

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)—

Recently, your child attended two in-class presentations on personal safety given by SAFV. These programs are provided to students in K-5 classrooms across the district and are designed to teach students to recognize potentially dangerous situations, protect themselves against bullying, child abuse, and sexual abuse, and to take appropriate action if they are unsafe. We discuss safe and unsafe secrets as well as safe and unsafe touches, and empower children by emphasizing their bodies belong to them and they can say “No” if they don’t want a touch or it makes them feel uncomfortable or confused. Children learn that private parts are off limits unless someone is helping them stay healthy or clean (like doctor checkups). Students know that if they encounter unsafe secrets or touches it is not their fault and they need to tell a safe grown-up right away. All classes learn the rhyme “My body is mine from head to toe; if I don’t like a touch, I can say No!”

We believe these lessons are important in the classroom as part of group education on social and safety skills. However, SAFV also knows that family can be the most important teachers for children this age! We encourage you to review this type of information throughout the year with your child to strengthen their understanding of safety guidelines and skills.

Please see the included sheet with some tips on how to talk to children in your life about personal safety. We also encourage you to work on the coloring sheet and safety planning page with your child, to help them brainstorm safe adults and safe places they can go if they are ever dealing with an unsafe touch or secrets. It is important for your child, and your child’s friends, to know they have safe adults in their lives with whom they can confide.

For other resources, additional information, or for questions or conversation about the presentations at Baranof Elementary, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Elena Gustafson

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Sitkans Against Family Violence

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Talking to Children about Personal Safety

How to Talk to Kids

- * Create a comfortable environment so it's easy for a child to talk to you
- * Use a calm voice
- * Practice what you want to say
- * Talk to your child every day– do check-ins over dinner or at bedtime or after school-- listen to your kids!



Personal Safety Tips

- * Tell children that their bodies are their own– no one else has a right to touch them if they don't want the touch or to hurt them.
- * Teach children that they can always say “no” when it comes to their bodies.
- * Practice NO, GO, TELL: brainstorm ways to say no, safe places to go to, and safe adults to tell.
- * Talk about touches they think are safe and those they think are unsafe. Examples of safe touch might be high-fives, hugging, or touches to private parts that keep us healthy or clean. Unsafe or inappropriate touches might include hitting and shoving, as well as any other touches to private parts.
- * Encourage children to trust their feelings about safe and unsafe touches. Touches that make them feel “uh-oh” or uncomfortable are probably unsafe.
- * Use anatomically correct words for private parts to help children develop a dignified vocabulary for parts of the body
- * Avoid scare tactics. Explain to children that most people don't do anyone harm, but if anyone, even other kids, makes you feel uncomfortable or touches you in an inappropriate way, you need to tell an adult that you trust.
- * Teach children that touching safety rules apply all the time, not just with strangers.
- * Stress that unsafe or uncomfortable secrets should be told to a trusted adult.
- * Help create a support system for your child– make a list of people they can talk to and trust besides you. Remind them it's never too late to tell.
- * Remind them **unsafe touches or secrets are never the child's fault!**

Help your children plan ahead: with the following scenarios!

What would you do if:

- * You were asked to keep a secret that made you scared?
- * You were given an unsafe or uh-oh touch from a classmate? A friend? An adult? A relative?

Additional Resources

Any school counselor or children's advocate can help adults understand how to talk to children about personal safety. If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

- * Baranof Counseling Office: 966-1321
- * Keet Gooshi Heen Counseling Office: 966-1213
- * Blatchley Counseling Office: 966-1412
- * Sitka High School Counseling Office: 966-1925
- * Pacific High School: 747-0525
- * SAFV Children's Program: 747-3370
- * Office of Children's Services: 747-2802
- To report suspected abuse: 1-888-622-1650**

Talking to Children about Personal Safety

Educating children that “their body belongs to them” can start early, and continue through teenage years, to help raise empowered young adults who have a clear understanding of healthy consent. Boundaries are important for all ages! And it is important to allow children to have choices in how they are touched by other people to show that their boundaries are respected and help grow self-esteem.

Here are some education tips for young children (ages 1-6):

***Teach your kids that “no” and “stop” are important words and should be honored.**

Both when someone else says stop (“Sarah said ‘no’, and when we hear ‘no’ we always stop what we’re doing immediately, no matter what.”) and when your child say no (“If a friend doesn’t stop when we say “no,” then we need to think about whether or not we feel happy and safe playing with them. If not, it’s okay to choose other friends!”)

