

Cary Kindness Chain

*John B. Cary Elementary School
Hampton, Virginia*

Last March, the hallways of Cary Elementary School were decorated with a paper chain, every loop of which described an act of kindness performed by a student or family member.

Cary Elementary is a Title I school that strives to excel in all areas. It has been fully accredited for the past few years and is proud of its academic success. The administration also works diligently with its students to promote proper conduct and good behavior in school, at home and in the community.

To celebrate Random Acts of Kindness Week, every student received a Kindness Chart to take home. Students were asked to list 10 acts of kindness that they or their family members performed at school, home, neighborhood, or work. Parents helped their children organize and complete their charts.

When students returned the charts, ATP members worked with parent volunteers and students to cut apart the charts so that each “kindness” was on its own paper strip. These strips were linked to make the paper chain hung in the hallways.

The Cary Kindness Chain project supports the school’s behavioral improvement goal of increasing good behavior and reducing student suspensions. More acts of kindness should help students reach this goal. Emphasizing and providing examples of kindness help teachers and administrators promote alternatives to violence. This, in turn, helps to improve the school’s climate.

The school was interested in a character education project that families also could work on at home, because many families are unable to attend events at the school due to work schedules and other commitments. Cary wanted to provide an opportunity that would begin with learning at home and culminate with a public display of the results. In reviewing possible

projects, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) came across information on promoting kindness, loved the idea and created the materials for their school.

The colorful chain and the clear display of many acts of kindness delighted students, parents, community members and other school visitors. “Why did you take the chain down?” a student asked when the project was completed. “We love it!”

A parent said that the activity was a great reminder of small ways to help others. Each participating student and family received an Acts of Kindness Award certificate, a candy treat, and public recognition at Family Fun Night!

Another advantage of this project is that it costs very little. The only materials required are supplies that schools already have on hand, such as copy paper, construction paper and certificate paper.

Cary Elementary plans to continue this activity, and would like to involve more families. The ATP plans to create a competition among the grades, and offer more recognition in the school and community for families who exceed the requested 10 acts of kindness.

*Betsy Taylor
Parent Involvement Facilitator
(757) 848-2374
bbtaylor@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us*