



# ADULTS AS MODELS

of kindness  
at school

## BEING A MODEL OF KINDNESS

### WHAT IS A SAFE, POSITIVE AND CARING SCHOOL CLIMATE?

The school climate is determined by how students, parents and school staff perceive the quality of life at school. It consists of various elements that are grouped into four broad areas: a sense of security and fairness; social skills and academic learning; interpersonal relationships; and a sense of attachment and involvement.

“School climate is not simply an accumulation of individual levels of well-being; it also has a collective dimension, particularly by taking into account the relations between individuals. And while a good school climate is important in and of itself, it also positively influences students’ learning and sense of security.” (Debarbieux 2015, 11) [*Translation*]

### “A good school climate . . . positively influences students’ learning and sense of security.”

Debarbieux, 2015

Thus, improving the various components of school climate can not only increase well-being and sense of security of students, but also positively affects their learning.

Éric Debarbieux, 2015, “Du « climat scolaire » : définitions, effets et politiques publiques,” *Éducation & formations* 88-89 (December), 1127.

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## BEING A MODEL FOR STUDENTS AS AN ADULT WHO WORKS IN A SCHOOL

Everyone who works in a school contributes to students' education in a variety of ways. Students draw inspiration from adults around them by observing the quality of their actions, behaviours, attitudes and relations with others. Since teachers spend several hours with students each day, they exert a considerable influence. Research has shown this. For example, the publication *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions: Seven Keys to a Positive Learning Environment* establishes a number of elements that foster positive collective momentum in schools. It highlights the importance of adults as inspiring models, and illustrates the significance of a healthy school climate and students' well-being with regard to educational success. Based on research, it demonstrates that students learn better when their socio-emotional needs are met. Establishing an emotional bond with students thus promotes their learning. It is essential to consider the relational factors that influence students academically and socially. Adults must be positive and caring models, reinforce expected behaviours, and encourage kind behaviour as it happens.

**“Teachers thus have an enormous privilege to positively influence students who will one day become the adults of tomorrow, the leaders and decision-makers of the future.”**

When someone describes an adult from their school days who influenced their lives positively, the reasons given for this influence are often the same: the adult's interest for the student, the passion for their job, a desire to excel and a sense of fairness. Teachers thus have an enormous privilege to positively influence students who will become the adults of tomorrow, the leaders and decision-makers of the future.

Adults have the opportunity to brighten a student's day, to make them laugh, to inspire them, to welcome them, and to foster a harmonious relationship with them. Adults who are models for students in school are laying the foundation for a healthy classroom and school climate.

To read more about this topic: Tom Hierck, Charlie Coleman and Chris Weber, 2011, *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions: Seven Keys to a Positive Learning Environment*, Bloomington: Solution Tree Press.



## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

### SECRET BUDDY (ELEMENTARY)

#### Objective:

To create an opportunity for students to be models of kindness.

#### Procedure:

- 1 Lead a discussion with students that invites them to identify adults who are models of kindness.
- 2 Ask students to come up with certain behaviours, actions or attitudes that show a person is kind.
- 3 Every Monday, each student randomly draws the name of another classmate. They are then asked to be extra kind to that person, without revealing their identity.
- 4 At the end of the week, the unveiling of names takes place. Students can guess whose name everyone else drew. Take a moment to discuss some of the kind gestures the students received and select some of them to become the kind gestures of the month.

### SAYING THANK YOU (SECONDARY)

#### Objective:

To allow students to recognize (by awarding a personalized certificate) the contribution of a person who is or was a model for them.

#### Procedure:

- 1 Invite students to discuss the definition of the word "model" and the difference between this word and other terms such as "hero" or "super model."
- 2 Help students become aware of the choices they must make, and that these choices are often influenced by models.
- 3 Invite students to give personal examples of such choices influenced by models.
- 4 Invite students to identify values that inspire them when making a decision.
- 5 Ask students to name an individual who supports and inspires them in their everyday decisions.
- 6 Invite students to award these individuals a certificate of merit, or to write them a letter highlighting the positive influence they had on the student.



## TAKING IT FURTHER ...

**Nancy Gaudreau, *Gérer efficacement sa classe : les cinq ingrédients essentiels*, (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2017).**

"Recognized as a major influence on students' evolution and success, class management is the basis for a healthy and safe climate that promotes learning. This book aims to be a tool for teachers and education professionals, supporting them in implementing efficient class management methods." (Excerpt from the editor's summary [*Translation*])

**Jean Archambault and Roch Chouinard, *Vers une gestion éducative de la classe*, 4th ed. (Montréal: Gaëtan Morin Éditeur, 2016).**

"This book deals with analysis and approaches in pedagogy that foster student development of competencies in elementary and secondary school. It offers practical, theory-based courses of action concerning current and efficient class management." (Excerpt from the editor's summary [*Translation*])

**Chaire de recherche sur la sécurité et la violence en milieu éducatif, *S'engager comme adulte pour créer une école bienveillante*, in *Actes du Colloque 2017*, [online], 2017. [[www.violence-ecole.ulaval.ca](http://www.violence-ecole.ulaval.ca)] (Accessed May 22, 2018).**

**Marie-Odile Le Masson, *Le climat scolaire : pour une école bienveillante*, in *Chronique Sociale* (Lyon: 2014).**

"School climate is a vast topic that affects all school subjects and that concerns everyone. A safe and caring school climate is integral for everyone's well-being and academic success." (Marie-Odile Le Masson) [*Translation*])