



Parents' role in education Teen wants to make a difference

By Dr. Vicki Mather, The Alberta Teachers' Association
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Parents play an important role in ensuring that schools are safe places for students. Parents are their children's first teachers and they serve as role models for peaceful living throughout the school years. Children whose parents are involved in their education achieve more than children whose parents are not involved.

In addition to parental support for and involvement in the school, parents can contribute to safe and caring schools. Help reinforce your children's commitment to education by

- making sure your children know they're important members of the family;
- praising children's good behavior;
- dealing with disagreements with your children by compromising;
- helping your children deal with fears, phobias, and negative feelings;
- making time to talk to your children about problems and sharing ideas with them;
- finding ways to help your children feel good about themselves;
- teaching children the "Golden Rule" —treat others as you wish to be treated;
- displaying your affection for your children every day;
- doing things with your children that they like to do;
- noticing your children's needs and protecting them from harm;
- warning your children about the consequences of breaking rules;
- demonstrating that your children can trust you;
- expecting your children to give you truthful answers;
- letting your children make their own choices as long as the choices do not conflict with your basic principles and
- ensuring that you always know where your children are and who they are with.

By Ellen Lawrence

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A 17 year old applies lessons learned through Safe and Caring workshops to everyday life.

During an argument with her sister, a teacher or even a friend, the seventeen year old Raelynn Shaughnessy likely wouldn't have stepped back, taken a deep breath and tried to work out the situation in a calm, respectful manner.

But ever since the 17 year old St. Joseph Catholic high school Grade 12 student completed all five of the Safe and Caring Communities workshops earlier this month, that's what she finds herself doing.

"I try to see where they're coming from and give other people a chance," Shaughnessy said. "If I'm having a bad day and somebody's having a good day, then I shouldn't try and rain on their good day with my problems."

According to the Alberta Teachers' Association, the organization that developed the program in 1996, Shaughnessy is one of very few high school students—if any at all—to have completed all five seminars. Up until now, mainly parents, teachers, coaches and youth workers have attended the SACC workshops - sessions designed to teach adults how to model and reinforce positive social behavior with children.

It's an accomplishment that makes Shaughnessy's former grade school teacher and SACC steering committee chair-woman Angie Peters proud.

"I'm really impressed," she said. "It definitely speaks well for the youth of today, that they are interested in improving their own skills as well and having more positive interactions with everyone they encounter."

Peters said it was valuable to have a young person's perspective for the duration of the workshops, primarily because it erased some of the stereotypes many adults have of youth. Teens do make judgement calls based on strong values, they are conscious of caring about each other and they do listen to other opinions, she explained.

"She seemed to be into respecting diversity among other people's opinions because that's the way it is with their

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peers, whereas adults seem to be a bit more focused on one view of how people should be, "Peters said, adding she hopes Shaughnessy will take what she's learned and teach other young people by example.

Shaughnessy is thankful she's learned how to respectfully communicate with those around her and wonders what the world would be like if everyone else did the same. "If we don't learn now we could go through life with all this anger and a lot of mistreating of people, but if we catch it young enough it prevents that," she said. "I even look at what's going on in our world and just the lack of respect and communication between countries and people is terrible."

Shaughnessy, who hopes to eventually become a nurse,

admits she was persuaded to attend the workshops with her mom, but doesn't have any regrets because of the invaluable lessons she's learned about herself and relating to others. "I just learned there are other ways you can get around everything," she said.

The five SACC workshops are called Living Respectfully, Developing Self-Esteem, Respecting Diversity, Anger Management and Dealing with Bullying and Resolving Conflict.

The next round of sessions will start in January. Call Dauna Grant, program coordinator for Safe and Caring Communities in Grande Prairie, at 402-2818 or call the ATA's Safe and Caring Schools office at 780-447-9487 for more information.

Attention Junior / Senior High Teachers

Turn your favorite unit and lesson plans into safe and caring plans, submit them for publication on the SACS website and receive a \$150 honorarium for each plan published.

Help create the ATA's Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) website for secondary teachers.

This site, currently under development, can be viewed at its temporary location ata.iomer.com. Download lesson plans contributed by your colleagues. Check out micro workshops on topics that impact the SACS culture in your classroom and school. Review effective strategies submitted by principals and school counsellors that contribute to building a SACS culture.

There are two ways to contribute:

1. Through a SACS school-based workshop: Funding is available to cover expenses for safe and caring schools (SACS) curriculum redevelopment workshops in a limited number of schools on a first-come, first-served basis. The workshop will review efficient ways to rewrite your unit and lesson plans to integrate SACS knowledge, skills and attitudes while meeting curriculum outcomes in whatever

subject you teach. This workshop is for teachers in every subject area. Teachers who submit their unit and lesson plans for publication on the website will receive a \$150 honorarium after approval.

2. Individually or with one or more colleagues: Submit your unit or lesson plan directly online. Either on your own or with one or more colleagues, click on the "Integration" information on the temporary website ata.iomer.com. Then, peruse the site for lessons in your subject area to understand how other teachers link curriculum outcomes to safe and caring topics and instructional strategies that teach pro-social skills. Write one of your most suitable and successful unit or lesson plan using the format provided. For information about submitting a unit or lesson plan, go to the "Contribute" hot button and use the template that is provided to format your lesson. Submit the lesson by clicking on "Unit and Lessons" (submit a lesson).

Contact Barb Maheu at 780-447-9484 to ask questions or to confirm that your lesson was accepted online. A \$150 honorarium will be paid after your unit or lesson plan has gone through a curriculum review and approval process. This process can take from six to eight weeks.

Toward a Safe and Caring Community Workshop Facilitator Training Red Deer March 14, 2002

Toward a Safe and Caring Community (SACC) is based on the premise that a violence-prevention program in the school—if supported by the home and the community—will have a positive impact on children's behavior. This training session will prepare community members to facilitate the SACC workshop series. The workshops strive to prepare adults who are important in children's lives to act as role models to inspire and validate safe and caring behavior.

The Public Legal Education Network of Alberta may co-sponsor this SACC facilitator training session at a reduced fee. If you interested in becoming a facilitator contact Sue Sheffield by e-mail at sacs@teachers.ab.ca or phone 780-447-9487. More information will be sent to those who register.

Niska News is a newsletter produced by the ATA's Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) Project for school and community members. The goal of the SACS Project is to encourage practices that model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviors so that learning and teaching can take place in a safe and caring environment. This newsletter is designed to provide timely, up-to-date information about the project. For more information, contact the SACS office by phoning 780-447-9487 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta). Copying and distributing Niska News are permitted as long as the source is credited. The newsletter is available online through the SACS Project website at <www.teachers.ab.ca/safe/index.html>. Editor: Sue Sheffield.
