

DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Jaguar Academy

P.S. 269 Nostrand, New York • May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Teach Skills

Highlights

- Fequire Lazare, a school psychologist at P.S. 269, describes the effects of inappropriate student behavior on the classroom and school environment.
- Mr. Lazare provides a special type of counseling through the Jaguar Academy program, which targets a sub-group of students characterized by persistent behavior problems.
- Students voluntarily participate in Jaguar Academy; they set goals to improve specific behavior skills as recommended by their teachers. If they meet their goals, students are rewarded by weekly meetings with Mr. Lazare in the gym for sports activities.
- To give these meetings educational value, Mr. Lazare interleaves character building activities and sports activities.

About the Site

P.S. 269 Nostrand

Brooklyn, NY

Demographics

90% Black

6% Hispanic

2% Asian

1% White

93% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

10% English Language Learners

P.S. 269 has established schoolwide practices and routines to create and maintain a supportive and caring school climate. Key features include:

- Explicitly teaching and reinforcing rules and routines.
- Collecting data about student behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it.
- Conducting community events to promote peaceful relationships between the school and the community.

Full Transcript

My name is Fequiere Lazare. I'm a bilingual school psychologist at P.S. 269, Brooklyn, New York.

Inappropriate student behavior has a profound impact upon learning. When a student is not behaving in the way that they're supposed to, they create a very unsafe environment in the school building, not just in their classroom but in the entire school building. And what that does to the other students, and them as well, is it really diminishes the effect of the teaching that's going on. Whatever type of atmosphere has been created really suffers as a result of inappropriate student behavior.

We have a program at 269 called Jaguar Academy, and what Jaguar Academy is, Jaguar Academy is a group of at-risk students, students who have displayed disruptive behaviors in the classroom, particularly students who've had difficulties controlling their anger, different mood-regulation type of issues. It's not a mandated program; it's run totally in-house. And I'm the staff mentor for Jaguar Academy. And what I do with the students is I take them to the gym. I do this first in order to present the incentive to them, and we engage in fun activities. We play different sports. And what I do there, also, with them is character building. I teach them different principles of character building to see if I can have them leave with some type of character education. In order for them to continue to go to the gym with me or do the activities with me, they have to meet certain goals, and these goals are indicated on a worksheet that their teacher fills out. The teacher is able to rate them according to a rubric, and I give it to the teacher every week. I put it in the teacher's mailbox, and they're able to give it back to me the following week to let me to know how the child is doing.

What I do during the week, I don't allow the whole week to go by before I see child again. I try to stop by their classrooms or wherever I know where they will be, whether it be in the lunchroom or the gym or in the art room. I might even see them in the hallway. And I try to see if I can go over some of the goals with them, ask them how they are doing. I may call their teacher at a random just to see how they're performing, just to kind of prompt them and let them know that I'm still watching and I'm still paying attention to them.

When a student is not able to come to the incentive for the week, whether it be the gym or any other fun activity, what I do is I try to see if I can have a good conversation with them and explain to them that we're still working to these goals and that it's perfectly fine that they didn't—well, it's not perfectly fine, but it's acceptable that they're having difficulty working toward these goals. We identified these goals because they were having difficulty in these areas. And they're usually very understanding that they may not get to their goal all the time, but we're still working toward, and they have a clean slate for the next week.

It's been my experience that children who may fall off for a week or sometimes two weeks, they're usually able to bounce back because those are the children that I give a lot more attention to during the week before I see them again, and I try to see if I come to a better understanding of what their difficulties are specifically. And sometimes we even change goals to be more attainable for the students because sometimes goals are little unrealistic at first when we draw them up.

Some of the attributes that we're working on with the children are persisting, not giving up when they feel like giving up, or managing their impulsivity, not acting before they really take a time to reflect and think about what they're going to do. Being very clear when they speak, when they refer to something, say "the door by the exit;" don't just say, "that door over there," or being very clear and precise when they communicate and think as well. And these are some of the traits. That's just a couple of examples of the traits that we try to instill in the children to see if we can bring a lot more success with them.