



## Meet Bouncy! Captivating Animatronic Service Dog From Ripple Effects Helps Young Learners Build Coping Skills in Stressful, Uncertain Situations

*In Bouncy pilots, students were actively engaged,  
resulting in lower levels of anxiety and fewer behavioral problems*

**SEATTLE – November 9, 2021** – Like so many educators in 2020, early childhood special education teacher Anita Compart of the Des Plaines School District (Ill.) realized she needed new ways to engage her early learners and give them tools to cope with a stressful, constantly evolving situation – both in the classroom and during remote learning.

Compart turned to Bouncy, Ripple Effects' captivating, breathing animatronic service dog that anchors a social-emotional learning (SEL) program that helps young children feel safe and learn how to self-calm when stressed. A multi-breed, smaller-than-average dog with a prosthetic, Bouncy signifies both vulnerability and strength. Bouncy offers three supports mental health experts agree young children need to thrive despite stressors: a sense of feeling safe, emotional attachment and training in specific SEL competencies linked to self-regulation and agency, particularly controlled breathing and positive self-talk.

Pilot testing of Bouncy in school districts, such as Des Plaines, demonstrated immediate short-term behavioral benefits consistent with this research, including fewer and less intense tantrums, aggressive incidents and anxiety episodes. When children hold Bouncy heart-to-heart and belly-to-belly, their breathing automatically slows to match his, and his encouraging words remind them they have the power to be calm and strong.

A few weeks prior to the pandemic, Compart began to incorporate Bouncy into her SEL curriculum, using him each day during circle times and play-based activities, such as singing and dancing. Compart and her students practiced self-calm breathing techniques by using Bouncy's signature "Breathing Out and Breathing In" music video. In addition, she encouraged students to take care of Bouncy by brushing his fur and "feeding" him. To further integrate Bouncy into daily lessons, the speech pathologist in Compart's district relied on him to help teach other subjects, such as math and language arts. Once learning went remote for her district during the pandemic, Compart created a virtual classroom complete with a Bouncy bitmoji.

"Teach your students that Bouncy belongs to them and that they belong to Bouncy," she said. "How students relate to Bouncy is important, which is why we treat him as a member of our classroom. If I have a student in need of emotional support, they can spend individual time with him to self-calm, allowing me to keep my focus on teaching the rest of the class without disruption. When my students need him, Bouncy is already there to engage with them and meet them at their level."



For more than 35 years, Ripple Effects co-founder and Bouncy creator, Alice Ray, has been a trailblazer in the SEL space, from development of the conceptual framework for instructor-based training in the *Second Step* program to leveraging technology to address implementation barriers in Ripple Effects learner-directed programs.

Ray said, “Living with my husband’s service dog inspired me to try to replicate that experience with a breathing, singing, coaching, loving, realistic, helper dog for young kids. We built the vulnerability that so many of children feel into this physical figure of wisdom and strength.”

She continued, “Our timing for introducing Bouncy was serendipitous. As young learners continue to grapple with the impact of COVID-19 disruptions on school and their lives, he provides them with the support they need to cope with stress and stay calm.”

Bouncy’s SEL program includes a full teacher kit with books, apps, activities and music videos plus a school-to-home connection package to help young students develop self-regulation skills and build confidence. Bouncy focuses on empowering students to develop their own skills and strategies for controlling anxiety and acting out, within a context of unconditional acceptance and belonging. Bouncy and his diverse digital buddies reinforce feelings of community, foster an appreciation of diversity, challenge stereotypes around disabilities and provide personalized supports, similar to live helper dogs at a much lower cost and with fewer health and safety issues.

To learn more about Bouncy, visit <https://bouncykids.net/>

### **About Ripple Effects**

Founded in 1997 by child advocate/media creator Alice Ray and technology innovator and producer Sarah Berg, Ripple Effects is a multi-award winning, social enterprise (WMBE) dedicated to using emerging technologies to prevent social injury and promote school and life success for all children and youth, especially those most at risk of failure. The company provides trauma-informed, culturally responsive, personalized, evidence-based digital tools for delivery of social-emotional-behavioral supports and training for PreK-12 students and staff.

For more information on Ripple Effects, visit <https://rippleeffects.com/>

**For more information about Bouncy or Ripple Effects, press only:**

Shaun Wiley, L. Wolfe Communications, 847-644-0237, [swiley@lwolfe.com](mailto:swiley@lwolfe.com)