***Give children options for greeting and saying goodbye to people.**

Instead of a hug, a child could give a high five, a wave, or even a handshake. Kids may not always feel comfortable around people they just met or even relatives who live far away, and it is important to allow kids to listen to their “gut feelings” about what feels safe, unsafe, or confusing. Giving a child the choice in greetings shows that manners—treating people with respect and care—is different than demanding physical displays of affection.

***Teach children to ask permission before touching or embracing a playmate so they respect other people’s boundaries.**

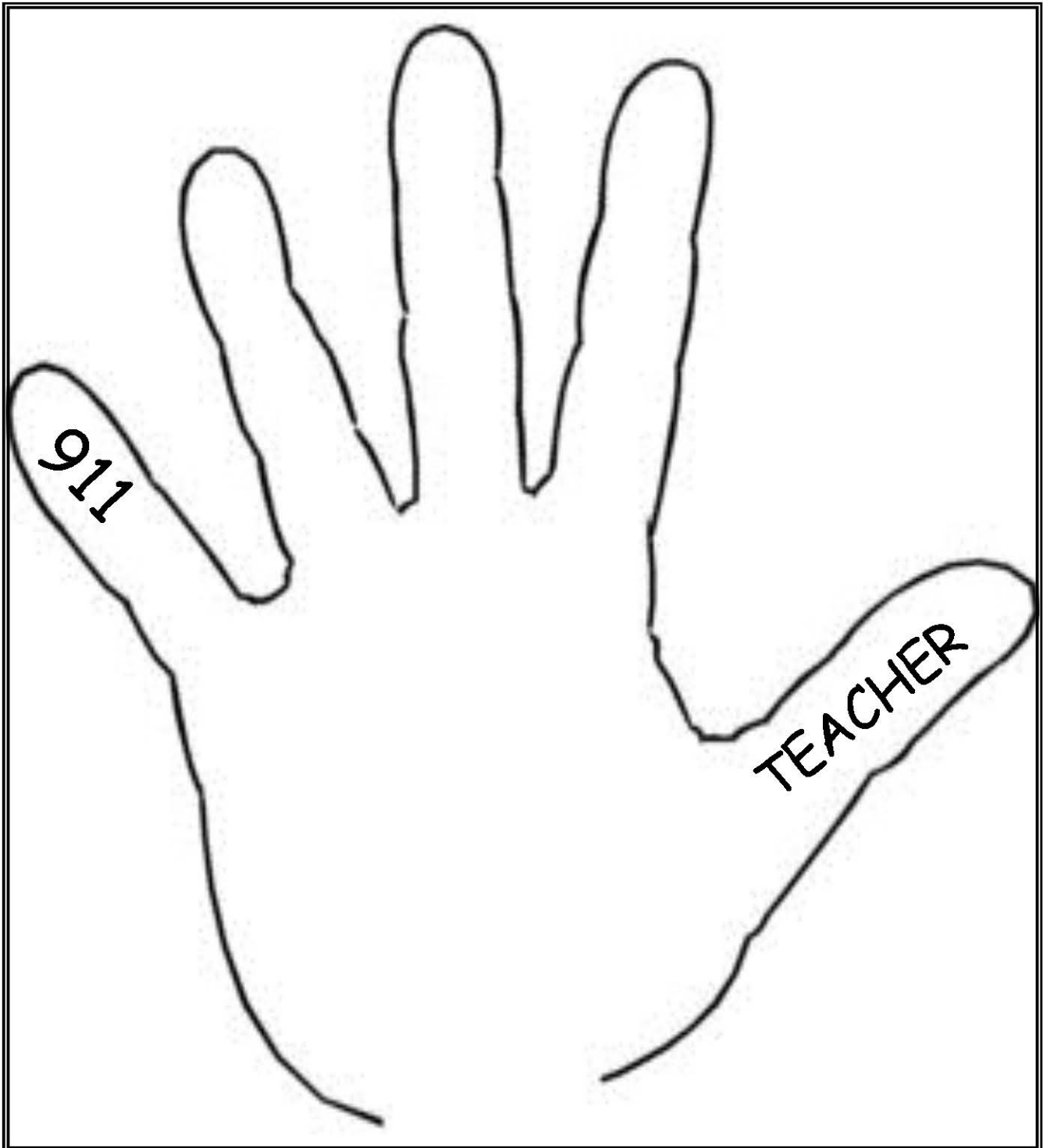
Use language like, “Sarah, let’s ask Joe if he would like to hug bye-bye.” If Joe says “no,” cheerfully tell your child, “That’s okay, Sarah! Let’s wave good-bye to Joe.” This reinforces that everyone has options for how they want to be touched and that each person’s choice should be respected! You can also practice this with your child, especially at bath time—model consent by asking for permission to help wash your child’s body. “Can I wash your back now? How about your feet? How about your bottom?” If the child says “no” then hand them the washcloth and say, “Cool! Your bottom still needs a wash. Go for it.”

