

Kinnelon Full Value School Community

“We must educate our children for civic participation at every level, so that they and we come to see more committed, generous, and heroic actions as part of everyday life, not just a reaction to crisis. We must prepare our children for the tests of life, not a life of tests.”

-Dr. Maurice Elias, Rutgers University

Extensive and rigorous research and common sense tell us that teaching and modeling healthy social problem solving and decision-making potentiates academic achievement; one does not exist without the other. In Kinnelon we have made a commitment to teach self regulation while empowering students to take care of themselves and their social/emotional wellbeing. This initiative was, in part, a response to New Jersey Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying legislation, requiring that a systemic primary prevention program be established to build these resiliency skills district wide. The rationale, which we unequivocally accept, is that a student who has the tools to take care of him/herself and others will not be bullied.

The foundation of the Full Value* program is the following core behaviors which staff and students hold each other accountable to. They are presented in a list, but are not hierarchical. All of them work together synergistically:

Be Here: This means that one must show up, be present, and pay attention in order to derive benefits from whatever they do in school. There are many behaviors associated with Be Here including coming on time, completing homework, listening to peers and adults, and following directions.

Be Safe: This asks that students and staff practice physical and emotional safety with each other. Behaviors are developmentally specific and/or age appropriate. They can include being careful on the playground and during recess, not engaging in illegal activities, not fighting, not harassing or devaluing other students, and deliberately removing oneself from a potentially compromising situation.

Be Honest: This core value connects to giving and receiving feedback to affirm the positive use of behavioral norms, or to offer feedback when they are being violated. An example of the integration of these concepts would be to point out that critical feedback should only be offered within the context of emotional safety (Be Safe). We have all experienced feedback that, while honest, was hurtful and not helpful. How the feedback is offered is critical to it being heard and integrated.

Set Goals: Students are encouraged to set a personal and professional (educational goal) using the S.M.A.R.T. goal setting process. Realistic goal setting is essential to students finding their way to success. SMART goals must be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**rackable. This is an important tool to help students answer the question, “How will I get to where I want to go”. This model can be applied to making friends, completing assignments, or choosing a school. It requires the careful setting of a goal and the defining of how one gets from Point A to Point B including the commitment of personal resources and the help one will need from others. All of the other Full Values inform the goal setting process.

Let go and Move On: This Core Value is often the toughest to set into motion. It requires the letting go of anger and resentment and continuing to be able to work with those around us, even those people that we will never positively connect with. It does not necessarily imply forgiveness, but accepts that there are many circumstances in life when we will need to be productive with people who we don't necessarily like or get along with. In terms of emotional safety (Be Safe) and the next Full Value (Caring for Self and other), an important way to take care of oneself is to not carry toxic feelings around that serve no purpose.

Caring for Self and Others: It is an accepted axiom that if students do not feel self efficacious and positive about themselves, they will have difficulty being generative; that is able to care for others in a healthy way. Caring for Self involves looking out for one's own emotional safety, having a voice, feeling accomplished, being successful; all of these behaviors and feelings captured by the totality of the Full Value behaviors.

In order for these precepts to stick, a contracting system has been developed for use in each classroom. These contracts are co-created by students and teachers. They operationalize the Full Value behavioral norms in language defined by students, and also contain distracters that tend to get in the way of fulfilling the promise of these norms. Some contracts are depicted below:



A Full Value Pop Up developed for the Media Center at Kiel. The animals under each door make it easier for younger students to make connections.



Student designed Full Value Highway. The cars contain the behavioral norms that students have agreed on. The side of the road is “litter” with the “trash” that gets in the way of living by the agreed upon norms



A Full Value I-Pod constructed by students in an art class



A puzzle theme co-created by students

Calling Group: The Calling Group process provides a forum for teachers and students to discuss positives and distracters associated with the agreed upon classroom contract. It is really a structured town hall with rules that maintain positive and productive communication. Various types of groups can be called depending on the need. For example, an Affirmation group is called when a member of the class community has contributed something positive and it is worthy of commendation. A Feelings group is called to share emotions associated with either support or violation of behavioral norms. The Calling Group process gives all students a voice in speaking their truth. Initially, the adults choose when groups are called. Over time, students take on this responsibility, as they come to understand the process.

Training: As of September, over half of Kinnelon's faculty and staff have received some form of training in Full Value, ranging from an overview to four days of intensive participation. The district is committed to continuing the training and a refresher process to insure that the model endures.

Outcomes: As a result of the Full Value program, staff who are implementing it with fidelity are finding that they are spending much less time on doling out repetitive and often marginally effective punitive consequences with students. Issues within the classroom are getting resolved with all students participating. This actually promotes an increase in instructional time. Students are becoming more empowered to take care of their social/emotional needs, and more sensitized to the needs of those around them. A common language has been developed around the behavioral norms from class to class and grade to grade. Students now know what to expect in terms of behavioral norms no matter what setting they are in. Statistical evidence as to a significant reduction of bullying has been reported from administration.

* Full Value is a federally approved program listed on SAMHSA National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. Approved programs are subject to rigorous evaluation by established Federal standards before being placed on this list.