

DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

A Rewards System to Promote Attendance

John C. Diehl Elementary School, Pennsylvania • January 2010

Topic: Increased Learning Time: Beyond the Regular School Day
Practice: Maximize Attendance

Highlights

- Jeanette Barczynski, principal of John C. Diehl Elementary School, encourages continuity between the regular school day and the after-school program by instituting policies that support communication between the programs.
- At Diehl, many of the after-school program instructors are also day school teachers who are familiar with the students and are better situated to address student needs.

About the Site

John C. Diehl Elementary School

Erie, PA

Demographics

44% Black

39% White

13% Hispanic

4% Asian

86% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

John C. Diehl Elementary School operates on site the district's CHAMPS after-school program to help students from an economically disadvantaged background succeed in school and become responsible citizens. The following strategies contributed to the program's success:

- Alignment of after-school programming with school-day goals and curricula,
- Classroom teachers staying after school to teach in the after-school program,
- Identification of students for the after-school program based on their academic and behavior records,
- Communicating to parents the importance and expectations of the after-school program,
- Incorporating physical, social, and academic components in educational activities,
- Maximizing attendance by following up on absent students and providing supports,
- Using data to evaluate and continually improve the program.

Full Transcript

My name is Jeannette Barczynski. I am the principal at John C. Diehl Elementary School, located in Erie, Pennsylvania.

John C. Diehl is K-8 elementary building. We service a population that is 85% economically disadvantaged. We also have a high English language learner population in addition to minorities; the minority in our building is the majority population.

We have seen that many of our students have no one to go home to after school, so in an effort to fill that void we have implemented the CHAMPS Program in our building. This offers the students an opportunity to remain here for three hours beyond the school day, during which time they receive academic help, they have an opportunity to participate in physical activities, they have a chance to develop their social skills.

In our building the regular classroom teachers that work with our students all day long also work in the after-school program. Therefore there is a great continuity in being able to identify the needs of the students, be them academic or emotional. And therefore it is much easier for us to be successful with the students because we already have a good relationship with them.

We have a policy here that we ask that the parents send a note if for some reason the child would not be able to stay. If we review the attendance roster and we see that the child was in school and we have not received a note for them to not be present at CHAMPS, then we are on the phone, making phone calls ensuring that the child is in fact at home, that the parent is aware that the child is not here. You know, we are trying to provide safeguards for our students. You know, if the parent thinks they are here, and they are not, then we can address that issue in a timely manner so that nothing happens to our students.

One way that we try to support the parents in being able to have their children continue in the CHAMPS Program during the winter months is we do provide busing transportation home. Normally our student population arrives at school by walking here. We are a neighborhood school and therefore not normally

used to busing. However, we do provide that service from the beginning of November to the end of March—basically when we give up Daylight Saving Time and go back to Eastern Standard Time.

In our program we have a ticket-type program, where the students can earn tickets for their attendance, for their participation in the programs, for accomplishing homework in the homework session. And each one of these tickets then is placed into a barrel, and they have weekly drawings and they have monthly drawings. The monthly drawing, one of the prizes is a gift card to one of the local stores, so we do try to provide different types of incentives to have the children attend and to be focused while they are in attendance.

We do have outside resources during the school day of a personnel who will work specifically with students who have, say, attendance issues along the lines of tardiness. And those students are referred to that program so that they are being addressed both by the CHAMPS Program and by their attendance during the regular school day.

Also, we do have a partnership with a group which promotes parental involvement. We also have a partnership with an organization that will provide tickets to different events for our students. So it's a very important component that we have the parental involvement and the support of the community to make this program really work.