

The Friendly Rapper

Students were given a chance to bust some moves while learning important life lessons.

By [Patrick Luce](#)

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Fifth graders Madison Cote, Faith Battaini and Brianna Ball bust a move while James McBride, aka Mr. Deep Positivity raps about the importance of friends at Hopkins Hill School last week.

Credit [Patrick Luce](#)

Students at [Hopkins Hill Elementary](#) are about to become the newest hip-hop stars, performing as backup dancers in a new rap video. But instead of bumping and grinding to songs about sex and drugs, the students are helping spread more age-appropriate lessons about respect, kindness and friendship.

James McBride, a.k.a "Mr. Deep Positivity," has been frequenting Hopkins Hill throughout the school year, spreading his message of kindness, respect and friendship. Earlier in the year, McBride challenged the students to be the best behaved in the school. The winning classrooms — those that collected the most "Paw Bucks," given out to students who best display positive behavior and respect — would appear in a music video on McBride's weekly cable show, "Deep Lessons For Life."

"I make positive raps for kids. I teach safety, non-violence," McBride said. "I use the TV show as an incentive... who can follow the school rules the best."

McBride started out as a volunteer for Big Brothers of Rhode Island, mentoring youngsters. The organization started promoting his positive songs to area schools, and he began traveling throughout New England to spread his message. His campaign has produced eight CDs and the weekly cable TV show.

"Big Brothers really inspired my words," McBride said. "And the kids themselves started to become role models for me, telling me what songs to write."

McBride was back at Hopkins Hill last week to make good on his challenge, filming two fifth-grade classes that displayed the best "Husky Habits" of being respectful, responsible and safe, principal Tracy Whitehead said. The students served as backup dancers in a video for his new song, "Be Friends," and will appear on "Deep Lessons for Life" discussing the importance of having and being a friend.

"Friends are special and important," said fifth-grader Anthony Youngs. "They help you with tough times."

"When you're down or you're sad, they're there to pick you up," added classmate Mackenzie Moore.

Being supportive and respectful seems to come naturally to the students in her class, said fifth-grade teacher Barbara Lyons. "We talk about community, so being friends comes very easily for them," Lyons said. "This class is known as the most respectful, responsible and safe in the building. They help each other when they need help. They're always there for each other. They are role models for this school."

McBride interviewed each student, asking what friendship means to them and what they like to do with their friends, before cranking up the tunes and filming a video for "Be Friends" right in the classroom.

"I love being on TV," said student Quinn Noel. "It's like I get to be a celebrity kid."

The newest celebrities will appear on an upcoming episode of "Deep Lessons for Life," which airs on Cox channel 13 and Verizon channel 32 on Fridays at 3 p.m. Mr. Deep Positivity's CDs are available at www.cdbaby.com. A portion of all sales is donated to [Big Brothers](#).