

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

A Notably Peaceful School Climate

P.S. 24, New York • May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Schoolwide Approach

Highlights

- It is important to have a conversation with a child who “misbehaves” so the child understands the conditions of the situation.
- Students at P.S. 24 write down what happened, what role they played, and what they think they could have done differently.
- Students have a toolbox of options for managing their anger, such as breathing deeply, counting backwards from ten to zero, and learning how to be assertive instead of aggressive.
- Guidance counselors, peace helpers, and peer mediators help children practice handling difficult situations.
- Students receive regular classroom lessons in The 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution), an interactive curriculum that uses children’s literature as a springboard for learning social and emotional skills.

About the Site

P.S. 24

Brooklyn, NY

Demographics

91% Hispanic

3% Asian

3% Black

3% White

94% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

43% English Language Learners

P.S. 24 has several behavior management practices in place to maintain a safe, caring, and positive learning environment for students. Key elements of the schoolwide approach include:

- Teaching students to identify and manage their emotions,
- Social skills training including effective communication and conflict resolution skills,
- Designing and implementing “Peace Education,” a process for conflict resolution facilitated by peers,
- Helping students to develop cultural awareness through student-led Diversity Panel discussions, and
- Collaborating with families and community service organizations to support social-emotional learning.

Full Transcript

Presentation title: A Notably Peaceful School Climate

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Welcome to A Notably Peaceful School Climate.

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My name is Mariana Gaston, and I’m the Assistant Principal of P.S. 24, The Dual Language School for International Studies in Brooklyn, New York.

Our basic perspective that underpins our approach to children involves making sure that when a child “misbehaves” that we have a conversation with that child, and we approach him or her by saying, “We don’t think you are a bad person, but you’ve made a mistake here.” And so, basically, our perspective is, “So, what happened? What were you thinking about? What triggered your behavior?” to ensure that the child understands what were the conditions under which that person acted, and what prompted that person to do that as a way of making them less defensive in being able to look at themselves and figure out a way that they could have done something different in the same circumstances. So, it’s a pretty lengthy conversation

that we have so the child can open up their thinking and open up their heart to reflect on.

Slide 3

In order to help our students be able to manage their anger, we have several strategies that we use in the school. One of them is to help them calm down so they can then access their intelligence and speak about the situation and write down what happened. And the parts that we ask them to write is what happened, what role did you play in the situation, because we say everybody had a role in the situation, and what could you have done differently.

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The other thing that we do is teach them to breathe deeply. We teach them to count backwards from ten to zero. We teach them that whenever they're upset, that their mind can be stepping out of the anger by distracting their mind because we can't always manage it. So, one strategy you can use so that you can deal with the situation is start distracting your mind. So, let's look at what's going on in the room. Let's look at the pictures. Let's walk around. That's another strategy to help them, and with some children it works very well. All those things, and they have this sort of toolbox of options to be able to think about what to do.

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We have guidance counselors, which help children on one-on-one sessions or in group sessions where children talk to each other and look at how other children behave and sort of help each other figure out how to manage themselves. And they role play situations that they have faced, and other children give them feedback about how they behave, looking at their body language, looking at their tone of voice, looking at the question of attitude. Attitude is a big thing to upper-grade children, what is attitude and how they interpret it. So, they analyze these things, and they give each other ideas of how to handle situations.

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Part of the reason that we have made a big difference and success in our school with a work of social-emotional learning and conflict resolution is that we have put in place several different layers of intervention to make sure that everyone in the community is affected by this work. We have the peace helpers, the peer mediators, the lunch clubs, the classroom lessons, the PASS after-school program, the guidance counselors, school psychologists, the partnership with the local hospital for mental health clinic, and the problem-solving approach on everything that we do.

Slide 7

We teach self-awareness, social awareness, self understanding and self management, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and building positive relationships. We've seen over the years the impact that this program has had on us, on our school. And visitors always comment on the climate that they perceive in the school, not only in terms of children just being learners and being in the classroom and everybody's learning but also the tone of the adults talking to each other, the adults talking to children, the way that people interact. It's notably peaceful.

Slide 8

To learn more about maintaining a notably peaceful school climate, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works web site.