DOINGWHATW⟳RKS

Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Improving Classroom Behavior and Social Skills

April 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention

Practice: Social Behavior Programs

Highlights

- Social and behavior programs are vitally important for the well being of students who are at risk of dropping out of school.
- Building positive relationships with other students, teachers, and staff can make students more engaged in school.
- Examples of social programs include: mentoring and counseling, rewards and recognition, specialized curricula, and partnerships with organizations in the community.
- Social skills training can be blended with the broader curriculum for schools with widespread social challenges or contained in special programs for schools that have a small percentage of at-risk students.

Full Transcript

Slide 1

Welcome to the overview on improving classroom behavior and social skills.

Slide 2

Ms. Connelly and Ms. Austin got their teaching credentials together and try to meet for coffee once a year.

Ms. Connelly talks about the struggles she is having with her classes. She has a couple of kids in each class that constantly cause disruptions. A few of the others are so withdrawn it's like they aren't even there. She'd like to figure out a way to reach these students, but she is too busy trying to take care of the rest of the class.

Before they part, Ms. Austin turns her tired eyes toward Ms. Connelly and says, "Those few students you describe sound like my entire classroom."

Slide 3

Disruptive student behavior is clearly associated with poor academic performance and dropout. Less frequently observed is withdrawn and unsocial behavior, which is also a warning sign of deeper issues and the potential for dropping out. Whether such students are the exception or the rule for a given school, social skills and behavior programs are vitally important for these students' well-being.

Slide 4

Helping students improve their classroom behavior isn't just about preventing disruption. These kinds of programs help kids to build more positive relationships with other students, teachers, and the staff. These improved relationships make students more comfortable initiating requests for help and contribute to their feeling more engaged in school. Kids also are more likely to avoid harmful behavior outside of school.

Slide 5

Research suggests four ways to address social skills training for students: mentoring and counseling, rewards and recognition, specialized curricula, and through partnerships with other organizations in the community.

Slide 6

Mentoring and counseling programs can help build the kinds of deep relationships that allow students the stability to look at their own behavior and how it impacts not only others but themselves. These can be one-on-one sessions or involve small groups. One successful program, for example, had twelve students who met together to discuss personal, family, and social issues. Schools that implemented programs like this found that students who participated were more likely to stay in school and eventually graduate than students with similar issues who didn't take part in the program.

Slide 7

When students show improvement, it's important to recognize and reward it. The sense that what a student does is seen and appreciated by those around him or her is extremely powerful. This can be done with physical tokens such as recognition certificates for improved grades or increased attendance. Making sure that news of improvement reaches home with calls and letters to families letting them know their child is showing progress can have a major impact on student progression. Making students aware of scholarships that they may be eligible for is also a great motivator, as kids begin to see the possibilities before them.

Slide 8

Social skills training can be blended with the broader curriculum for schools with widespread social challenges or contained in special programs for schools that have a small percentage of at-risk students. For example, clearly defined and consistently enforced rules for classroom behavior combined with a focus on behavioral issues as they relate to curriculum would benefit entire classrooms, while an after-school program on identifying risky behaviors and understanding their consequences might be appropriate for an identified subgroup of students.

Slide 9

Student behavior issues often have their origins outside the classroom in social or family matters. Partnerships with social services, welfare, mental health, and law enforcement organizations are vitally important for the success of the school and the well-being of the students. Issues such as pregnancy, addiction, abuse, and homelessness are beyond the scope of any school program, but the school can play a vital role in getting students the help they need.

Without understanding the origins of student behavior, the best any school can do is damage control. With such understanding, however, true and lasting transformation is possible.

Slide 10

School- and districtwide assessments can help identify which students are most in need of such programs and help identify which concerns can be addressed by the school and which should be forwarded to school partners.

Slide 11

Teachers can integrate programs to improve social competence into the regular school day. For that purpose, schools should provide ample resources and professional development opportunities. Principals can also provide resources in terms of available staff and tools for intervention when students show signs of chronic social or emotional difficulties. Finally, teachers can make students feel supported and cared for and also help them develop appropriate skills by talking to students respectfully and modeling peaceful social problem-solving inside and outside the classroom.

Slide 12

Ms. Connelly talked to her principal about getting some programs in place to help her students and has suggested that the school run some assessments to determine what's really going on with them. Ms. Austin has firmed up rules for classroom behavior. She is taking special care to let students know when they've done well and is continually encouraging them to ensure that they know their positive behavior is appreciated. Both teachers are beginning to see some positive changes take place.

Slide 13

To learn more about improving classroom behavior and social skills, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.