

DOINGWHATWORKS



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Strategies for Teaching Social-Emotional Skills

Everett Area Elementary School, Pennsylvania

Hidden Hills Elementary School, Arizona

P.S. 24, New York

P.S. 269 Nostrand, New York

May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Teach Skills

Highlights

- Teachers in four U.S. elementary schools incorporate a variety of instructional strategies and props to engage their students in learning social-emotional skills.
- With younger students, teachers utilize concrete and colorful approaches, such as puppets and picture books, to connect with students and encourage discussion.
- With older elementary school students, teachers use more abstract strategies, such as graphic organizers, self-monitoring charts, and in-depth discussion.
- After learning social skills, students can hone and practice them through group work and peer conflict resolution programs.

About the Sites

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.

Hidden Hills Elementary School

Phoenix, AZ

Demographics

70% White

19% Hispanic

5% Black

3% Asian

2% Native American

35% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

8% English Language Learners

Hidden Hills Elementary uses a comprehensive schoolwide approach to provide a safe learning environment and promote students' social and emotional skills and positive character values. The unique strategies used by the school are:

- A schoolwide approach that focuses on positive behavior support and is led and guided by a core team of five to six staff including the principal, social worker, and several teachers;
- Monday class meetings conducted by every teacher to talk about bullying prevention, social-

emotional skills, and character values;

- Clear communication and reminders of behavior expectations;
- A web-based system and detailed referral forms to record characteristics of problem behavior, hypothesized motives for behavior, and actions taken; and
- A multi-level positive reinforcement system to acknowledge positive and caring behavior of students and teachers.

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.

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, and
- Conducting community events to promote peaceful relationships between the school and the community.

Full Transcript

Title Slide: Strategies for Teaching Social-Emotional Skills

Learn how four schools—P.S. 29, P.S. 269, Hidden Hills Elementary, and Everett Area Elementary—use a variety of strategies to teach social-emotional skills. Teachers engage their students in learning these skills with discussions, visual aids, and props such as picture books, graphic organizers, and puppets.

Slide 1: Visual Displays

Ms. Mendez, a dual-language teacher at P.S. 24 in New York City, teaches emotion identification skills to first graders. She teaches emotion labels in English and Spanish to discuss how emotions are identified and interpreted in both languages. Discerning emotions is the basis for effective nonverbal communication and a building block in teaching students how to regulate their emotions.

Slide 2: Use of Puppetry

In a kindergarten classroom in Everett Area Elementary in Pennsylvania, Ms. Bulger uses puppets and toys to conduct a lesson on recognizing, learning, and managing emotions. In the teacher's hands, puppet "Molly" helps students to understand and express their emotions. The puppet initiates student discussion by asking students to describe a time they experienced a certain emotion, such as "sad."

Slide 3: Children's Literature

Ms. Wimmer, a first-grade teacher at Hidden Hills Elementary in Arizona, is reading a book about several girls who decide to have a "Princess Club" and exclude a classmate based on her appearance. As she is reading, the teacher asks her class questions to engage students in a discussion. Ms. Wimmer uses the book to reinforce the concept of social bullying taught in a previous session. She picked the topic because social bullying is a recurring problem for this age group.

Slide 4: Role Play

A teacher can ask for student volunteers to role play positive behavior. For example, first-grade students at Hidden Hills Elementary practice positive communication skills. The teacher is facilitating the role play by providing suggestions, feedback, and praising the volunteers for their participation in the role play. Guided practice is essential in effective teaching and reinforcing new social skills, especially with younger students.

Slide 5: Graphic Organizer

Ms. Rea, a fifth-grade teacher at Hidden Hills Elementary, is facilitating a classroom discussion on what makes a positive classroom. Working in teams of four, the students use a Thinking Map, a type of a graphic organizer, to chart the causes and effects of a positive classroom. The groups read the causes and effects they have found, provide examples, and connect these examples to everyday life at school.

Slide 6: Fun Games and Activities

Making smart choices and resisting peer pressure is also part of social-emotional learning. Ms. Beale, a sixth-grade Everett Area Elementary teacher, uses the format of a television game show to facilitate a discussion on the myths and realities of smoking. The teacher plays the host of the show using a microphone and speakers. The “audience” can answer questions using paddles with “for real” on one side and “no way” on the other.

Slide 7: Problem Solving and Reasoning

At P.S. 269 in New York City, Mr. Griffith gathers his students in a mixed-grade special education classroom to teach conflict-solving skills. The class is broken into groups, and each group is given a scenario that involves a conflict. After a brainstorming session, each team identifies the “who,” the “conflict,” and a “win-win” solution to the conflict at hand.

Slide 8: Active Practice

P.S. 24 encourages peer mediation for conflict resolution. A specialist trains students as mediators who help their peers reach a mutually agreeable solution to an interpersonal conflict. At this school, four students—two peer mediators and two students in conflict—work together to resolve a conflict.

Slide 9: Biographies

At P.S. 24, fifth-grade students are given the task of writing autobiographies that showcase their diverse backgrounds. They are able to write about the culture and climate of their country of origin and provide illustrations. Projects like this help promote cultural awareness and tolerance of differences and reduce tension that may stem from stereotypes.

Slide 10: Self-Monitoring and Positive Reinforcement

A simple chart can help students evaluate, analyze, and monitor their behavior in school. It is important to recognize students' progress and positive behavior through praise and rewards. Gradually, students can shift to intrinsic motivation and learn to self-evaluate their behavior.

Slide 11: Selecting a Strategy

Teaching and reinforcing social skills can take many shapes and forms. Playing out difficult scenarios, modeling appropriate responses, and having students practice the skills they are learning all help cultivate a positive classroom climate and decrease interpersonal conflicts and problem behaviors.