

DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Everyone Becomes Involved

Everett Area Elementary School, Pennsylvania • May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Collaborative Relationships

Highlights

- The Family Support Facilitator for Everett Area School District holds workshops in which parents and children practice handling difficult situations.
- Workshops cover topics such as bullying, Internet safety, and refusal skills.
- Workshops include group activities and role playing, and then all participants have dinner together. This way, not only are families bonding but the school also becomes an intricate part of their lives.

About the Site

Everett Area Elementary School

Everett, PA

Demographics

48% White

9% Native American

6% Black

7% Asian

10% Hispanic

47% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

3% Special Education

Everett Area Elementary School implements an integrated, broad-based approach to reduce behavior problems and foster healthy social development. Key features include:

- Classroom management strategies to increase student engagement and reduce disruption,
- Teacher collaboration to address needs of students with behavior problems,
- Social-emotional skills instruction in the classroom, and
- Workshops for parents to provide tools on how to manage their child's behavior at home.

Full Transcript

Sharon McNamara: My name is Sharon McNamara, and I am the Family Support Facilitator for Everett Area School District. And what I do is I facilitate the workshops that go hand-in-hand with the programs that the school has implemented in helping children with problem behaviors. What I do is I actually help the parents learn techniques to assist the children in correcting problem behaviors. I coordinate the workshops, and I also host the workshops. The workshops span the whole grade—from kindergarten up through eighth grade, and we speak to parents about issues that are pertinent to all age groups, including adolescence. We speak with them about proper parental monitoring, bullying, cyber bullying, Internet safety, all the topics that parents care about today, and technologies that they may not be familiar with.

One of the skills that we teach the parents to assist the children with is refusal skills, and an example of that would be if one of their peers came to the child and said, "Let's go down to the store and steal a candy bar." Well, the child would know how to handle that situation. They would know how to refuse the behavior and maybe even offer a different opportunity to go back to the playground or to the child's house and play and still maintain the peer friend.

McNamara (to workshop participants): What are some alternatives to things you can do instead of throwing rocks at Mr. Turner or smoking?

Student: You could help him instead with groceries or something.

McNamara (to workshop participants): You could do something helpful. That's a good idea. Any other ideas?

Student: You could play your Wii or something.

McNamara (to workshop participants): You could play your Wii, that's a lot of fun.

Student: Listen to your mp3 player.

McNamara: It becomes second nature for the children to use the refusal skills that they're being taught. The parents are there to aid them, and they actually practice the skills at different locations—during a family meeting, maybe in the ride of the car, on the playground with their friends—so that when the child is approached by a peer to do a behavior that would get them both into trouble, the child knows second nature how to refuse without having to think about it. They know the terminology to use, and they use it in their own words.

Male speaker at workshop (role-playing): Hey Lis, why don't we go down to the pizza shop?

Female speaker at workshop (role-playing): What are we going to do there?

Male speaker at workshop (role-playing): Well, I got a friend down there who can give us free pizza as long as the boss isn't around.

Female speaker at workshop (role-playing): Oh, that's not good. That's not right. We're not supposed to get free pizza.

Students: Trouble! [laughing]

Male speaker at workshop (role-playing): Well, why not? The boss isn't around, who knows? I mean that's free pizza, we get sodas to drink.

Female speaker at workshop (role-playing): That's stealing.

Male speaker at workshop (role-playing): Well, yeah, so what? The boss doesn't know. They'll never find out.

Female speaker at workshop (role-playing): No, why don't we go roller skating instead?

Sharon McNamara: These are very informal and interactive workshops. Parents get to know their peers. We offer dinner, which helps supplement the family time. The children are invited, and the parents are invited, and everyone has a dinner together. And then the groups split, and the children go to a daycare where they're doing activities, sometimes supporting the same techniques that we're learning in the parenting session, and it helps. Again, it works on the bonding between the parent and the child but also interjects the school into the bonding, so we become an intricate part of their lives.

An interesting aspect of these workshops is that to raise healthy children, a child needs to not only bond with their parents and the teachers in school but other community members, and these workshops are the perfect opportunity for this to take place because not everyone who attends a workshop is a parent. Some are grandparents. Some people are aunts and uncles. Some people don't even have children or have children that have left the home, but it's important that they know, the children know, that they're part of the community as well as part of the school, and it's an interactive prosocial program where everyone becomes involved.

One of the positive aspects of the parenting program is that the skills that the children learn in school are carried through to the home. The parents also are aware of the skills and the practices that the teachers are

implementing into the classroom, being implemented school- and countywide, so they're on the same page. They can reinforce those skills they can give the recognition for the skills that they're learning in the school at home and on the playground, in the park. And not only the parents, the other community members can also give children the recognition that they need. They needed to know that the community is recognizing what they're doing, and so the other community members are sure, and they know what the school is implementing.