***Never force a child to hug, touch or kiss anybody.**

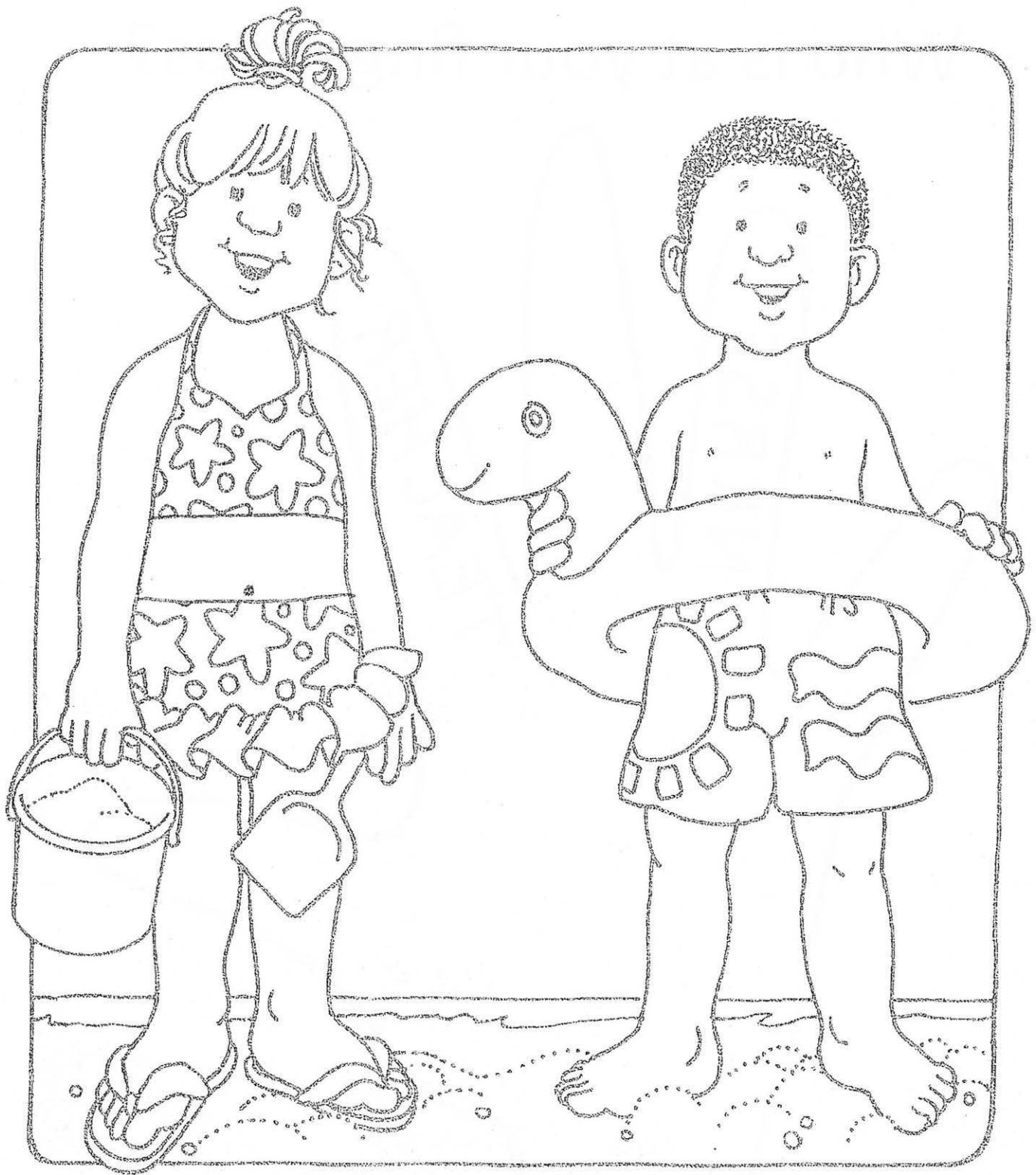
Explain to relatives why you are giving your child the choice in how they are touched by others, even if it might make that relative upset. The most important thing is to give each child the tools to be safe and happy and empower them by respecting their control over their body! It’s important not to teach kids that it’s their job to use their bodies to make others happy.

My Very Own Safety Plan!

Who is at your fingertips?



Fill in trusted adults on the fingers and a safe place on the palm.



There are parts of my body that everyone sees, like my head, hands, arms and legs. There are also parts of my body that are private. Those are the parts that are covered, even when I wear my bathing suit.