

Taking Care of Others at Dolsen!

By Laura Weakland
4th Grade Teacher
Dolsen Elementary

As students entered the building for the first day of school this year, the staff was eager to spread the message of the importance of “taking care of others!” In classrooms across the building you could drop into classrooms and hear teachers reading aloud books to their students with lines such as “You take care of me...now I’ll take care of you” (Bear Feels Sick) or “Remember when you treat others with love and kindness, you are doing the right thing” (Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun).

Last year, Dolsen fourth graders had the opportunity to join the Dolsen Helping Hands Club. This group of fourth graders worked diligently every month to spread the message of taking care of others by collecting donations for Active Faith. This year, the Dolsen Helping Hands Club decided to sponsor a bigger school-wide initiative called “Taking Care of Others.” Dolsen is a strong community of learners and this message ties directly into the Dolsen school rules of “We take care of ourselves. We take care of each other. We take care of our school. We are ready to learn!”

The “Taking Care of Others” initiative includes several components. The first component of the initiative is helping students develop empathy, compassion, and acceptance for others through literature. The Dolsen Helping Hands Club purchased approximately 40 picture books for the Dolsen staff to share with students during read aloud time. All of the books have strong themes of compassion, empathy, and acceptance. In addition, the fourth and fifth grade teachers are reading aloud *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio in anticipation of a special guest presenter coming in December from the Children’s Craniofacial Association. The presentation called “Beyond the Face is a Heart” helps kids understand the importance of taking care of others and to accept others for who they are, not how they look.

Classrooms all around Dolsen have taken the #choosekind pledge and posted the pledge on their doors as a daily reminder of this message. Secondly, the Dolsen Helping Hands Club purchased wristbands with the message “Taking care of others...by choosing kind.” When teachers notice a student being kind to others, they are awarded one of the wristbands with a certificate they get to share with their parents. Lastly, the initiative also has a component for the staff in the building. Every morning when the staff arrives and opens email they receive a daily inspirational quote from the books in the Helping Hands book collection. The Helping Hands Club also provided the staff with kindness thank-you cards so when someone in the building does something kind for them, they drop a thank-you note of appreciation on their desk.



The “Taking Care of Others” message has spread rapidly around the building and has created energy and enthusiasm. Kindness is contagious! In the words of Jacqueline Woodson in *Each Kindness*, “Each little thing we do goes out, like a ripple, into the world. This is what kindness does.” We hope our ripples of kindness reach you!