

KIND News: A Progress Report

Complete results of *KIND News* teacher surveys from 1998 through the current year are available at www.nahee.org. Click "Research & Evaluation."



How do you use KIND News? What does your class like best—and least—about it? Do the articles and activities affect the way your students treat animals? The environment? Each other? If you could change anything about KIND News, what would it be?

These are the kinds of questions we regularly ask teachers, and the answers continue to challenge and inspire us. We thought we would share them with you—and invite your feedback as well!

Survey Says...

In publishing *KIND News*, NAHEE's mission is to instill good character in children, with a strong emphasis on the humane treatment of animals and respect for the environment. Are the values central to our mission embraced by teachers? Does *KIND News* foster those values in its young readers?

Each year, 400 randomly selected *KIND* teachers are asked to participate in a survey to determine what they perceive to be our main publication's strengths and weaknesses and to learn more about our readership, its demographics, and its needs.

Our 2002 teacher survey indicated a high degree of satisfaction with *KIND News* and confidence in its effectiveness. Of the 400 teachers contacted, 233 sent back completed questionnaires, for a 58% response rate. As a supplementary resource, *KIND News* earned a rating of "excellent" or "very good" from 88% of teachers. Ninety-nine percent of respondents indicated that they use *KIND News* in their classrooms, and 88% reported that their students take the newspaper home.

At least 84% of *KIND* teachers regard as "very important" teaching children to respect wildlife and the environment and to care responsibly for pets, and 98% say that *KIND News* has increased or somewhat increased students' knowledge and interest in humane issues, such as the role of animal shelters and the preservation of

endangered species. Similarly, 97% report that *KIND News* has raised students' concern about protecting the environment and improved their understanding of the work of The Humane Society of the United States.

In terms of behavioral outcomes, the majority of teachers—82%—believe that consistent exposure to *KIND News* has either improved or somewhat improved their students' treatment of one another. Since 1998, when NAHEE began maintaining its survey data, teachers' ratings of the usefulness and effectiveness of *KIND News* have remained steadily high in all categories.

Stay Tuned

After reading *KIND News*, are children less likely to litter? To crush spiders or tease dogs? To call each other hurtful names? Are they more likely to pay attention to their pets? Plant trees? Recycle? Will more rigorous, qualitative research corroborate the results of our annual teacher surveys? If so—how, and why?

To further evaluate its impact on children's attitudes and behaviors, NAHEE has commissioned a formal study of *KIND News*. Designed by a doctoral student at Tufts University's Department of Child Development, the multi-tiered investigation will consist of teacher interviews, classroom observations, an assessment of NAHEE's goals and values, and an examination of how those values are reflected in *KIND News*.

Among other questions, the study will address the following: *Is KIND News geared toward particular learning styles? Does it make assumptions related to children's family composition, socioeconomic status, or living environment? Does it represent characters with which children can identify?* The answers can provide important clues to the success of *KIND News* and identify specific areas for improvement. We look forward to bringing you the results of this unique study in future issues, and we hope you will share your own thoughts and experiences as well. E-mail nahee@nahee.org or call (860) 434-0172. We're all ears!

Who Gets What?

Did you know that you are one of more than 35,000 teachers across the country who receive *KIND News*? Are you also aware that the newspapers your class reads may be different from the ones that other *KIND* kids get?

Each month, *KIND News* is published in three editions to accommodate a range of reading levels and cognitive abilities.

KIND News Primary, generally used in grades K-2, features large, colorful photos and art, short, simple articles and recall questions that build reading comprehension skills, puzzles that give children practice in counting, drawing, and letter recognition, and an "Around the World" page designed to increase their awareness of the customs, indigenous wildlife, and unique features of other countries, from Australia to Zaire. As with all editions, *KIND News Primary* focuses on good citizenship in our treatment of people, animals, and the environment. Approximately 36% of total *KIND News* subscribers receive the Primary edition.

The majority (40%) of *KIND News* subscribers—third- and fourth-grade classes—receive the Jr. edition. *KIND News Jr.* strengthens readers' vocabulary and language arts skills as well as their proficiency in science, social studies, and math. Along with timely articles about animals and the environment, *KIND News Jr.* includes character-building and critical-thinking exercises, projects, quizzes, and fiction.

Students in the upper elementary grades account for 24% of our readership. *KIND News Sr.*, our edition for grades 5 and 6, centers on the same themes and material as the Jr. edition at a more challenging reading level, with grade-appropriate exercises in all subjects.

