

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Developing Teaching and Management Practices for Healthy Academic and Social Behavior

Everett Area Elementary School, Pennsylvania • May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Schoolwide Approach

### Highlights

- Shawn Kovac, the principal of Everett Area Elementary School, talks about the schoolwide programs implemented to reduce behavior problems and to improve student achievement.
- The school implements a K-6 program focused on proactive classroom management and engaging instructional activities.
- There are two additional social emotional programs implemented at the school. The kindergarten program helps students learn about emotions and how to manage them. The sixth-grade program provides lessons on such risky behaviors as smoking or alcohol use.
- The programs help all stakeholders bond to the school—teachers, students, families, and the community.

### About the Site

Everett Area Elementary School

Everett, PA

## Demographics

48% White

10% Hispanic

9% Native American

7% Asian

6% Black

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

Hello, my name is Shawn Kovac. I am Principal of the Everett Area Elementary School in Everett, Pennsylvania. Our school is a rural school. We have approximately 515 students in this elementary school.

Three years ago, we were looking at ways that we could increase student achievement. And when we looked at the different methods that we could go about increasing student achievement, we knew there were different instructional techniques that we could teach our teachers and that we can do with our students that would improve our scores a little bit. But we needed a broader program. We needed a schoolwide program that could touch everyone, touch all students, touch the families, and involve all stakeholders in the learning of the child. And we also were looking at ways that we could decrease the amount of discipline referrals that we had in our buildings, and we needed a way to tackle some of the risk factors that were identified in our research-based programs.

The program is an all-encompassing program to teach social and emotional wellness to the students in the elementary school. It also helps teachers by teaching them pro-social activities within the classrooms and different instructional activities to keep the students motivated, to keep them engaged in the classroom lessons, and it provides bonding experiences for the students to bond to the teachers and bond to the classrooms and to the school itself.

It's not a curriculum per se. There are no segmented lessons that you have to teach for 15 minutes over a certain period of the week. What it is, it's a collection of best practices that we incorporate in the school. It takes four years to implement the program. Each year, we have four in-services for the teachers. And the in-

services for the teachers range from teaching them how to actively engage the students in your classroom. They learn ways to keep the students engaged from bell to bell, from the beginning of the lesson to the end of the lesson, of course with the knowledge that the student that is engaged is less likely to become involved in discipline behavior issues.

They do this through a series of classroom management lessons where they learn how to actively organize their classroom, and we've tried to bookend our K to six program, which is our overarching program, with a Pre-K and a K program. On the other side of our K to six program is a program that we have put in place for middle school which is six through eight. However, at this building, we do house the sixth grade. And in this program, we teach our students not only the knowledge of what antisocial behaviors can impact on them, such as smoking and drinking and fighting and so forth, through activities, we give them the knowledge and the skills on how to resist peer pressure and, to coin a phrase, "how to say no" through our overarching program to make sure that the student is bonded with the school.

One of the risk factors that we as a school can attack is the antisocial bonding with the school. We want to make the student want to come to school. And we do that by promoting a social and healthy emotional atmosphere here in the school. So, our teachers will have in their classroom birthday charts with everyone's birthday listed on it, and when it's someone's birthday, they will celebrate by a special cheer or clapping. That is the student of the day. Also, as you walk through out of our classroom, you may see put-up charts. Some teachers use leaves on a tree. Other teachers use adding pictures to a wall or even just using sticky notes on a wall. And students are encouraged to give positive put-ups to each other. And when someone is given a positive put-up, they write it on the leaf on a tree, or they write it on a sticky note. And that goes up on the wall, and then everyone celebrates everyone else's positive put-ups. So again, it's encouraging students to want to be here because it's a place where they feel safe and the environment is welcoming to them.

As you go through the school, you'll see posters. We want students to know that here at Everett Elementary, they have rights, they have respect, and they have a responsibility. We teach that in every classroom throughout the building, and you will see that not only in the classrooms but in the halls that they have certain rights, that they deserve respect, but they also have certain responsibilities that they have to uphold, too, in order to be an active member within the school.

I could say that the impact of the behavior programs and social-emotional programs that we have implemented here at Everett Area Elementary have had a tremendously positive impact on our students, on our teachers, and on our parents as a whole.