves as difference makers – “I Make A Difference”— in the bigger picture.

In allowing the children to work with each other, the noise level will be up, but the difference made is immeasurable.

The energy in the room will be up. The relabeling process makes them feel better and more empowered quickly.

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Discussion:

As they are relabeling themselves, ask them how they are starting to feel with changing their minds about themselves and about what is possible.

How are they beginning to feel now? How is their energy?

If they aren't feeling good... investigate a little bit with them, "What's going on that they are not beginning to feel better?" If they don't know, that's OK. When they do know, you want them to tell you, if they want.

Step Three: Put New Labels on Name Tags

This can be done several different ways too.

When I did this process at summer camps for at-risk youth, I would bring hundreds of Name Tags. For each new label they decided upon they could use 1-name tag. I always carry hundreds of name tags!

What was really cool was the healing process these kids experienced from putting these name tags with their new labels all over their bodies. Some kids had as many as 20 name tags with new labels.

Another option: You can also have them put as many new labels as can fit on 1 or 2 name tags.

Then take the back off the name tag and stick it to their shirt anywhere they want it.

In a classroom situation, I would set this up so we were done in plenty of time before they head out the door to the next class.

Let them enjoy wearing their new Label. Then before the bell rings, have them take the name tag off and stick it in their notebook ... or they can throw them away saying to themselves: It's Already Accomplished!

Step Four: Throw the Negative Labels Away!

Cut off the left side of the paper and either burn it in a 100% safe place or crumple it up and have Basket Practice.

Have every one cut their Relabeling paper in half. We're going to throw away the left side—Negative Labels side—of the page and keep the righthand side—NEW Labels and Image side—of the page – if they want.

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Again, the focus is on the fact that we've decided on the IMAGE we are going to see for ourselves, (whether others see us this way or not, yet.) We can keep the paper to remind us and encourage us, or we can throw it away saying: It's already accomplished!

Conclusion of this activity:

Ask them for their insights into themselves.

- What insights do they now have about other people in their community classroom that they didn't realize before today?
- What do they now understand that they have the power to change for the better in their lives?

***Note to Teachers:**

As you are already aware, these children are living with the adults, siblings, social/family situations in their lives who have unknowingly labeled them negatively.

I encourage you to share your findings from this activity about the IMAGE each child has been believing about themselves with their parents at Parent-Teacher Conferences.

You can share with them "generalities" about what the child has decided that they want to hold firmly in mind for this new, positive image of themselves and what benefits the child is currently experiencing from this work.

To include the parents in on what the children did in relabeling themselves will dramatically help children on all levels as their parents try to understand and help them too.

Unless there is something of great concern that shows up during this process—if you see from what a child has written that he or she is suicidal, or that they intend to cause harm to themselves or others, or that they are being abused—then it would be advisable to keep the child's findings about himself in general terms of the new image he is working to become.

For example: My mother would come home from a P-T Conference and yell at me even more to justify why she labeled me as "irresponsible and can never be trusted." So, be highly conscientious about how you encourage parents to work with their children's decisions for improvement.

*We all make a difference every day.
The question is: What kind of difference are we making?*

We receive emails daily, filled with creative suggestions on how to raise funds to provide the "I Make A Difference" Wristbands and the Blue Ribbons to children, faculty and staff. Here are three ways I have found over the years that work well to generate funds for a worthy goal:

1 - Use the Movies. Send www.TeddyStallardMovie.com and www.BlueRibbonMovie.com to people in your community who have businesses and organizations. Email a movie web address to them, with a personal invitation to watch it. Or pick up the phone and ask for a few moments of their time to tell them about a free online movie that will make a difference in someone's life today! Tell them what you hope to do for students, faculty and staff and let them know that you are calling to ask them to participate in this effort through of a donation of a specific dollar amount for the "I Make A Difference" wristbands and/or Blue Ribbons.

2 - Think Bigger than You. Determine the total cost of the wristbands and ribbons you will need. Then use the Internet - it's FREE! Most businesses and organizations in your community have websites with contact emails. Do a Google Search for the name of the business you want to contact. Write directly to the decision-makers. Giving them a movie website will show them they matter. ... and that they too can make a difference in their community. Ask them to contribute and show them how they can help you build a 'Make A Difference' Year.

3 - Plan Ahead. If it is your intention to show the movies and give the "I Make A Difference" wristbands, Blue Ribbons and/or the little book that speaks volumes: *Make A Difference with the Power of Connection* Gift Book & DVD for an Acknowledgment Event, plan ahead. Order now to assure that we'll have the quantities you need for your August In-Services and/or "Make A Difference" Events. (*The Power of Connection* Gift Book will be available for shipping in mid-July 2008.)

There's much to be said for the Power of Acknowledgment in lifting people's spirit ... to fill their cup emotionally by helping you continue to make a difference. Maybe it feels overwhelming, yet the very best way to generate and sustain schoolwide synergism and avoid burn-out is to simply pick up the phone and say, "Hello, I just wanted to let you know what a difference you make."

If you are interested in creating a fundraiser for this upcoming school year please check out how you can use our "word-of-mouth" movies, books and wristbands for your fundraiser. To find out how it works, visit: <http://www.makeadifference.com/fundraising.htm>

To your Best School Year ever—in 2008-2009,

Mary Robinson Reynolds Founder, Heart Productions & Publishing