

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## A System for Teacher Collaboration to Reduce Behavior Problems

Harmony Hills Elementary School, Maryland • April 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Collaborative Relationships

### Highlights

- The principal at Harmony Hills explains the Collaborative Action Process (CAP) in place at her school. This process allows teachers to get advice from a team of teachers and experts on dealing with specific behavior problems.
- Teachers at Harmony Hills perform a series of steps during the CAP process: problem identification, problem analysis, intervention planning and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- The principal discusses how teachers at Harmony Hills do not feel alone when dealing with behavior problems in the classroom. There is always a team of people to help teachers solve the problem when they feel they have done all they can on their own.

### About the Site

Harmony Hills Elementary School

Silver Springs, MD

## Demographics

62% Hispanic

25% Black

7% White

7% Asian

80% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

47% English Language Learners

8% Special Education

Harmony Hills Elementary School maintains a positive and safe school environment using the following practices:

- A Collaborative Action Process (CAP) aimed to build capacity of general education teachers to help students with behavior problems that impact their learning;
- A discipline plan posted on the school website that clearly states the rights and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, and the principal in maintaining a safe school environment; and
- Positive reinforcement of responsible and appropriate behaviors through immediate praise, peer recognition, classroom awards, and schoolwide recognition.

## Full Transcript

My name is Robin Weaver. I'm the Principal at Harmony Hills Elementary School in Montgomery County, Maryland.

It was very important that we have a schoolwide program to help us with children who were struggling with social skills or behavioral skills and that was negatively impacting their ability to learn.

We are working on what we call the Collaborative Action Process. Each grade level, kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, identifies one of the general education teachers to be a Collaborative Action Process—and I am going to call that CAP. The CAP coach is a volunteer from the team to get additional training and to help the team and facilitate meetings when they're talking about individual children. We've found it incredibly successful in keeping children out of special education and engaging students in the learning process.

In the beginning of the year, teachers, they may find a child in the month of September who begins to struggle with the classroom procedures or the learning, and the acting out may begin. The classroom teacher works to identify some strategies and some interventions on his or her own. And after four to six weeks, if they're still struggling, the teacher may say, "I need more help than I can do on my own," and she'll say to her grade-level CAP coach, "I would like to have some help. Can we put my child on to the agenda for next month's meeting?" Between the time when she asks to get her child on to the agenda and

when the child is actually talked about at the team meeting, the classroom teacher must review the health file, the cumulative file, and the confidential file if there is one, and the teacher must contact and meet with the child's parent to talk about the concerns that she's seeing and the help that she is going to try and get from her teammates.

Each grade-level team consists of the general education teachers, one special education teacher, one English language—we call them ESOL teachers, teachers for Speakers of Other Languages. And the first step that the team does is they have the child on the agenda; they review the student's profile—what the information that the teacher found from all of the folder reviews and maybe talking to the nurse, and they talk about the behaviors that they see. The teacher begins to diagnose where does the problem occur, what triggers a problem, and what kind of strategies has she tried already. And then the team designs the goals for that particular child.

Most children are in the CAP process for eight to ten months. We ask a teacher to try a strategy for four to six weeks. And with help, whether it's from an administrator, a guidance counselor, or a special ed teacher, there are other people, reading specialists, who can help the teacher implement the goals and to monitor whether or not the child is responding to the strategies that we've put in place.

The results of the program have been remarkable. Many of the children with behavior issues that impact learning can be addressed if there is a team of general education teachers who they know, who care about them and help them setting goals and monitoring the goals and changing goals if you need to. And the most remarkable result we've gotten is the reduction of children with special education labels when, in fact, the child had a behavior issue rather than a special education issue and we could get a good response to our plan and the child was able to shift.